The passage in Isa 3:18-23 has long been enigmatic because in its catalog are included items that are very little known. Recent archaeological studies yield more precise information about probable jewelry pieces, but a major concern still remains with the vocabulary of the list. For some of the items this is the only place in the Bible where the Hebrew words are used. The RSV presents a commendable attempt in English, but some translations seem to have overlooked other contexts where the rare Hebrew words or their relatives are used and clues to the meanings are presented. Misrepresentations of these articles of jewelry and clothing can lead to unfortunate consequences in interpretation. It is important for understanding the prophetic message to see what hints the Bible gives as to who wears this apparel and for what purposes. For easy reference, the list below has the RSV translation for the numbered words in the first column, Hebrew transliterations in the second column, and the suggestions discussed here summarized in the third column.

1. The Terms Commonly Understood

Following the RSV translation, we will start by reviewing the meanings of those words that have a more or less accepted degree of definition, before attempting a few new suggestions based on archaeological study of jewelry. In the first place, the word tip’eret, in Biblical Hebrew is used primarily as a collective term to speak of the accouterments that indicate the honor of an exalted position of office, characteristically one which is designated by a crown. Judah/Jerusalem/Zion is a crown of glory,
Table 1. The Jewelry Catalog of Isa 3:18-23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSV</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
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| vs. 18 In that day the Lord will take away the finery of | **tig’eret** | the insignia of office:  
(1) the anklets, **ha’okasim** | the ankle bangles,  
(2) the headbands, **wehaasshehisim** | and the sun- or star-disks,  
(3) and the crescents; **wehaassahoromin** | and the crescents,  
vs. 19 (4) the pendants, **hannekipot** | the drop pendants,  
(5) the bracelets, **wehaseerrot** | and the necklace cords,  
(6) and the scarfs; **weharsalot** | and the beads,  
vs. 20 (7) the headdresses, **happe’erim** | the garland crowns,  
(8) the armlets, **wehasseagdot** | and the armlets  
(9) the sashes, **wehaqqissurim** | (or foot jewelry),  
(10) the perfume boxes, **ubahate hannepes** | and the sashes  
(11) and the amulets; **wehalohasim** | (or girdles),  
vs. 21 (12) the signet rings, **hattabba’ot** | and the tubular  
(13) and the nose rings; **wenizme ha’ap** | “soul” cases  
vs. 22 (14) the festal robes, **hammaholahot** | and the signet rings,  
(15) the mantles, **wehamma’ataropot** | and the nose rings,  
(16) the cloaks, **wehammitpahot** | the loin cloths,  
(17) and the handbags; **wehahoritim** | and the enveloping capes,  
vs. 23 (18) the garments of gauze | **wehagiylonim** | and the mantles,  
(19) the linen garments, **wehassedinim** | and the wallets,  
(20) the turbans, **wehassenipot** | and the thin garments,  
(21) and the veils. **weharedidim** | and the warriors’ belts,  

a royal city (Isa 28:1, 4; 52:1; Jer 13:20; cf. 13:18); the high priest’s apparel is glorious (Exod 28:2, 40); the queen’s jewelry designating her rank is beautiful (Ezek 16:17, 39); the king’s crown (Prov 4:9; Jer 13:18; Esth 1:4) or scepter (Jer 48:17) is regally splendid; and God’s signs of dominion are ultimately majestic (Isa 28:5; 1 Chr 29:11, 13; Isa 63:12, 14, 15). Certainly the English words of “beauty,” “glory,” and “finery” are associated here, but the basic biblical meaning has more to do with symbols
of high office which would, as a matter of course, be “beautiful” jewelry, metalwork and apparel designating exaltation and honor. Hence the term tip'aret here is an introductory collective noun with a colon implied, “insignia of office:”, and what follows is a list of those insignia.

The first item in the list of accouterments of high office is, interestingly enough, something that has to do with the feet—perhaps in poetic contrast to the expected association of “glorious crown” for the head. We have just been told that women in Jerusalem, “the daughters of Zion,” walk “tinkling with their feet,” vs. 16. The verb “tinkling,” translating ḥs, has the same root as ḥāʾḵāṣîm; and even though these are the only two places in the Bible where the word is used, because of the graphic poetry of vs. 16 we can be fairly sure that foot ornaments are involved. More specifically, they are probably heavy round anklets or bangles worn in pairs, usually several at a time, as shown on Late Bronze fertility figurines and found on female leg bones in Iron Age burials. Another feminine association is with the name of the daughter of Caleb (Josh 15:16, 17 and Judg 1:12, 13), Achsah, from the same root.

Of the next five items translated by the RSV as “the headbands and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs,” only two, “crescents” and “pendants” are discussed with realistic certainty. “The crescents,” ḥāsšāhōrōnîm, relate to a root in several Semitic languages having to do with “moon,” and in the plural refer to the insignia of office worn by the kings of Midian and their camels in Judg 8. In vs. 21 Gideon slays Kings Zebah and Zalmunna and takes “the crescents that were on the necks of their camels,” and then, while refusing to become a king himself with a dynasty for Israel, Gideon asks the warriors to give him their jewelry spoil out of which he makes “an ephod.”

The soldiers contribute not only earrings (nezem) but “the crescents and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars that were about the necks of their camels” (Judg 8:26). Since the crescents of the camels were “on the necks,” it can be assumed that the crescents in vs. 26 were also worn on the necks of the kings. Archaeology provides two different kinds of metal crescents with some fine gold examples: a flat type with perforations in the tips for a neck thong or loops to affix it to a fabric; and a slender wire, shaped like the letter “C” with a central metal loop for suspension.

The “pendants,” hannētipōt (4), mentioned with the crescents in Judg 8:26, could also be neck jewelry worn in the same fashion as the crescent from a cord. The root of this kind of “pendant” is associated with the dropping or dripping of liquid (rain, honey, wine, myrrh), and archaeologically the nearest suggestion would be beads in turquoise, lapis, faience, glass, and other semiprecious stones. Pendants, beads of semiprecious stones, and other valuable jewelry are characteristically found with crescents in Palestinian excavations of the period. In the Isa 3 passage the item that follows “crescents” is exactly in keeping with the paired use in Judg 8:26 as royal insignia.

The Isaiah catalog continues with haššērōt (5), translated by the RSV as “bracelets,” but which may happily be the necklace cords. The Hebrew lexicon BDB has the word used only in Isa 3:19 classified with šōr meaning “umbilical cord,” and of special note is the related šaršērōt.2 In Exod 28:14 the latter word designates “two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords” to attach to the high priest’s ephod, and hence there is a strong jewelry association.

We can now say that the three items, crescents, drop pendants, and necklace cords, are associated to some degree with insignia of

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office for the Hebrew high priest and the Midianite kings (Judg 8:26). The meaning of the following term, translated "scarfs" (6), is less apparent and is better included in the discussion later on. Vs. 20 lists five kinds of articles, one of which, "the perfume boxes," ṭabāṯe hannepes (10), has negligible associations within the Bible and so it too will be treated at another point. For the other four, Biblical Hebrew gives us some help.

The seventh term, ḥappeʾērim ("the headdresses"), is related to the introductory tipʾeret and in the present form means some kind of special head ornament, probably to be thought of with reference to a crown. In Isa 61:3 the headdress is a sign of honor as a "garland" instead of mourning with ashes on the head, and in vs. 10, as the bride adorns herself with jewels, so the bridegroom wears this "garland" or crown. In Ezek 24:17 the prophet hears Yahweh command a similar reversal: instead of mourning (with ashes on his head) over the death of his wife, he is to bind on this "turban," probably like a bridegroom. In Ezek 44 in the vision of the restored temple, the Levitical priests wear these turbans as do "Aaron and his sons" in Exod 39:28. Archaeological jewelry evidence suggests that the object may be a "frontlet" made of a strip of metal foil with holes for ties to place it across the forehead and then knotted in the back. Several of these have flowers and rosettes in repoussé and places to attach ornaments. Iron Age tombs at Megiddo had some lovely examples. Palestinian frontlets seem to be reminiscent of the more elaborate Egyptian fashion, and there must be a relationship between this kind of crown and the head garlands pictured so often in Egyptian art as worn by men and women. Imitations of the flower wreaths in precious metals and inlay could also be executed conceivably in a fabric or leather band. So, instead of the RSV "headdresses," more specifically the translation could be "garland crowns" or "frontlets."

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Hassā'ādōt (8), "the armlets," is another rare term, but it is usually defined by the contexts of two other instances in the Bible. In 2 Sam 1:10 an Amalekite warrior at the king's own request killed the already mortally wounded Saul. The soldier brought to David the old king's "crown which was on his head and the armlet which was on his arm." The 'esʿāḏāh would appear to be of the same linguistic root as the term in Isa 3:20, and specifically as an insigne of royal office was worn on the arm. In Num 31:50 the booty from the battle against Midian under Moses included articles of gold called 'esʿāḏāh which were coupled with šāmīd. The latter is the term for the bangles definitely worn as arm jewelry by Rebecca in Gen 24. These associations would favor "armlets" as the Isa 3 term, but the Hebrew here does differ in that no "prosthetic aleph" is present. Alternatively, a strong suggestion has been made to see the Isa 3 word related to šīd, "to step or march," and hence some kind of foot jewelry would be indicated. As yet there is no convincing archaeological evidence for a "step-chain."

At this point in the list possibly a group of three related items exists: a garland crown for the head (7), foot ornaments (8), with (9) being worn in the middle of the body. From the Hebrew root "to bind," haqqīssurīm (9) is usually translated "sashes," and in other passages it is something the bride binds on. English versions are confusing because they do not consistently hint at the same Hebrew original word. For Isa 49:18 the RSV has, "You shall put them on as an ornament, you shall bind them on as a bride does"; and for Jer 2:32, "Can a maiden forget her ornaments or a bride her attire?" It is difficult to know what this could be from archaeology; perhaps the beaded girdles from Egypt help, but more likely an outer garment is meant, one particularly characteristic of the queenly wedding dress. We should note here that of the seven items discussed so far, only the first

4 BDB, p. 857.
5 Alex Wilkinson, Ancient Egyptian Jewellery (London: Methuen, 1971) p. 264, "girdles."
("ankle bangles") and this one are associated in the Bible exclusively with women; the others are mainly insignia of offices held by men.

The last item in this section (11) is usually given as "the amulets," and the word hall'éhăšim is surely related to a root meaning "charm" and possibly associated with snakes. Earlier in Isa 3 the list of men of high office has a neḇôn lāḥaš, an "expert in charms" (vs. 3). In Neh 3:12 and 10:25 a man who is head of a restoration family has a patronymic of this word. The reptile association is given, e.g., in Jer 8:17, "For behold, I am sending among you serpents, adders which cannot be charmed." From Palestine, representations of snakes are found in metalwork and in terra cotta iconography; and the uraeus in Egypt is very familiar, especially in jewelry.

The signet rings, haṭṭabbā́ōt (12), are examples par excellence of jewelry used as insignia of high office. In Gen 41:42 Joseph received one from the pharaoh, and in Esth 8:2 Mordecai accepted one from the Persian king. Esther in Israelite tradition perhaps cannot as a woman own a seal of this particular designation (although other women in the ancient Near East, especially in Egypt, possessed the seal ring). Hence the circumlocution to have Mordecai hold it, but Esther proclaimed powerful: "and the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman" (Esth 8:2). The ring itself, a highly developed Egyptian fashion, characteristically had a scarab of semiprecious stone carved with a seal and set in a swivel mount. Side wires were wrapped around the ends of the gold base, and in some Palestinian examples knobs aided in the function of the stamp. A group of handsome signet rings is shown in Fig. 176 of the volume on the Megiddo Tombs. The nose rings that are paired in Isa 3:21 with signet rings are definitely part of the queen-bride's jewelry as mentioned in passages such as Ezek 16:12.

*Guy and Engberg, p. 172.*
The best archaeological evidence is the "mulberry earring" found in position as a nose ring in a burial at Megiddo.\(^7\)

Of the eight remaining items in the catalog contained in vss. 22 and 23, all seem to be clothing with the exception of ḥāḥ Priest (17), "the handbags." The one owner of two of these items in the Bible is a man, a military officer: "Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor" (2 Kgs 5:1). He gave Gehazi, the servant of the prophet Elisha, two talents of silver tied up in two of these "wallets" (2 Kgs 5:23). Another possible association is with the root hrṭ when it means "engraving tool," and especially with Egyptian associations of an engraver, writer, or scribe who was also a diviner-magician because of his literacy and learning (Gen 41:8; Exod, chaps. 7, 8; Dan 1:20; 2:2). Egyptologist William C. Hayes writes of the central appurtenance of this high royal officer—the scribal bag, important enough to be included in burial equipment.\(^8\)

Since the remaining items in the catalog cannot as yet be identified as jewelry objects, we will pass over them more hastily. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note which of them have associations elsewhere in the Bible with high office of men and women. Two are mentioned with reference to the high priest's garb: the characteristic wrapped "turbans," and the "fes-
tal robes." What the RSV designates as "the turbans" (20), ḥaṣṣeñipōt, is from the verb "to wrap," and the noun forms refer most often to the requisite headgear of the high priest (Exod 28 [several times]; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev 8:9; 16:4; Zech 3:5). Two typical instances are: "you shall make a turban of fine linen" (Exod 28:39); "and he set the turban upon his head" (Lev 8:9). When the prophet Zechariah saw the vision of Joshua the high priest, the opening issue concerned his garments. The priest was

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standing before the angel in filthy clothes, and as the sign that his iniquity was taken away he was dressed in the proper vestments which were clean: "Let them put a clean turban on his head" (Zech 3:5).

Just before that command it is stated that the angel said, "I will clothe you in rich apparel" (Zech 3:4). The Hebrew term for those two English words is the same plural form as for "the festal robes" hammahšālāšōt (14) in Isa 3:22. These are the only two times the term is used in the Bible. The BDB lexicon relates the noun to the much more common verb ḫlš, "to draw off or out," with the implication that the robes get their name from being "taken off in ordinary life."9 Another possibility would be to relate the garments to the second meaning of ḫlš, "to equip for war." Here the idea would be from the uniform worn by a warrior, especially as he "girds his loins for battle," because another related noun ḥālāš does mean "loins as seat of strength."10 For item (14) in the list, "festal robes" of the priests or the warriors' "loin cloths" are the possibilities at present.

The term just before "turbans" (20) is hassēḏīnīm (19), rendered in the RSV as "the linen garments"; and here, too, a military association can be made. In Prov 31:24 the woman of valor, or more accurately, the estate manager, makes sēḏīnīm to sell; and in the following line that forms a poetic parallel, she delivers ḥāgōr to the merchant. To understand better what the sēḏīnīm are, we might do well to follow the practice of examining the poetic parallel which could be synonymous. The "girdle" or ḥāgōr is described vividly in 2 Sam 20:8 (RSV):

Now Joab was wearing [ḥāgōr] a soldier's garment, and over it was a girdle [ḥagōr] with a sword in its sheath fastened upon his loins. . . .

In Judg 14:12, 13, sēḏīnīm are some of the special garments the warrior Samson wagers for the one who solves the riddle. In all these cases the implication strongly exists that garments are

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9 BDB, p. 322.
10 Ibid., p. 323.
meant, with no special claim that they were worn by women. The preferred association in our study is with “warriors’ belts.”

Two other terms in vss. 22 and 23 are definitely associated with women in the Bible, (16) and (21). No. (21) harʿādīm, “the veils,” is used in the singular in Cant 5:7 as the article the watchmen took from the bride-queen found searching after curfew for her lover. The RSV has “mantle” in the Canticles passage; very likely it was some sort of outer cloak. Strangely the word in the Hebrew lexicon is related to the root meaning “beat out,” as in the gold foil on the temple cherubim (1 Kgs 6:32). With this association it could perhaps be a cloth with metallic threads. No. (16) hammitpāhōt, “the cloaks,” is used in the singular in Ruth 3:15. The RSV has Ruth holding out her “mantle” so that Boaz could give her six measures of barley in it. Since the verbal root has the notion of “to extend, spread,” the logical meaning is that this is also a kind of outer enveloping cape that women wore.

To summarize, thus far we have discussed sixteen of the more identifiable terms of the twenty-one given in the catalog of Isa 3:18-23. Fifteen of these have associations as insignia of honorable office. Ruth’s mantle can be considered ordinary, and archaeological evidence for metal ankle bangles indicates common use. Twelve of the Isaiah articles have connections with important men of office; four are items relating to women of high rank. Before continuing with suggestions for the meaning of the remaining five more obscure words, we must comment on the information now at hand.

2. The Usual Interpretation of the Catalog as Women's Wear

The entire Isa 3 catalog is usually interpreted as a detailed specification of women’s wear with negative connotations of characteristic superficiality and heedless extravagance. One reason for this interpretation is that the list is placed between 3:16-17 and 3:24-4:1, which speak of the retaliation due to the daughters
of Zion for being “haughty,” walking “with outstretched necks,”
“glancing wantonly,” and prancing with affectation (vss. 16-17).
Consequently their finery will be taken away (vss. 18-23, our
catalog), and “instead of perfume there will be rottenness, . . .
instead of well-set hair, baldness,” etc. (vs. 24). In vs. 26
Jerusalem is personified as a mourning woman and the section
closes with the desperate picture of a war-torn society where the
soldiers have died and “seven women” must plead with “one
man” to be part of his family for even the most minimal sem-
blance of social order.

The interpretation would be supported by the deprecation
theme in passages such as Amos 4:1-3, where the “cows of
Bashan,” the aristocratic women of the capital city of Samaria,
will be taken away as captives because of their oppression of the
poor and the needy, and the treatment of their own husbands as
servants. The Amos passage has comparable emphasis on the
aristocratic theme of the Isaiah section, as well as the reversal
of social order, but there is no element of jewelry or dress.
Ezek 16, as discussed elsewhere,\(^{11}\) does use jewelry and apparel
to illustrate the reversal of the queen-bride who will be stripped
because of her harlotry. The punishment of having the “nakedness
uncovered” is similar to the Isaiah phrase (in 3:17), “the Lord
will lay bare their secret parts.” The verb ‘rh, “to be naked, bare,”
is clear, and it is related to Ezekiel’s ‘erwah, “genital area”; but
the noun for “secret parts” in Isaiah is problematical.

3. An Alternative Interpretation Based on the
Context of Isa 3

Another interpretation of the significance of the Isaiah catalog
could be based on identifying the terms and the setting of the
larger context of the whole passage which is now chap. 3 in our
Bibles. Scholars have long recognized that there is a collection

\(^{11}\) See Elizabeth E. Platt, “Triangular Jewelry Plaques,” BASOR, No. 221
(February, 1976): 103-112.
of several oracles in this section, and that the catalog may be a unit in itself because of its divergence from the poetic structures immediately above and below it. The general theme of the chapter is the denunciation of those who hold aristocratic office in the royal city of Jerusalem and the disruption of societal roles which will come as punishment. Isa 3:1 states:

For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff.

There follows a list of the officers in vss. 2-4, such as the warrior, judge, prophet, diviner, elder, military commander, cabinet secretary. In the capitulation ahead, however, these very prominent people will be subjects—boys will be princes and children will be oppressors (vs. 4). The reason why “the Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people” is because “the spoil of the poor is in your houses” and the leaders are guilty of “grinding the face of the poor” (vss. 13-15). Up to this point the implication of the passage with its group of oracles is that the society’s leaders are men.

However, in vs. 16 the women aristocrats are denounced for their haughty ways. In the Amos 4 oracle they too, by implication, “oppress the poor” and “crush the needy” (Amos 4:1). But in Isaiah they are also guilty of seduction of the kind Ezekiel dramatizes so strikingly. They are dressed in elaborate jewelry and clothing for the dishonorable purpose of “glancing wantonly with their eyes.” The oracle appears to conclude with the proclamation that they will be punished by repulsive bodily disease and subsequent stripping to reveal it.

Next comes the catalog in a literary unit which could stand by itself. The following section draws contrast that “instead of perfume there will be rottenness” and “instead of a girdle, a rope.” These, we are about to learn, are not items belonging exclusively to women at all. The word for “perfume,” ʰəbəm, is

better translated “spice” or “balsam,” and was a major ingredient in the anointing oil or holy chrism by which Moses was to consecrate the Aaronic priesthood (Exod 30:23). It was one of the tribute items given by the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon (1 Kgs 10:10); and King Hezekiah kept it in his treasury of royal wealth (2 Kgs 20:13). The “girdle” הֲגֶרֶן, as related to הֲגֹר discussed above, is reminiscent of the warrior’s belt or distinctive uniform. The next line has very rare words for “well-set hair” and “rich robe,” but conceivably they could refer to the elaborate tonsures of aristocratic men for whom “baldness” is more of a genetic reality. Vs. 25 specifically mentions the fall of the men warriors, and there follows a comparable metaphor of Jerusalem women mourning and desperate, but who evidently can provide for themselves food and clothing. Again, the section Isa 3:24-4:1 has the patterned alternation of references to men and women.

The obvious conclusion here is that Isa 3 gives a collection of oracles that denounce both the men and women aristocrats. The choice of the symbols of office in jewelry, garments and cosmetics reflects the societal positions of both men and women. More items belonging to men are mentioned because Jerusalem was a predominantly “patriarchal” society in political structure. The injustices of the society are being condemned by denouncing the symbols of those officers who have transgressed their authority and taken advantage of the poor by virtue of power positions. The catalog in vss. 18-23 especially reflects this with its predominance of identifiable articles from other biblical contexts.

It could very well be, of course, that the six of the twenty-one words we have not thus far discussed (and which will be treated in a subsequent installment of this article), belonged specifically to women. And in light of the rest of the chapter, women aristocrats are indeed being denounced. It is also perfectly possible that women had versions of the garb the Bible ascribes to men, that those items were called by the same names, and
that therefore originally the catalog was meant to emphasize women's belongings. Nevertheless, the present evidence is not convincing that these items were exclusively the property of women at one historical period. The tradition that preserved the catalog probably did not do so as a record of women's fickle fashions of the period; that tradition would have had more motivation to remember the articles in the catalog if they represented symbols important in other biblical contexts.

The juxtaposition of men's and women's articles would be particularly appropriate in the context of the Isa 3 oracle collection where first men of office have been denounced, then aristocratic women, and ultimately both in conclusion. The poetic structure of the catalog is difficult for literary experts to discern, but it should be noted that the arrangement and alternation of masculine and feminine plural noun forms in Hebrew may even witness to the juxtaposition of the oracle subject of men and women. There are eleven masculine plural nouns and ten feminine plural ones set in identifiable patterns. Our evidence indicates that this catalog of insignia of high office was specifically constructed in literary effect to confirm the denunciation of both aristocratic men and women.

(To be continued)