

## Isaiah 1-12 Show Notes

### Brief Outline of Isaiah

#### 1. THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD - CONFLICT AND VICTORY (Isaiah 1-39)

- a. Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 1-12)
- b. Prophecies concerning the nations (Isaiah 13-27)
- c. Deliverance found not in Egypt, but in the Lord (Isaiah 28-35)

#### 2. HISTORICAL INTERLUDE (Isa 36-39)

#### 3. THE BABYLONIAN PERIOD - HOPE FOR TROUBLED TIMES (Isa 40-66)

- a. The One True God against the idols (Isaiah 40-48)
- b. The Lord's servant brings salvation through his suffering (Isaiah 49-57)
- c. The future of the kingdom of God, Zion, the New Jerusalem (Isaiah 58-66)

In Isaiah chapter 1, Isaiah mentions Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. These were kings of Judah. I find it interesting that Manassah, the king (according to tradition) that killed Isaiah, is not mentioned here. Manasseh is discussed in [The Ascension of Isaiah](#).<sup>1</sup> Here were their respective times of their reigns:

Uzziah (Azariah) – 767-740 B.C.

Jotham – 740-732 B.C.

Ahaz – 732-716 B.C.<sup>2</sup>

Hezekiah - 716-687 B.C.

Manasseh – 687-642 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I think this is what is going on in the discussion in Hebrews 11 where the author of the text says, "But others were tortured, not accepting release, to obtain resurrection to a better life. And others experienced mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **They were stoned, sawed apart, murdered with the sword**; they went about in sheepskins and goatskins; they were destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (the world was not worthy of them); **they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and openings in the earth.**" (Hebrews 11.35-38, emphasis added.) This is a direct parallel to The Ascension of Isaiah 5.11 (see text below).

<sup>2</sup> Ahaz is portrayed negatively in the Hebrew Bible. He sacrificed his son to a false god (2 Kgs. 16.3), and he sent messengers to the king of Assyria stating, "I am thy servant and thy son" (1 Kgs. 16.7). He also took the treasures in the temple and sent them to the Assyrians as tribute (1 Kgs. 16.8).

<sup>3</sup> Manasseh is the one that tradition tells us killed Isaiah. He is also the husband of Isaiah's daughter. The Ascension of Isaiah gives us an account of Manasseh's mistreatment of Isaiah:

Isaiah said to Hezekiah the king . . . "And Sammael Malkira [that is, Satan]<sup>6</sup> will serve Manasseh and will do everything he wishes, and [Manasseh] will be a follower of Beliar [that is, Satan] rather than of me. He will cause many in Jerusalem and Judah to desert the true faith, and Beliar will dwell in Manasseh, and **by his hands I will be sawn in half.**" Ascension of Isaiah 1.7-10, emphasis added.

## Avraham Gileadi's Organization of Isaiah<sup>4</sup>

1. Ruin and rebirth – Isaiah 1-5; 34-35
2. Rebellion and Compliance – Isaiah 6-8; 36-40
3. Punishment and Deliverance – Isaiah 9-12; 41-46
4. Humiliation and Exaltation – Isaiah 13-23; 47
5. Suffering and Salvation – Isaiah 24-27; 48-54
6. Disloyalty and Loyalty – Isaiah 28-31; 55-59
7. Disenfranchisement and Inheritance – Isaiah 32-33; 60-66

## Isaiah the Prophet

### Isaiah's Political and Religious Climate

Isaiah was born about 770 B.C. during the reigns of two strong Israelite kings, Jeroboam II and Uzziah. In the northern kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam II was beautifying Samaria and expanding his country's borders and influence to their greatest extent since Solomon's time. Likewise, in the southern kingdom of Judah, Uzziah was serving as Jerusalem's most powerful king since Solomon. **This was a time of peace for both kingdoms, since neither Assyria (to the northeast) nor Egypt (to the southwest) had strong rulers who threatened that part of the Middle East.** Both Israelite countries were becoming more cosmopolitan as increased trade and prosperity improved the wealth of the urban upper classes. Meanwhile, **the lower classes and rural dwellers experienced increased taxes, land expropriations, and social inequities. Idolatry and wickedness permeated all social levels.** Thus, wealth, social injustices, immorality, and growing pagan worship came to characterize both societies, with the greatest decadence being in Samaria.<sup>5</sup>

### A False Sense of Security

"The many years of military victories and territorial expansion resulted in prosperity, pride, and a false sense of security. Prophets appeared to condemn **the moral and spiritual failings of the Israelites.** The **warning voices of Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea** were heard in the lands of Israel and Judah. They pronounced with emphatic clarity that Assyria was the greatest political threat to Israelite existence."<sup>6</sup>

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Because of these visions, therefore, Beliar was angry with Isaiah, and he dwelt in the heart of Manasseh, and he sawed Isaiah in half with a wood saw.<sup>8</sup> And while Isaiah was being sawed in half... And he said this to him when he began to be sawed in half. And Isaiah was in a vision of the Lord, but his eyes were open, and he saw them... And they seized Isaiah the son of Amoz and sawed him in half with a wood saw... And to the prophets who (were) with him he said before he was sawed in half, he did not cry out, or weep, but his mouth spoke with the Holy Spirit until he was sawed in two. Beliar did this to Isaiah through Belkira and through Manasseh, for Sammael was very angry with Isaiah from the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, because of the things that he had seen concerning the Beloved,<sup>9</sup> and because of the destruction of Sammael that he had seen through the Lord, while Hezekiah his father was king. And he did as Satan wished. *Ascension of Isaiah* 5.1-2, 6-7, 11, 13-16.

<sup>4</sup> Avraham Gileadi, *The Literary Message of Isaiah*, Hebraeus Press, 1994, p. 9-26. Gileadi explains that because of the unity and overall structure of the book as it is laid out in his argument of his book, he contends that Isaiah is a unified work, the creation of one author, Isaiah the son of Amoz of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1982, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> David B. Galbraith, D. Kelly Ogden, Andrew C. Skinner, *Jerusalem: the Eternal City*, Deseret Book, 1996, p. 86-87.

### Authorship of the text of Isaiah

The scholarly consensus is that Isaiah is authored by several individuals. This has sometimes been referred to as the “Deutero-Isaiah” model or problem. This theory is the claim that parts of Isaiah were written later than others. Specifically this paradigm asserts that **there were at least three individual authors**, whose works were later compiled together under the name of the first author, the “real” Isaiah (known first Isaiah or as Proto-Isaiah by supporters of this view). If this theory is correct, it presents problems for the Book of Mormon as an actual book written by prophets that left Jerusalem in 600 B.C.

The problem it presents is as follows: First Isaiah or Proto Isaiah was written around 700 B.C. Deutero-Isaiah (or Second Isaiah) was textualized during the Exile, sometime around 550 B.C., and Trito-Isaiah (Third Isaiah) after the exiles returned from Babylon, around 500 B.C. The issue is that Nephi is quoting Isaiah while writing his record, a text which he takes out of Jerusalem in around 600 B.C. The Brass Plates contain selections from First and Second Isaiah but none from Third Isaiah. So that at least alleviates Latter-day Saints from having to tackle the Third Isaiah problem. But the question remains, if Nephi is quoting text that wasn’t written until the exile, what does this do to the truth claims of the Book of Mormon? More on this later.

As to the multiple authorship of the text of Isaiah, one scholar put it this way:

One may surmise that texts of individual prophecies, or small clusters of his prophecies, circulated in scrolls during Isaiah’s lifetime and afterward, whether in the hands of his followers or of private collectors of prophetic revelation. Chapters 1–39 in the book that has come down to us incorporate the prophecies of Isaiah but also include much disparate material that is clearly later, some of it reflecting the imminent or actual fall of the Babylonian empire to the Persians in 539 B.C.E. Nothing from chapter 40 to the end of the book is the work of Isaiah son of Amoz. **The strong scholarly consensus is that chapters 40–55 were composed by a prophet of the Babylonian exile**, whose name is beyond recovery, prophesying a triumphant return of the exiles to Zion through the agency of the Persian emperor Cyrus (mentioned by name), who was poised to overwhelm the Babylonians. Even in this unit, however, it is far from clear that all the prophecies are from the same person. The so-called Second Isaiah is followed by a Third Isaiah in what is now the last eleven chapters of the book.<sup>7</sup>

Even though many scholars argue for the multiple authorship of Isaiah, not all agree. Some scholars have contended that the book of Isaiah is the work of one author. They argue for the unity of Isaiah, and give evidence to their claims. See, for example, Gileadi’s arguments in his book [The Literary Message of Isaiah](#). Some scholars take a middle ground approach, stating that “A reasonable possibility is that Isaiah’s messages were collected and preserved by his disciples and later edited and put into written form.”<sup>8</sup>

Options as to how to deal with the deutero-Isaiah problem:

1. Realize and admit that we don’t know, but we take the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon text on as a matter of faith, despite what current scholarship is saying about Isaiah.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Alter, [The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary](#), W.W. Norton & Co., 2019, p. 617.

<sup>8</sup> LaSor, et. al., [Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Eerdmans, 1996, p. 285

2. Find a “middle path,” whereby perhaps there were later authors or a later group of prophets in the Isaiah tradition that added to his text, but that what was on the Brass Plates was legitimate and that these quotes that Nephi used were from the actual Isaiah. In other words, allow space for the scholarship to be mostly correct, that there were later additions, but also allow space to believe that Nephi had access to the actual Isaiah’s words, and that perhaps not all 66 chapters of Isaiah were on the Brass Plates.

**Combining all of the elements of the “separate” Isaiahs into one book, showing how this happened, and when, is impossible.** One scholar comments that by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. the Isaiah scroll existed essentially as it does today, with all 66 chapters intact. He explains:

**It is not clear to us when, or why, the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah were combined with those of Isaiah son of Amoz.** The strong emphasis in both literary corpora on God's universal kingship, the messianic era, and the future exaltation of Zion may have suggested that these texts belonged together. Already at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, the Jewish sage Ben Sirach (whose writings are preserved in the Apocrypha, but not in the Jewish Bible) knew a version of the book of Isaiah that combined both blocks of material (see Sirach [Ecclesiasticus] 48.20, 24-25). The great scroll of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls (dating to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) also contains the entire book of Isaiah as we know it today.<sup>9</sup>

All this being said, I am open to the possibility that Isaiah was a unified work. I am also open to the idea that there were multiple authors of the text. I just don’t know. I wasn’t there. I do not believe anyone right now can make any assertions with certainty at this point that go beyond the physical evidence that exists. I will state that I believe that Nephi existed. If he did, and he actually had access to the Plates of Brass, then the text that he had at his disposal had some of the second Isaiah material contained thereon. It is noteworthy that none of 3<sup>rd</sup> Isaiah has been found in the Book of Mormon. For now, I am still gathering information and listening to all sides of this scholarly debate regarding the authorship of Isaiah.

## Jesus and Isaiah

### The Importance of Isaiah to Latter-day Saints and its relationship to the Book of Mormon

One commentator said this about the importance of Isaiah:

“When the resurrected Savior visited the descendants of Lehi gathered at the temple in Bountiful, He quoted [Isaiah 54](#) to them and then gave a remarkable endorsement to the prophet’s writings: ‘Behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah’ (3 Nephi 23:1).

“Many have wished that the Savior had picked an easier text to command us to study. We would prefer that he had said, ‘Master the writings of Omni!’ or ‘Ponder the words of Ruth!’ But the Savior explained why Isaiah’s writings were deserving of His special endorsement. He declared, ‘For surely he [Isaiah] spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles’ (3 Nephi 23:2). Thus, He taught that Isaiah spoke not only to the house of Israel but also to everyone who would hear or read his words. The Savior then

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, [The Jewish Study Bible](#), Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 784, emphasis added.

added His own testimony of Isaiah's words: 'And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake' (3 Nephi 23:3).<sup>10</sup>

### Translation Issues in Book of Mormon Passages Containing Isaiah

Since the Brass Plates contain the earliest known version of Isaiah, some LDS scholars assert that the Brass Plates have a more correct version of Isaiah's words than what we have today in our Bibles or in the Dead Sea scrolls (dated to around 100 BCE). With this in mind, it is worth mentioning that there are around 70 verses with changes<sup>11</sup> in the Isaiah text contained in the Book of Mormon. This amounts to about 70 of the 433 verses of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon, or roughly 1/3 of Isaiah.<sup>12</sup>

It is noteworthy that most of the Isaiah verses as quoted in the Book of Mormon **contain no changes at all** when compared to the King James Version. Latter-day Saint scholar Daniel Ludlow discusses what some scholars have called "Isaiah problem" of the Book of Mormon:

Translation is frequently concerned with general ideas rather than specific words; even the best translators do not translate the same material from one language into another word-for-word the same. There appears to be only one answer to explain the word-for-word similarities between the verses of Isaiah in the Bible and the same verses in the Book of Mormon. When Joseph Smith translated the Isaiah references from the small plates of Nephi, he evidently opened his King James Version of the Bible and compared the impression he had received in translating with the words of the King James scholars. If his translation was essentially the same as that of the King James Version, he apparently quoted the verse from the Bible; then his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, copied it down. However, if Joseph Smith's translation did not agree precisely with that of the King James scholars, he would dictate his own translation to the scribe. This procedure in translation would account both for the 234 verses of Isaiah which were changed or modified by the Prophet Joseph as well as the 199 verses which were translated word-for-word the same. Although some critics might question this procedure of translation, scholars today frequently use this same procedure in translating the Biblical manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Terry Ball and Nathan Winn, [Making Sense of Isaiah](#), Deseret Book, 2009, p. 1-2

<sup>11</sup> This number reflects what some call "major changes." See Victor Ludlow, Isaiah 2. 199/433 of the Isaiah verses in the Book of Mormon are word-for-word the same as the KJV. This is telling us something, for when I translate a text, if I come back to the same text months later and translate it again, I will not obtain a word-for-word translation. This just doesn't happen with this kind of accuracy.

<sup>12</sup> There are 66 chapters in the Book of Isaiah, containing a total of 1,292 verses in the present King James Version text of Isaiah. Nineteen of the 66 chapters are quoted in their entirety in the Book of Mormon, and two other chapters are quoted in their entirety, except for two verses.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel H. Ludlow, [A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon](#), Deseret Book, 1976, p. 141-42. I realize that this explanation goes against what many of the witnesses to translation related. Some have suggested to me that perhaps Joseph Smith had an incredible memory and could quote large passages of the KJV of Isaiah. I have had others express other ways that these things could be explained, many explanations that delve into the supernatural. For scholars, the simplest solution would be to assume that Joseph used the KJV in some manner as he went through his work of translation. This seems to be Ludlow's assertion. Ludlow explains further, "The early prophets of the Book of Mormon frequently quoted from the writings of Isaiah that appeared on the brass plates of Laban. (1 Nephi 5:11-13; 19:21-23.) **Of the 433 verses of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon, 199 verses are word-for-word the same** as the corresponding verses in the King James Version of the Old Testament. The so-

## Isaiah 1: The Great Arraignment<sup>14</sup>

### The Daughter of Zion is Left as a Cottage in a Vineyard<sup>15</sup>

1. The Apostasy and Devastation of Israel<sup>16</sup>
  - a. "I have brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" (Isa. 1.2).
  - b. "Ah sinful nation!" (Isa. 1.4).
  - c. "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint!" (Isa. 1.5).
  - d. No soundness, wounds, bruises, a cottage in a vineyard, a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city (Isa. 1.6-8).<sup>17</sup>

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called Isaiah problem is this: How do Latter-day Saints account for this striking similarity in nearly half of the verses and the differences in the remainder of the verses?

In order to attempt an explanation of this problem, a person should consider the following points. Joseph Smith did not explain in great detail the process used in translating the Book of Mormon; he merely stated, "through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God." (*Millennial Star*, 18:118.) However, it is quite evident that the process of translation was not automatic; Joseph Smith not only had to exercise faith in the translation procedure, but he also had to put forth mental and spiritual effort. Oliver Cowdery's unsuccessful attempt to translate indicates clearly that the translation of the Book of Mormon was more than a mechanical process. (See D&C 8:1-3, 10-11; 9:7-9.)

<sup>14</sup> **The first chapter of Isaiah is often called the "Great Arraignment,"** because it takes the form of a court scene with Jehovah as the plaintiff and judge, Israel as the defendant, Isaiah as an observer and occasional interlocutor, and heaven and earth as the witnesses. After a prologue (Isa. 1:1) comes the court scene, which can be outlined as follows:

Accusation: The Lord's charge of sin and sickness throughout Israel is given (vs. 2-6).

Immediate judgments: Physical and spiritual consequences are coming upon Israel because the people have not obeyed the Lord (7-15).

Promise of pardon: Conditions of cleansing, repentance, and blessing are presented (16-20).

Final sentencing: The Lord will purge the wicked and redeem the righteous through apostasy, restoration, and judgment (21-31). Victor Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1996, p. 71-78.

<sup>15</sup> Much of this chapter is read as the *haftarah*, or prophetic reading, on the Sabbath preceding [Tish'ah be'av](#), which commemorates the destruction of the Temple. This section is thus seen as offering theological justification for that event. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 784.

<sup>16</sup> I see these images as reflecting both physical and spiritual devastation. I see Isaiah doing both things with these images. I see echoes of this idea in 1 Nephi 22 when Laman and Lemuel ask about things on the plates, and want to know if these things are literal or figurative. **Nephi tells them that these things are both** ([1 Nephi 22.1-3](#)).

<sup>17</sup> This verse and the two preceding ones probably refer to the devastation wreaked by the Assyrian invading forces in 701 B.C.E. Lachish was Judah's largest town outside of Jerusalem. Relief exist which portray in a vivid detail the Assyrian destruction of Lachish. Other parts of the relief depict Assyrian archers and stone throwers on the attack, Judean soldiers being impaled around Lachish, and later scenes of people being led from the defeated city into exile. **According to archaeological surveys, the Assyrians decimated virtually all of the countryside outside of Jerusalem.** David Carr, [Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins](#), Yale University Press, 2014, p. 46-47.

- e. A <sup>18</sup>שְׂרִיד remnant left (Isa. 1.9).<sup>19</sup>
2. The Wicked Leaders<sup>20</sup>
- a. “Ye rulers of Sodom: give ear to the law of our God!” (Isa. 1.10).
  - b. “I delight not in the blood of bulls or lambs or goats” (Isa. 1.11).
  - c. “Your hands are full of blood!” (Isa. 1.15).
  - d. “Wash you, make you clean... learn to do well, seek mishpat/judgment/fairness, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow!” (Isa. 1.16-17).
  - e. “Come now, let us reason together... though your sins be as scarlet, they can be made white as snow” (Isa. 1.18).<sup>21</sup>
  - f. הַיְיָהוָה לְזוֹנָה קָרְיָה נֶאֱמָנָה “How is the faithful city become a harlot!” (Isa. 1.21).<sup>22</sup>
  - g. שְׂרִיף סוֹרְרִים “Your princes are rebellious!” (Isa. 1.23)<sup>23</sup>
  - h. כָּלֹּא אֶהֱב שָׂחַד “Everyone loves gifts/bribes!” (Isa. 1.23).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The Hebrew word *sārîd* denotes “a survivor,” a “remnant, that which is left.” In the case of Isaiah 1.9 we are talking about a כְּמַעֲט שְׂרִיד *sarid kimat*, or a very small remnant, or a very small population of survivors.

<sup>19</sup> The idea of a remnant returning is repeated in Isaiah. See: Isaiah 10.20-22; 11.11; 11.16; 37.31-32; 46.3. Nephi knew that his seed was a “remnant of the house of Israel” (2 Ne. 28.2). Other prophets spoke of the remnant of the flock of Israel, for example, Jeremiah said “**I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds;** and they shall be fruitful and increase” (Jer. 23.3). Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, said, “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; **I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah,** as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men” (Micah 2.12).

<sup>20</sup> Margaret Barker had this to say about the sins that Isaiah condemned, “**The sins of Jerusalem that Isaiah condemned were not those of the ten commandments, but those of the Enoch tradition: pride** (e.g. Isa.2.11, 17), **rebellion** (e.g. Isa.1.23; 1.28; 5.24) and **loss of Wisdom** (e.g. Isa.2.6; 3.12; 5.21). ‘Isaiah and Enoch have much in common, not because a small eccentric Enochic group quilted together a marvellous pattern from older texts wrenched from their earlier context, but because the tradition of the older cult and its vivid imagery persisted long after a small group had attempted to reform and eradicate it.’ Barker, [The Mother of the Lord: Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple](#), T&T Clark, 2012, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> Two possibilities exist for interpreting this verse. First—as Hebrew has no question marks—Jehovah is asking, “**With blood on your hands, do you still imagine you can become clean? Do you assume I will readily pardon you though you are guilty of the unpardonable sin?**” Do Jehovah’s people pretend that the God who said, “Whoever sheds a man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6), will simply overlook their crimes so long as they go to church and put on a good appearance? That kind of hypocrisy is indeed characteristic of a Sodom-and-Gomorrah type of society (vv 9-10). Second, in this verse’s larger context of Jehovah’s people’s repenting of transgression and purifying their lives, they may even now become clean of gross crimes. They shouldn’t assume, though burdened with guilt, that they are too far gone, that there exists no further hope of recovery. The “test” Jehovah presents is whether or not they will repent of doing evil. While “scarlet” and “crimson”—the color of “blood”—allude to murder, abortion, etc. (v 15), they also signify the stain of wickedness in general. Jehovah is willing to forgive those who “cease to do evil” and “learn to do good” (vv 16-17). Avraham Gileadi, [IsaiahExplained](#), accessed 8.01.22, emphasis added.

<sup>22</sup> **This prophecy begins with אֵיכָה** *’eikhah*, the word that conventionally starts lamentations or dirges. The prophet sees it as a reason to lament that the once just town has become a place where justice is perverted. Alter, p. 624.

<sup>23</sup> There is some punning going on here in the Hebrew. Alter gives it a spin in English when he translates this as “Your nobles are knaves!” He writes, The alliteration in the translation seeks to be an approximate equivalent of the fuller sound-play of the Hebrew, *sarayikh sorerim*. The point of the sound-play is that something turns into its opposite in a move from one word to an antithetical one that sounds like the first.” Alter, p. 625.

<sup>24</sup> A *šōḥaḏ* is a bribe. While it is translated as “gift” in the KJV, Isaiah is talking about how the leaders of the city are taking bribes and not doing their duty to uphold *mishpat*, or justice.

### 3. Future Hope

- a. "Zion shall be redeemed!" (Isa. 1.27).
- b. Destruction of sinners (Isa. 1.28).
- c. "For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen" (Isa. 1.29).<sup>25</sup>

### Isaiah 2: The Mountain of the Lord's House<sup>26</sup>

1. Isaiah "saw" the word of the Lord (Isa. 2.1).<sup>27</sup>
2. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains" (Isa. 2.2).
  - a. All nations shall flow unto it (Isa. 2.2).
3. Many will say, "Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord!" (Isa. 2.3).
4. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks (Isa. 2.4).
5. "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!" (Isa. 2.5). Though the house of Jacob is invited to the feast, they are also called out for not participating.<sup>28</sup>
6. A condemnation of the Proud (Isa. 2.6-22).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Truly, you shall be shamed because of the terebinths you desired, and you shall be confounded because of the gardens you coveted. (Victor Ludlow translation). Ludlow writes, "As verse 29 indicates, the sinners will be ashamed of the trees and gardens they coveted. The oaks (or terebinths) and gardens might represent either the worldly acquisition of property or idolatrous nature worship—sinners in groves of trees. The Canaanites usually worshipped their pagan idols in the groves and on the high places, and they even considered some trees sacred." Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1996, p. 80. Margaret Barker argues that Isaiah had been edited and that Isaiah the prophet is not against the Asherah in the temple. If this is true, why this polemic against the "oaks which ye have desired?" For Barker, it is because Isaiah 1 is a later editing of Isaiah's work. She writes, "The Book of Isaiah is a complex tapestry of material from many periods, but chapters 2–12 show the character of the first Isaiah's teaching. [The first chapter is most likely a later preface to the whole book.] **He did not condemn incense and sacrifice at high places and under trees...**" Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, p. 88. She notes that the polemic against Asherah is located here in Isaiah 1 as well as in Isaiah 57, which she attributes to 3<sup>rd</sup> Isaiah.

<sup>26</sup> This can be read as the Jerusalem of the future and of the present. In this way, this section of Isaiah starts in Isaiah 2.2-4 with a description of Jerusalem as it should and will be: a city of peace. The middle section (Isa. 2.6-4.1) focuses on the sinful nature of Jerusalem and their fate. The ending section of this bit (Isa. 4.2-6) also gives a description of Jerusalem when it will be holy and beautiful, the dwelling place of God's presence.

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the first words Isaiah records in verses 2-4 of chapter 2 are also found with only slight variations in Micah 4:1-4. It may be that Isaiah "saw" the words of Micah or that he "saw" his own vision and Micah borrowed his words. Or, both prophets may have read the prophecy of some earlier prophet. Scholars differ in their opinions on which of these possibilities best explains the textual similarities. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1996, p. 85-86.

<sup>28</sup> Butler, Goodness, p. 160. He continues, "Instead they adopt foreign cults, "from the east" or "like the Philistines," delighting in the "children of strangers" rather than in the peace-making children of God (Matthew 5:9; John 1:12). Is this Isaiah's take on the reforming ideology that violently drags the temple lamp from the Holy of Holies to the Hekal—that the princes of Judah have been driven to their revolt by foreign influence? **If so, pointing at the same time in opposite directions, to the "east" and to the "Philistines" whose land was to the west of Judah, seems like a deliberate effort not to identify a specific source, which may have been obvious to Isaiah's contemporaries, or may have been dangerous to explicitly name. Or maybe pointing at foreigners east and west at the same time cancels both pointing fingers, as if to say 'the foreigners right here, the Judahites who are acting like foreigners.'** The house of Jacob is distracted by its wealth, and worships false gods (Isaiah 2:6-9). *Goodness*, p. 161, emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> While reading Isaiah's rebuke, notice that some words such as "gold," "silver," "idols," "proud," "humbled," "rocks," and "holes" are often repeated. Also recognize that three major themes are repeatedly stressed: the



- a. “They please themselves in the children of strangers” (Isa. 2.6).<sup>30</sup>
- b. The proud are taken down (Isa. 2.11-12).
- c. The idols are cast away to the holes of the rocks and to the caves (Isa. 2.18-21).

### Isaiah 3-4: Zion and her Daughters

1. The Lord takes away the stay and the staff (Isa. 3.1).<sup>31</sup>
  - a. Isaiah 3 can be a story of the problems in Isaiah’s day, specifically as they relate to the temple and the religion of his time.<sup>32</sup>
2. The mighty man, the judge, the captain of fifty, the eloquent orator... I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them (Isa. 3.2-4).<sup>33</sup>

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people's worldliness, the Lord's vengeance, and the wicked's humility and fear. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1996, p. 89.

<sup>30</sup> This clause is unclear, and the meaning of the verb is especially uncertain. Some notion of adopting foreign ways (the eastern things, the Philistines) would appear to be implied. Alter, p. 627. *Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon* notes that 𐤇𐤒𐤓 denotes a striking of a covenant or making an agreement.

<sup>31</sup> David Butler sees this as code for the lacking of true priesthood in Isaiah’s day at the temple. He explains: This is grim stuff. Isaiah’s *first* calling narrative, we’ll see, tells the same story, focusing on different details. Isaiah 3 begins with a complaint about leadership:

For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the **staff**, the whole stay of **bread**, and the whole stay of **water**. (Isaiah 3:1)

Other leadership is also decried as inadequate (Isaiah 3:2-5), but the key problem is set out in verse 1. Jerusalem and Judah are missing the “staff,” which is to say, the shepherd’s crook (Psalms 23:4), and therefore they have no one to present “bread” and “water” in the shalem feast (Psalms 23:5-6). There’s no priest after the order of Melchizedek, or at least not one who counts, not after the removal of the Melchizedek priest recounted in Isaiah 5:23. David Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men*, Create Space, 2012, p. 150.

<sup>32</sup> Butler explains, “What, then, is the story of Isaiah’s calling? There’s an apostasy among the Judahite elites and among the priestly class. The apostates change the furnishings of Solomon’s temple. Specifically, they move the lamp from the Holy of Holies to the Hekal. They remove, which I think must mean they kill, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and they replace him with their own creature, a wicked man. They discontinue the Worship of the Shalems. The Virgin laments this apostasy and threatens judgment, but she doesn’t abandon the faithful; she chooses a new man to stand as the Lord and offer the feast of bread and wine. This man isn’t the establishment’s candidate, **he’s an underground high priest**. He may be the elder full of glory of Isaiah 3:5. He leads worship not in the physical temple of Solomon, but in other buildings: “dwellings” and “assemblies.” **At this pivotal moment when the worship of the visionary men goes underground, this priest-prophet is instructed to raise a banner of his writings to attract and inform a new nation of priests, but he’s told to write it in a way that only the faithful will be able to read.** He does this by writing in the imagery of shalem worship and the temple.” Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 157, emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> As in other passages, it is difficult to be sure whether the prophet predicts the future or describes the present. If this is a prediction, then the prophet announces that God will remove Judah's food and its leaders; in their place inexperienced and immature people will rule, and the nation will be desperate for the stability that legitimate authorities bring. If this is a description of the present, then he criticizes the current leadership, asserting that they are like children. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 789.

1. A prince is chosen (Isa. 3:6-7). The “princes,” who are the same “men of Judah” we heard about in Isaiah 5:7, behave proudly towards someone who is “ancient” and “honourable.” “Ancient” here is *zaken* in Hebrew, an ‘elder,’ and “honourable” is *nikhbod*, literally meaning ‘glorious’ (Isaiah 3:5). Without transition, Isaiah tells us: When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. (Isaiah 3:6-7)<sup>34</sup>
2. The people will be oppressed... in my house is neither bread nor clothing... for Jerusalem is ruined... their sin is as Sodom... woe unto their soul! Woe unto the wicked! They “grind the faces of the poor” (Isa. 3:5-15).
3. The daughters of Zion are haughty... tinkling ornaments... round tires like the moon... mufflers... bonnets... nose jewels... glasses... hoods... veils... instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth, burning instead of beauty... she shall sit upon the ground (Isa 3:16-26).
  - a. Robert Alter sees many of these passages as describing the disparity between the rich and the poor.<sup>35</sup>

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In ancient Hebrew, the words "supply" and "support" ("stay" and "staff" in the KJV) are the masculine and feminine forms of the same root, *masen* and *masenah*. By using both forms, Isaiah seems to suggest complete destruction—spiritual, social, and physical. Thus, the prophet's language and imagery carry many implications beyond the threat of physical famine. The threat of physical famine is most obvious. Removing the staff or support from a nation is analogous to suddenly taking away the props or stakes of a tent—the tent collapses shapeless on the ground. "The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water" might be taken literally, since at both the first and second desolations of Jerusalem, the city was besieged and was at the mercy of a devastating famine. Jeremiah records in the seventh century B.C. that "the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land." (Jer. 52:6.) The famine was probably even worse during a second siege in 70 A.D., for the ancient historian Josephus records the story of one woman, gone berserk from the ravages of war and famine, who roasted and ate her own child. (*Wars of the Jews* 6:3.) Ludlow, p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> A “ruler” or “healer” is needed in the “house” of the “father.” The princes of Judah, who are apparently in a position to choose, snub the elder who is full of glory (compare with John 1:14 and Isaiah 6:3). **They choose a “brother” instead, but he can’t be the “healer” or the “ruler of the people,” because he has neither “bread nor clothing.”** Remember that the rod is held by the Lord-Melchizedek the Word, who also must be dressed (John 1:18, 27; Matthew 17:2). Remember also that the bread is the fruit of the tree, the symbol of the body of the Lord (Leviticus 24:5-9; Luke 22:19; John 6:30-35). **The three missing objects— the staff, the clothing, and the bread— are all symbols of the same thing, which is Yahweh the Lord, who is the healer** (Isaiah 6:10; see also Malachi 4:2, showing an image of the arrival of light that brings healing with it). **Following the former Melchizedek priest’s murder, the Judahites fill the office with their own man, who isn’t worthy—his appointment doesn’t result in the return of the Lord.** The great and fair house of Solomon’s temple has indeed lost its inhabitant, thanks to the wicked words and deeds of the Jerusalem leadership, the royal tribe of Judah (Isaiah 3:8). Isaiah reminds us of another missing occupant, and another reason why there can be no shalem feast: his enemies “declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not” (Isaiah 3:9). The apostates are proud of having removed the tree from the Holy of Holies, which Isaiah again compares to the men of Sodom in their attempt to rape Lot’s angel visitors (Genesis 19:1-5). This is not only a second reference to the removal of the temple’s tree, but a direct commentary on the actual words of 2 Kings 18:4-5. 2 Kings says of Hezekiah that “after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him”; **Isaiah tells us that not only do his enemies commit the sin of Sodom, but they don’t even try to hide it. They boast of what they’ve done. That boasting is written in 2 Kings 18. We can’t trust 2 Kings to tell us anything trustworthy about the author of the Book of Isaiah.** David Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 151-152.

<sup>35</sup> This long catalogue of items of apparel and jewelry includes quite a few terms occurring nowhere else that are of uncertain meaning as well as some others that occur elsewhere which can be confidently identified (for example, “armlets,” “veils,” “shawls”). To understand the prophet’s rage at these aristocratic women flirtatiously parading

- b. Victor Ludlow sees these passages as a description of the immodesty of the daughters of Zion contrasted with the slavery they will soon face.<sup>36</sup>
  - c. Margaret Barker sees these verses as a corruption of wisdom in the Enoch tradition.<sup>37</sup>
  - d. David Butler sees these verses as a condemnation of the priestesses in the Jerusalem temple.<sup>38</sup>
4. Seven women will take hold of one man, requesting his name to take away their reproach (Isa. 4.1).
- a. David Butler sees this as the lamp in the temple, the Virgin.<sup>39</sup>
  - b. Wilford Woodruff sees this as a future devastating event.<sup>40</sup>

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about in their expensive finery, **one might imagine a contemporary social critic, dismayed and indignant over the plight of the homeless of New York, who sees the rich matrons of Manhattan walking along Madison Avenue in their designer dresses and coats, with shopping bags filled with more of the same.** Alter, p. 632, emphasis added.

<sup>36</sup> In short, these women who delight in their immodest exposure are rewarded with indecent and rude exposure at the hands of the Babylonian conquerors, who molest and rape, thus discovering "their secret parts." (Isa. 3:17.). Ludlow, chap 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> The Book of Isaiah is a complex tapestry of material from many periods, but chapters 2–12 show the character of the first Isaiah's teaching. [The first chapter is most likely a later preface to the whole book.] He did not condemn incense and sacrifice at high places and under trees, (this is found in the preface – Isa. 1.29-30, and in the third section of the book, chapter 57) ... **His oracles were against those who had grown prosperous in the good times under Uzziah, when the land was filled with silver and gold, horses and chariots (Isa.2.7). They worshipped the work of their own hands and consulted mediums and wizards (Isa.2.8; 8.19). The rulers had exploited the poor, and the women of Jerusalem were slaves to fashion (Isa.3.13-24) Isaiah was a prophet in the tradition of Enoch,** and there is no evidence that he knew the Moses traditions. **What he described was a land under the influence of the fallen angels who taught about metal working and weapons, cosmetics, enchantments and astrology.** The sins he condemned – both at home and in foreigners – were also those of the Enoch tradition: pride, rebellion and abuse of wisdom. Margaret Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, p. 88.

<sup>38</sup> Then follows a lengthy indictment of the "daughters of Zion" (Isaiah 3:16-24). This is out of place unless the women being chastised are also leaders, people who are as important as princes and priests. **They might be women of wealthy or ruling families, but I think it's more likely they're priestesses.** That would explain why in this chapter there are multiple "daughters" and they're chastised as sinners, but in other passages the "daughter of Zion" seems to be a single person, with a special connection to the temple. See, for instance, Isaiah 1:8, where the daughter of Zion is the temple, and Isaiah 16:1, in which the "mount" belongs to her. **That would also make sense of the elaborate description of the women's clothing, which is then a description, or a parody, of the ritual clothing of the priestesses. If the ancient order of the Jerusalem temple to which Isaiah is attached knows a class of priestesses who wear sacred vestments like the priests in order to become the Virgin, this diatribe against the "daughters of Zion" who spangle themselves with vain ornamentation and will be blasted with ugliness makes perfect sense.** In the temple apostasy, the sacred women have abandoned their posts in favor of frivolity. Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 153, emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> **Who are the seven women? They're the lamp with seven arms that is a tree that is the Virgin** (Exodus 25:37; 1 Nephi 11:4-13; *Plain and Precious Things*, p. 70-74). This isn't a verse about polygamy. A ruler is needed in the house of the father and the candidate of Judah's princes is no good, so the Virgin herself, who collapsed to the earth at the end of Isaiah 3, now chooses a man. She will provide the "bread" and "apparel" the failed candidate lacked, because those who worship in the temple must have a man by whose name to be called (compare with Moroni 4:3)—in other words, they need a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and one who isn't complicit in murder. The result is that the promise of Isaiah 3:10 is kept and the fruit is "excellent and comely" (compare with 1 Nephi 8:10-12) for "them that are escaped of Israel." Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 155-156.

<sup>40</sup> Wilford Woodruff reported having a visionary experience in which he saw the devastated the caused this loss of human life. He said, "I had been reading the revelations . . . [when] a strange stupor came over me and I recognized that I was in the Tabernacle at Ogden. I arose to speak and said . . . I will answer you right here what is coming to pass shortly. . . . I then looked in all directions . . . and I found the same mourning in every place

5. A future where Zion is holy (Isa. 4.2-6).
  - a. The branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious (Isa. 4.2).
  - b. The fruit of the earth shall be excellent (Isa. 4.2).
  - c. The Lord will wash away “the filth of the daughters of Zion” (Isa. 4.4).
  - d. Zion will be a place of safety, a shadow in the day and a place of refuge (Isa. 4.6).

### Isaiah 5: The Parable of the Vineyard

1. Isaiah’s parable of the vineyard (Isa. 5.1-7).
  - a. The Lord fenced it, took out the stones, put in a tower, built a winepress, and the vineyard made “wild grapes” (Isa. 5.1-2).
  - b. “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isa. 5.4).
2. Six “woe” pronouncements upon the wicked (Isa. 5.8-25).
  - a. “Woe to them that join house to house!” (Isa. 5.8).<sup>41</sup>
  - b. “Woe unto them that rise up early ... that they may follow strong drink!” (Isa. 5.11).
  - c. “Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were a cart rope!” (Isa. 5.18).<sup>42</sup>

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throughout the Land. It seemed as though I was above the earth, looking down to it as I passed along on my way east and I saw the roads full of people principally women with just what they could carry in bundles on their backs... It was remarkable to me that there were so few men among them... Wherever I went I saw... scenes of horror and desolation rapine and death... death and destruction everywhere. I cannot paint in words the horror that seemed to encompass me around. It was beyond description or thought of man to conceive. I supposed that this was the End but I was here given to understand, that the same horrors were being enacted all over the country. . . . **Then a voice said "Now shall come to pass that which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet "That seven women shall take hold of one man saying &C."** *Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, June 15, 1878, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup> **This judgment falls upon wealthy landowners who buy up all the property then can until their lands border one another.** This results in a monopoly of property that should be divided among others, especially the poor. This practice violates the spirit of the Law of Jubilee, the property law of ancient Israel, which states that ‘the land shall not be sold forever.’ (Lev. 25:33) Instead, **land was to remain within families** and clans as a perpetual inheritance...The hoarding of land described in verse 8 was in violation of this law, for when all property was purchased by a few wealthy individuals, there was no place for the original families to dwell. Having no homeland, they were forced to move to the cities or live on the property of the owner as indentured servants or slaves. Although drought, sickness, or economic setbacks might require a farmer to sell his land or indenture himself and family to cover losses, the Year of Jubilee every fifty years was instituted to correct the perpetual loss of land and the slavery of people by guaranteeing the periodic return of land to the original owners. **Obviously, this law was severely abused by the landowners of Isaiah's time.** Ludlow, p. 117, emphasis added.

<sup>42</sup> Isaiah teaches that as sure as the cart follows the horse, iniquity is the natural consequence of vanity. While some would find fault with the iniquity, **the essential problem is vanity.** So it is with many of our sins. Some might spend much of their lives repenting of sinful actions; totally overlooking the point that the fundamental hindrance, “the cords of vanity” and the desire for sin are an issue and must be dealt with. The lesson Isaiah teaches us is deeply connected to poetic nature of his metaphor. **When we sin, it is as if we are holding onto a rope that weighs us down while we are the ones holding onto it. We are the one pulling the cart.** It is our own burden, and we are the ones with the power to let go. The ropes with which we pull are the underlying desires and motives of our iniquity. Catherine Thomas taught, **“Much of the unhappiness we feel in this world comes from a refusal to let go of those things that cause our unhappiness.** Often as we seek relief, we aren’t able to discern the real problem, and we have trouble shaking off a sense of dissatisfaction. For those suffering spiritual and emotional distress, the Sermon on the Mount offers relief... The genius of the sermon lies in the Lord’s invitation to sacrifice those very things that cause spiritual distress. He urges us to lay aside the things of this world, teaching us

- d. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil!" (Isa. 5.20).
- e. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes!" (Isa. 5.21).
- f. "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine... who justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (Isa. 5.23).
  - i. David Butler sees this as a takeover. The righteous priest is removed and a wicked one is put in his place.<sup>43</sup>
- 3. A promise of an ensign, gathering, and an army (Isa. 5.26-30).<sup>44</sup>
  - a. "He will lift up an ensign!" (Isa. 5.26).
  - b. None shall slumber, their arrows are sharp, bows bent, wheels like a whirlwind, they shall roar like young lions... and none shall deliver (Isa. 5.26-29).

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that real happiness is established on spiritual principles." Catherine Thomas, "[Blessed Are Ye...](#)" *Ensign*, June 1987, 6.

<sup>43</sup> The apostates call themselves "wise," a temple designation that should be reserved for those who have rightfully entered the Holy of Holies, but in this case it's a title the sinners have bestowed on themselves (Isaiah 5:21; compare with Matthew 7:24-27). They're entering the Holy of Holies without authorization, awarding themselves temple statuses and titles they don't deserve. The last of the transgressions Isaiah lists tell us a story of two Melchizedek priests. The sinners remove righteousness from the righteous ones (Isaiah 5:21-23; in Hebrew, the 'righteous ones' are definitely plural), and make a wicked man righteous ("justify" is 'make righteous') as a bribe. 'Righteousness' here again means a Melchizedek priest. We've heard a tale of abandoned ordinances, confusion of the temple rooms, removal of sacred temple furniture, and unauthorized entry into sacred space. Now Isaiah tells us the sinners, whom he describes as great drunkards, remove a Melchizedek priest, and as a bribe make a wicked man, a ra'ash, the Melchizedek priest in his place (Isaiah 5:22-23). Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 146-57.

<sup>44</sup> **Taken in historical context, these verses probably describe Assyrian soldiers in all their terrible power.** They come with speed, need no rest, and do not even pause long enough to take off their shoes. Their weapons are ready, their roar is like that of the lion, and, when they lay hold of their prey, none can stop them. The destruction is so swift and complete that even in daylight, darkness (perhaps from the smoke of burning cities) and gloom (or defeat) hangs over the people. If these verses describe the Assyrian army and the fear and destruction it inflicted upon its enemies, this judgment was fulfilled upon Israel and Judah during Isaiah's day. In 722-721 B.C. Assyria conquered Israel, carrying the Ten Tribes into captivity, and in 701 B.C. she destroyed most of Judah and besieged Jerusalem.

In addition, **the raised signal or ensign may represent the assemblage of a future spiritual force rather than an ancient political army.** The ancient American prophet Nephi placed this chapter in a latter-day context when he quoted it in 2 Nephi 15. Numerous references in modern scriptures also tell of an ensign in the last days that will be raised up in conjunction with the Restoration and the gathering of Israel.

**Zion in the last days shall be known as "an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven."** (D&C 64:42.) The word ensign means a standard or flag, a rallying point. The gospel covenants and teachings are one rallying point in a metaphorical sense—"to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it." (D&C 45:9.) In addition, the powers of the priesthood, including missionary work, serve in this dispensation as "an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days." (D&C 113:6.) Also, the religious records of ancient American prophets have come forth as a signal in the last days—Nephi testifies that the Book of Mormon will "hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel." (2 Ne. 29:2; compare Isa. 5:26.) From these and numerous other scriptures, we see that an ensign in the last days can refer to Zion, the gospel, missionary work, the gathering, and the Book of Mormon. Ludlow, p. 122-123.

- c. “If one look into the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens” (Isa. 5.30).<sup>45</sup>

### Isaiah 6: Isaiah’s Call

1. In the year Uzziah died “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne” (Isa. 6.1).
2. Isaiah sees seraphim (Isa. 6.2).<sup>46</sup>
3. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord (Isa. 6.3).
4. אֲוִי-לִי כִי-נִדְמִיתִי “Woe is me for I am undone!” (Isa. 6.5). Isaiah here is struck dumb at the Lord’s presence.
5. “Mine eyes have seen... I also heard...” (Isa. 6.5, 8).
6. The angel places a live coal upon Isaiah’s mouth and his sin is purged (Isa. 6.6-7).
7. “Who will go for us?” (Isa. 6.8). This is the language of the Divine Council.
8. “Make their ears heavy and shut their eyes” (Isa. 6.10).<sup>47</sup>
9. How long? It shall return... a tenth... as an oak... the holy seed (Isa. 6.11-13).<sup>48</sup>

### Isaiah 7-9: War, The Woman, The Child, The Stone, The Prince of Peace

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<sup>45</sup> The poetic imagery is incipiently apocalyptic: it is dark on the earth and dark in the heavens as well. This is a reversal of the first moment of creation, when “let there be light” drives back the primordial darkness that is over the face of the abyss. The suffix indicating “its” in the Hebrew is feminine and so must refer to “the earth,” the only feminine noun in this verse. Alter, p. 640. The motif of light turning to darkness is ironic when compared to v. 20. There the sinners turn light (= moral/ethical good) to darkness (= moral/ethical evil). Now ironically the Lord will turn light (= the sinners’ sphere of existence and life) into darkness (= the judgment and death).

<sup>46</sup> The spiritual level of “seraphs” (*serapim*) in the Book of Isaiah appears directly below that of Jehovah, as it does here. The fact that Isaiah sees Jehovah, on the other hand, identifies him with Isaiah’s son/servant category, immediately below that of seraphs. Together, these three spiritual levels constitute the highest in the Book of Isaiah’s hierarchy of seven. Later, after ministering as a prophet for more than forty years, Isaiah himself assumes the role of a seraph. The seraphs’ “wings” or “veils” (*kenapayim*) perhaps consist of energy fields that enable them to move or conceal themselves at will. Gileadi, [Isaiahexplained](#).

<sup>47</sup> Gileadi sees this as Isaiah’s mission to make certain that certain individuals will be condemned for their wickedness, in order that the judgments of God might be just (see Alma 14.11). He states, “**Although Isaiah’s role as a hardener of his people’s hearts seals upon them Jehovah’s condemnation, there exists a redeeming side to his prophetic ministry.** “Seeing” with the eyes, “hearing” with the ears, “understanding” in the heart, and “repenting” at the same time constitutes Jehovah’s formula for “healing” or salvation. A remnant of Jehovah’s people—a “holy offspring” comprised of those who repent (v 13)—thus survives destruction in his Day of Judgment. Typifying them are Isaiah’s disciples, for whom Jehovah provides sanctuary at the time others suffer covenant curses (Isaiah 8:13-17). Gileadi, [Isaiahexplained](#), emphasis added.

<sup>48</sup> **The answer to Isaiah’s cry is not comforting. There will be no reprieve for Judah.** God’s justice will be carried out to its full extent until the land is empty. So the prophecies of Deuteronomy would come to fulfillment (Deut. 28:21, 63; 29:28). The land was not theirs to possess as their own. **Rather, they possessed it in trust from the true landowner, God.** So long as they remained in God’s favor, by living lives in keeping with his character, then the land was theirs to develop and to enjoy. But if they ceased to live in obedience to God, the land would vomit them out as it had the Canaanites before them (Lev. 18:25-27)... The text offers a ray of hope. Yes, the desolation will be complete. Not even a tenth part will remain. The nation will be like a forest whose stumps are burned after the trees are cut down. Yet even from such blasted stumps a shoot can burst forth. So it will be for Judah (cf. 10:33; 11:1). Utter desolation is sure, but that desolation is not the end. There will be offspring holy to the Lord, for the Lord is not finished with Israel. God’s promise to Abraham to bless the nations through his offspring is not to be forgotten (cf. 49:19,32). Oswalt, [The Book of Isaiah 1-39](#), p. 190-191.

David Butler offers a word of advice on how to approach Isaiah 7-9:

Before we dig into the rest of the material of the Isaiah chapters, I want to offer two suggestions about how to read it. The first is to watch for and follow the story lines that unfold over more than one chapter. One of the ways we undercut our own reading of scripture is we break it down into tiny bites, one chapter or even just one verse long, and digest each bite in isolation. This is a real risk when we read Isaiah 7 through 9, which is a narrative arc telling a continuous story around a single unifying character, packed around Worship of the Shalems images. Isaiah 10 through 14 also belongs together, as a single vision of the Day of Atonement. We pulverize these stories and render them meaningless by reading each chapter without considering the others. It doesn't help that the story is written in code. It also doesn't help when the unifying character we miss is the one Nephi calls "precious above all" (1 Nephi 11:9), greatest of the "plain and precious things" that have been edited out of the Bible (1 Nephi 13:28-29).

The central character of Isaiah 7-9 is a woman. In Isaiah 7 she is the Virgin (Isaiah 7:13), "the" and not "a" in both Hebrew and Greek. This is a specific woman, the virgin who is the tree of Nephi's vision (1 Nephi 11:4-15; *Plain and Precious Things*, p. 70-74). In Isaiah 8 she is "the prophetess," again a specific woman. The popular notion that the "prophetess" is simply 'Mrs. Isaiah' is ridiculous on its face—the woman of Isaiah 8 is the same woman who appears in Isaiah 7 and 9, in a single continuous story. The 'Mrs. Isaiah' bunkum can only persist because we talk about each of these chapters as a self-contained unit. In Isaiah 9 the woman is not named, but unless the "child" of Isaiah 9:5 springs out of his divine father's forehead, her presence is implied and strictly necessary.

The second suggestion is that **you shouldn't get bogged down in the foreign policy stuff**. I don't mean you should ignore it, you can go ahead and read it, but ask yourself: Is the detail of the conflict with the Kingdom of Israel the reason why Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome thought Isaiah was one of them, writing about the Christian mysteries? Is this why Matthew quoted Isaiah over and over again, or the Dead Sea Scrolls people preserved so many copies in their libraries? Think in particular about Nephi, who preserved Isaiah 2-14 as a single block: did Nephi care about the wars of the kings of Judah, two centuries after they were over and an ocean away? Of course not.

**The foreign policy stuff is camouflage.** These are the historical crises that give rise to Isaiah's prophecy; prophesying to the king in response to his foreign policy puts Isaiah in the company of Elijah and Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kings 16:29-17:1; 22:1-5). It gives Isaiah a reason to publish, and a setting in which to embed his real messages.<sup>49</sup>

1. War! (Isa. 7.1-9).<sup>50</sup>
  - a. The first son is mentioned: Shear-jashub (Isa. 7.3). He and Isaiah are to meet king Ahaz at the laundry plaza at the upper pool, symbolic of the Davidic dynasty.

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<sup>49</sup> Butler, *Goodness*, p. 162-3.

<sup>50</sup> Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel are joining forces to take out Judah. Isaiah tells Ahaz, king of Judah, not to stress out (Isa. 7.4-7). In 65 years Ephraim (Israel) is going to be laid waste. This essentially happens around 721 BCE.

- b. “Ahaz, don’t worry. These guys are NOT going to be a problem!” (Isa. 7.7).<sup>51</sup>
  - c. Within 5 or 6 years this will be over.<sup>52</sup>
  - d. Joseph Smith taught that the Lord would “regulate the affairs of the world in his own time.”<sup>53</sup> Many of Isaiah’s messages about politics and war can be read in light of Joseph Smith’s statement.
2. The sign: **The Virgin will conceive** and bear a son: Immanuel (Isa. 7.10-16).
- a. הַעֲלֶמָה The Virgin (Isa. 7.14).<sup>54</sup>
    - i. Margaret Barker sees “The Virgin” connected to Mary and the return of The Virgin to the temple.<sup>55</sup>
    - ii. Gileadi sees the woman with child as being at the laundry plaza during Isaiah’s conversation with Ahaz. He also sees Hezekiah as a possible identity for the child.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The alliance between Syria and Israel was formed in 734BC. Rezin died in 732; Pekah died in 731. The prophet was right. The alliance was gone in four years.

<sup>52</sup> Avraham Gileadi puts the 65 year prophecy as a scribal error, meaning that it probably originally said “In five or six years.” Either way, the prophecy came true. Gileadi’s point is that a prophecy that takes 65 years may not be as relevant to Ahaz, as he won’t be around to see it fulfilled, especially since Ahaz only lives to 36. See his explanation at [Isaiahexplained](#), accessed 8.10.22.

<sup>53</sup> The world itself presents one great theatre of misery, woe, and "distress of nations with perplexity." All, all speak with a voice of thunder, that man is not able to govern himself--to legislate for himself--to protect himself--to promote his own good, nor the good of the world. (Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, 10: July 15, 1842).

**It has been the design of Jehovah**, from the commencement of the world, and is his purpose now, **to regulate the affairs of the world in his own time; to stand as head of the universe, and take the reigns of government into his own hand.** When that is done judgment will be administered in righteousness; anarchy and confusion will be destroyed, and "nations will learn war no more"...Other attempts to promote universal peace and happiness in the human family have proven abortive; every effort has failed; every plan and design has fallen to the ground; it needs the wisdom of God, the intelligence of God, and the power of God to accomplish this. Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, 10: July 15, 1842, emphasis added.

<sup>54</sup> The LXX of Isa. 7.14 is as follows:

διὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν **σημεῖον** ἰδοὺ **ἡ παρθένος** ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ. “Through this the Lord himself will give unto you all **a sign/token: The Virgin** in her womb will have *life*, and will bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel” (my translation).

The Hebrew text does not use *betulah* בְּתוּלָה or *virgin*, rather it uses *alma* אִלְמָה a word that designates a young woman. The problem is complicated, however, because centuries before Christ was born, the Jews that translated this passage into the Greek scriptures used *parthenos*, or *virgin* for this specific passage (see above). It is for this reason that this passage has caused such a debate among Jews and Christians, scholars and laypeople. For an overview of the important scholarly treatments of Isaiah 7.14, see the list of references given by John Oswalt in [The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39](#), Eerdmans, 1986, p. 207. It is worth mentioning here that Oswalt renders Isa. 7.14 as “a maiden shall conceive.” See Oswalt, p. 202. The [RSV renders this verse](#) “a young woman shall conceive.”

<sup>55</sup> The Christian message was not only that the Messiah had come; it was also about the restoration of the Mother of the Lord to her temple. Mary was proclaimed as the Lady just as her Son was proclaimed as the Lord. The first two generations knew this, and it can be read between the lines of all four canonical gospels. Texts such as the Infancy Gospel of James were not later elaborations of the story but fuller accounts for the generation that needed the original understanding spelled out more clearly. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, p. 375.

<sup>56</sup> While Jehovah’s sign to Ahaz doesn’t exclude Matthew’s interpretation—that in this instance Isaiah was prophesying of Jesus—that interpretation doesn’t accord with the prophecy’s primary intent in Isaiah’s prophecy as a whole. Indeed, it is in the nature of Hebrew prophecy to contain several levels of meaning. On the other hand, **Hezekiah—Ahaz’ son—in all respects qualifies as the prophesied Immanuel**, whose people Israel’s God is with



- iii. Ludlow gives at least three interpretations of this passage as they relate to the identity of the child and does not commit to one single reading.<sup>57</sup>
- iv. Oswalt questions whether this child could be Hezekiah.<sup>58</sup>
- b. עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים Immanuel (Isa. 7.14), literally “with us is God.”
- c. Butter and honey he will eat, he will know to refuse the evil and choose the good! (Isa. 7.15).<sup>59</sup>
- d. What is the answer to the violence of the 8<sup>th</sup> century? What is the fundamental message Isaiah provides? The answer to all of this violence is a child. The answer is love.<sup>60</sup>

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when he delivers them from the Assyrian army that takes up a position at the very same Laundry Plaza (v 3; Isaiah 36:1-2; 37:33-36). [Isaiahexplained](#). Accessed 8.09.22.

<sup>57</sup> There are several theories as to how this prophecy was fulfilled in the days of Ahaz. One theory proposes that the child to be born is Isaiah's own. This is based upon information in Isaiah 8:1-4, in which Isaiah names his new son. Although Isaiah already had a son, Shearjashub (Isa. 7:3), it is still possible that the mother of the new son could be a virgin if Shear-jashub's mother was deceased and Isaiah was about to be remarried. (See Albert Barne, *Barne's Notes on Isaiah* [New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1847] 1:177.) One question asked about this theory is, "How could Isaiah have two new sons with different names in such a short period unless he had two wives?" However, it is possible that two names were given to the same child, specifically that Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isa. 8:3) was also named Immanuel (Isa. 7:14). The practice of having two or more names is not unusual in the Bible, as shown in the cases of Joshua (see BD "Joshua"), Gideon (Judg. 6:11, 32), and Jesus (see BD "Christ, Names of"). This argument is disclaimed by many scholars, however. Some of them, such as Otto Kaiser, suggest a second possible fulfillment and state that Isaiah is promising such a rapid dissipation of the Syro-Israelite threat that any "women who are now with child will name their sons, in thankfulness for being saved, 'Immanuel,' 'God is with us.'" Kaiser goes on to say that the immediate fulfillment of the prophecy was necessary to show Ahaz that Isaiah's sign was given with God's authority and that to reject it is nothing other than apostasy from the living God. (Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 103.) A third possible explanation is a variation of the one just mentioned: instead of the son of any woman fulfilling the promise, the son of one particular woman was designated. In the Hebrew, a definite article precedes the term translated as "virgin" or "young woman," indicating that she is the virgin and not just a virgin or any young woman. Ludlow, p. 143-144, emphasis added.

<sup>58</sup> **The enigmatic nature of the references makes it extremely difficult to identify the child of Ahaz's time.** In the context of the house of David and being spoken of as owner of the land, it is tempting to think of a newly conceived crown prince. The recognition that curds and honey represent food of royalty in some Mesopotamian texts lends further credence to the idea, as does the thought that through Hezekiah God was able to demonstrate his faithful presence. However, that Hezekiah was twenty-five years old at his accession in 516 (2 K. 18:2) means that he was born in 741, at least six years before these events. To hold that the child was "the crown prince, as yet unborn," raises again the question of Hezekiah. **Are we to think Isaiah did not know that the crown prince was already born?** Oswalt, p. 212, emphasis added. Oswalt lays out the difficulties here. In the end he may seem to be leaning towards Ludlow's first possible identity: that Immanuel was Isaiah's son, in this case Maher-shalal-hash-baz: **"Perhaps the most attractive option is that Immanuel and Mahershalal-hash-baz were one and the same.** If this were so, this passage would form a more poetic statement of the child's identity, pointing to the ultimate Immanuel..."

<sup>59</sup> The real story starts in Isaiah 7:10, and it's the story of a birth. Here Isaiah prophesies that the Virgin will conceive and will bear a special son, someone who must in some way be God who comes among his worshippers, since his name means 'God [E] is with us' (Isaiah 7:14; compare with John 1:1, 14). We've seen a god who comes among the worshippers—that's a Melchizedek priest. **The child will be taught to know good and evil—in Hebrew, *ra* and *tov*—the two things the apostates lie about**, as opposed to actually physically moving, in Isaiah 5:20. ***Ra* and *tov* are also what the gods are said to know, and what humans can learn to know by eating the fruit of the tree in Genesis 3:5** (Isaiah 7:15-16). The name and knowledge of the Virgin's son mark him as one of the gods. Butler, *Goodness*, p. 164.

<sup>60</sup> John Oswalt lays out the argument: "What is all this saying? It is saying that the divine answer to arrogance is not

3. A foreign invader will come (Isa. 7.17-25).
  - a. Assyria is coming (Isa. 7.17-20).
  - b. They will be shaved by the Assyrians (Isa. 7.20).<sup>61</sup>
  - c. After/during the destruction, “butter and honey” will be eaten by everyone (Isa. 7.22).<sup>62</sup>
  - d. The land will become “briers and thorns” (Isa. 7.24-25).
4. “I went unto the prophetess and she conceived” (Isa. 8.3). This is the third son in these prophecies. Maher-shalal-hash-baz means “To speed to the spoil, he hasteneth the prey.”
5. The Lord counsels Judah not to form an alliance in the coming war (Isa. 8.5-13).
  - a. “He shall reach even to the neck” and “fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!” (Isa. 8.8).<sup>63</sup>
  - b. God tells the people of Judah not to form an alliance with Israel and Syria (Isa. 8.9-10).
  - c. “For Jehovah spoke to me, clasping my hand, and admonished me not to follow the ways of the people” (Isa. 8.11).<sup>64</sup>
6. צור הַעֲוֹדָה “bind up the testimony” (Isa. 8.16 KJV). It also can be read “A rock of witness,” as צור literally means “rock.”<sup>65</sup>
  - a. “I will wait upon the Lord” (Isa. 8.17). This is the test of the elect in Isaiah’s writings. Some individuals are waiting upon the Lord.

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more arrogance. Aggression is not the answer to aggression, nor oppression to oppression. In the words of the apostle Paul, the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of humans, and the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of humans (1 Cor. 1:25). **The greatest power of all, says Isaiah, is the power to take evil into oneself and give back love.** John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: A Short Course on Biblical Theology*, CTJ 39, 2004, p. 66.

<sup>61</sup> The humiliation and slavery that will befall the people is represented in verse 20 by the razor cutting off their hair. The Assyrians cut off all the hair from their captives for three reasons: humiliation, sanitation (especially while traveling under crude conditions to Assyria), and separation (if any slaves escaped while being moved from their homeland, they could not blend in with other peoples since their baldness would give them away; thus they usually were quickly recaptured, punished, and returned to their captors.) Ludlow, p. 145.

<sup>62</sup> The abundance of honey in these devastating circumstances comes from the large land areas that are left uncultivated and quickly turn to wild flowers, weeds, and other blossom-producing plants. Thus, ironically, the few who remain in the land will enjoy milk and honey because of the relatively large numbers of food-producing animals. Ludlow, p. 146.

<sup>63</sup> The Assyrian king will get to the head, or the capital, that is Jerusalem. In its historical context, Immanuel would be king Hezekiah, the man who withstood the onslaught of the Assyrian forces. See Isaiah 36-39.

<sup>64</sup> Gileadi translates כְּחִזְקִי הַיָּד “clasping my hand,” and while this is not a literal meaning of the phrase “with a strong hand,” I see what he is doing here and I love this translation.

<sup>65</sup> Butler explains, **“The rock of the Holy of Holies appears again in a passage about witnessing secret things** (Isaiah 8:16-17). “Testimony” is *teuda*, a thing seen by a witness, who is an *ed*. “Bind,” provocatively, is *tzor*, which is spelled the same (the Hebrew letters are *tzaddi-vav-resh*) as *tzur*, ‘rock.’ **This means the phrase “bind the testimony” can also be read as ‘a rock of witness.’** The same boulder that is a “stone of stumbling” and a “rock of offence” to the apostates in verse 14 is a ‘rock of witness’ to the righteous in verse 16. This reading is given weight by the fact that another name for the Ark of the Covenant is the *edut*, from the same root as *teuda* and translated as the “Testimony” in the KJV (see, for instance, Exodus 16:34). In Solomon’s temple, the Ark rested on the *eben shetiyah*, the foundation stone. This wordplay subtly reminds us of the Lord’s summons to his new disciples in John 1, calling them to have visions in the Holy of Holies with the words “come and see” (John 1:39, 46). The Lord “hideth his face” because, not yet born, he waits to appear beside the foundation stone in the Holy of Holies (compare with John 1:1-4), and Isaiah and the faithful shaloms “wait” and look for him (Isaiah 8:17; compare with 2 Nephi 6:13). Butler, *Goodness*, p. 169.

7. "I and the children whom the Lord has given to me are for signs and wonders" (Isa. 8.18).<sup>66</sup>
8. The people are looking to false sources of revelation (Isa. 8.20).
9. The elect go the sanctuary (Isa. 8.14), while the wicked go to darkness (Isa. 8.22).<sup>67</sup>
10. Isaiah 8 ends in gloom, and **Isaiah 9 opens with light** (Isa. 9.1-3).
  - a. The Land of Zebulun and Naphtali. The land contained the highway whereby the Assyrians took the Israelites captive. The Sea is a metaphor for the king of Assyria as well.<sup>68</sup>
    - i. This is also where the Savior Jesus Christ spent much of his time teaching (Matt. 4.12-16).
  - b. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light (Isa. 9.2).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The three sons in these chapters have prophetic names: Shear-jashub (Isa. 7.3) שָׁרְיָשׁוּב "a remnant will return," Immanuel (Isa. 7.14) אֱמָנוּ אֵל "God with us," and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isa. 8.1) מְהַר שָׁלַל חֵשׁ בָּז "hasten the plunder, hurry the spoil." In spite of an apparent prohibition that prevents Isaiah from prophesying directly among Jehovah's people, he does so indirectly through the names and lives of himself, his children (and Hezekiah). The very names they bear are a foreshadowing of what Jehovah will do: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz—"Hasten the Plunder, Hurry the Spoil"; Shear-Jashub—"A Remnant Shall Repent/Return"; Immanuel—"God Is with Us"; and Isaiah—"Jehovah Will Save." **Butler contends that the speaker in Isaiah 8.18 is not Isaiah, rather it is The Virgin.** He explains, "Now in Isaiah 8:18 a speaker says 'I and the sons Yahweh has given me will be *otot*,' 'signs.' The father in this conception is Yahweh, not Isaiah, and the father's dwelling is specified as the temple, "Mount Zion." The parent here can't be Isaiah, but must be the Virgin again. **What does it mean that the Virgin's sons will be "for signs and for wonders in Israel"?** Alma explains this: high priests after the order of Melchizedek are ordained "to teach," but they are also ordained "in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption" (Alma 13:1-2, 14). In other words, **in addition to the words of their teaching, what the Melchizedek priests do teaches Israel about the Lord—the begotten priests themselves are signs.** Against this background we see that **Isaiah is not the parent** in Isaiah 8:18, **but one of the sons**, a Melchizedek priest whose roles in temple ordinances are themselves prophecies. **He says this to us in the context of showing us such an ordinance, an ordinance at the climax of which the Lord appears to those who wait for him.** Isaiah contrasts his true worship with the wrong-headed bumbling of his enemies. He likens his priestly rivals to "wizards" and necromancers (Isaiah 8:19), as he previously called them "soothsayers" (Isaiah 2:6). He asks rhetorically whether a people should not "seek unto their God," "the law," and the "testimony," meaning 'witness' (Isaiah 8:19-20; compare with 2 Nephi 11:2-3). This is a straightforward description of shalem activity in the temple, moving towards God, making covenants, witnessing the Lord both at the shalem feast and also at the veil, and building on the rock of witness. It's what Isaiah and his community do, and their foes do not. Butler, p. 170-171.

<sup>67</sup> Butler's commentary here is noteworthy, "What his foes are missing is שָׁחַר *shachar*, the first light of dawn (Isaiah 8:20; compare with Genesis 19:15). The sun has not yet risen, the Lord has not appeared to them. Isaiah's enemies do make it into the Holy of Holies, though—he says they pass through the veil "hardly bestead and hungry." "Hardly bestead" means that things are hard for them, they're hard pressed. **They're in "darkness" because this is what they've made of the *Debir*** (Isaiah 5:20); they're "hungry" because they haven't eaten the shalem feast, which can only be served after the Lord arrives; but unlike good visionary men, they "curse their king and their God" (Isaiah 8:21-22), the source from which, if only they were in their right minds, their relief would come." Butler, p. 171, emphasis added.

<sup>68</sup> "But it shall not be gloomy to those who have been in anguish for her. In the past he humbled the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, but at the last he will exalt the Sea Route by the Jordan in Galilee of the nations" (Isa. 9.1, Gileadi translation).

<sup>69</sup> Many ways to read this verse... It can refer to those taken captive by Assyria seeing light, or a witness of truth. It can refer to those who see Jesus in the day when he visits these areas and teaches. It can be a general reading of those that are brought into light out of darkness, as those that are converted.

- c. “Thou hast multiplied the nation and increased the joy” (Isa. 9.3).<sup>70</sup>
  - d. The yoke, staff, rod of Assyria are broken. These are parallel images: the king of Assyria has these things, but so also do the Lord (Isa. 9.4).
  - e. Unto us a child is born... Wonderful Counselor,<sup>71</sup> The Mighty God,<sup>72</sup> the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace<sup>73</sup> (Isa. 9.6). This passage has historical connection to Hezekiah.<sup>74</sup> Reading this passage in its historical context is important in understanding the passage.<sup>75</sup>
  - f. No end to his rule... it is established with judgment and justice forever (Isa. 9.7).
11. Isaiah Lambasts the Wicked (Isa. 9.8-21).<sup>76</sup>
- a. The proud say “We will rebuild!” (Isa. 9.9-10).
  - b. Israel will be devoured, הַיָּמִין יָדוֹ יִנָּחַם “and His hand is upraised still” (Isa. 9.12).<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> This is a joyous harvest, as those that harvest are happy in the bounteous spoil of the land. The people are in the promised land, spoil means that they now have power over their enemies. This could refer to those that are coming out of exile and returning to the land.

<sup>71</sup> His list of titles is impressive... he’s the Counsellor (yo’etz, phonetically implying he’s the ‘man of the tree’)... Butler, p. 172.

<sup>72</sup> Some translate this as “mighty one of valor.” Oswalt takes another position: “Many commentators dismiss Mighty God as a reference to deity on the basis of the fact that *gibbor* can be a noun, “hero,” as well as the adjective “mighty,” or that *’el* (or *’elohim*) may be used adjectivally to mean “great.” Thus, they read “great hero.” Apart from the attempt to deny deity to the person in question, however, there is no reason to depart from the traditional rendering. **Wherever *’el gibbor* occurs elsewhere in the Bible there is no doubt that the term refers to God** (10:21; cf. also Deut. 10:17; Jer. 32:18). Oswalt, p. 247.

<sup>73</sup> The only other person in all of scripture bearing the title “prince of peace” is Abraham. He applies it to himself in the Book of Abraham, in connection with his becoming a high priest (Abraham 3:2). Butler, p. 173.

<sup>74</sup> Ludlow writes, “If Isaiah is prophesying about Hezekiah, then verse 3 describes the Israelites’ joy at their deliverance; verse 4 portrays how the Assyrians were defeated in spite of their greater numbers, just as the many Midianites were by Gideon and his 300 men (Judg. 7); verse 5 describes the Assyrian casualties; and verses 6 and 7 tell about Hezekiah’s titles and righteous, peaceful rule as king.” Ludlow, p. 154.

<sup>75</sup> Historically, verses 6-7 serve as a Coronation Hymn for King Hezekiah, the prophesied Immanuel. The four Hebrew couplets that comprise the king’s titulary—“Wonderful Counselor, One Mighty in Valor, a Father for Ever, a Prince of Peace” (pele’ yo’es ’el gibbor ’abi-’ad sar-salom)—reflect four phases in the life of Abraham as recorded in successive narratives of the Genesis account: (1) when he counsels with Lot; (2) when he delivers Lot; (3) when he begets Isaac, his heir; and (4) when he intercedes with Jehovah on behalf of the righteous in Sodom (Genesis 13-18). [Isaiahexplained](#).

<sup>76</sup> What we’ve seen in Isaiah 7-9 is the same moment we see in John 1, the descent of the Melchizedek priest from the Holy of Holies in the Worship of the Shalems. The difference is that where John uses the images of that ordinance and moment to testify of the identity of Jesus, **Isaiah puts himself in the clothing of the Elias priest and lambasts the wicked, demanding their repentance**. Isaiah and the true shalems wait until the Lord shows his face, so they can move forward and seek the rock of witness. The apostates dress themselves ineffectively and squeeze themselves into their darkened Holy of Holies, where they stumble on the rock rather than building on it. The imagery of the same ordinance is put by John and Isaiah (and Mormon and Ether) to different pastoral or literary ends. Butler, p. 173, emphasis added.

<sup>77</sup> **The Hebrew is also clear on the subject.** The idiom *is yadô neṭūyâ*, which means that **the hand is hanging over, threatening or bent. It is thus a threatening gesture**. The two lines form a synonymous parallelism, both stressing the anger of the Lord. Biblical scholar J.J.M. Roberts, explained, “Despite the judgments, Israel had remained adamant in its sinful rebellion, and God’s anger remained unabated. This point is made by the refrain, “For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still,” which is repeated three times ... each time following an account of judgment.” Similar imagery is also found in Canaanite, Akkadian, and Egyptian sources, all in the context of the punishing hand, fighting against the forces of evil and opposition. See: *Why is the Lord’s Hand*

- c. Head and tail of Israel to be cut off in one day (Isa. 9.14).
- d. The leaders err (Isa. 9.16).
- e. The land is darkened, they will be hungry, they shall “eat the flesh of his own arm” (Isa. 9.19-21).

### Isaiah 10-14: A Song on the Day of Vengeance

1. Corrupt laws and leaders (Isa. 10.1-2).
2. The “Day of Visitation” or the day of reckoning (Isa. 10.3).
3. “They shall bow down... they shall fall under the slain” (Isa. 10.4).<sup>78</sup>
4. The king of Assyria is a razor, rod, staff, and ax (Isa. 10.5).<sup>79</sup>
5. God gives the king of Assyria power to “take the spoil” (Isa. 10.6).
6. The king of Assyria is proud in his heart (Isa. 10.7-19).
  - a. Should the ax boast against the lumberjack? (Isa. 10.15).
  - b. “The rest of the trees of his forest shall be few” (Isa. 10.19).<sup>80</sup>
7. A remnant will return (Isa. 10.20-27).
8. Assyrian forces take the world by force (Isa. 10.28-34).<sup>81</sup>
  - a. “he shall cut down” (Isa. 10.34).<sup>82</sup>
9. The Stem<sup>83</sup> of Jesse and the Rod (Isa. 11.1-5).
  - a. Who is the stem of Jesse? [D&C 113.1-2](#) states that it is Jesus Christ.
  - b. Who is the rod that will come out of the tree stump? D&C 113.3-4 says that it is a servant, partly a descendant of Jesse and also of Ephraim, “on whom there is laid much power.”<sup>84</sup>
10. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, leopard with the kid, calf with the lion (Isa. 11.6).
11. An ensign to the people (Isa. 11.10)
  - a. The second time the Lord works to “recover the remnant of his people” (Isa. 11.11).

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“Stretched Out Still”? [Book of Mormon Central KnoWhy #49](#). See also: J.J.M. Roberts, [First Isaiah: A Commentary, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible](#), Fortress Press, 2015, p. 157–158.

<sup>78</sup> Those who perish are those who rejected the word of the Lord (Isa. 28.9-15; 65.12).

<sup>79</sup> See also Isa. 7.20, 10.15.

<sup>80</sup> In the same way the king of Assyria/Babylon destroys “forests” or cities and lays lands waste (Isaiah 32:19; 33:1, 9), so it is done to him... The “trees” or people that are “left” of his forest are but few. They are nevertheless recorded in the Book of Life with others who are “left” in that day (Isaiah 4:3). In effect, just as Israel’s northern tribes anciently went captive into Assyria, so those who return from end-time “Assyria” are their descendants (Isaiah 11:11, 16; 27:12-13). Gileadi, [Isaiahexplained](#).

<sup>81</sup> These locations are all a short distance from Jerusalem. The overall idea is that the enemy is getting closer and that the destruction of Jerusalem seems immanent, though Jehovah protects the city (see Isaiah 36-39).

<sup>82</sup> This passage has commentators divided regarding how to interpret this. See: Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, p. 273-4.

<sup>83</sup> A stem or *ṣṭṭā geza* is a stump or a tree trunk. The image Isaiah is painting is one of a tree that has been cut down.

<sup>84</sup> Bruce R. McConkie said this in relation to this verse, “Are we amiss in saying that the prophet here mentioned is Joseph Smith, to whom the priesthood came, who received the keys of the kingdom, and who raised the ensign for the gathering of the Lord’s people in our dispensation? And is he not also the “servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power”? (D&C 113:4-6.) Those whose ears are attuned to the whisperings of the Infinite will know the meaning of these things.” [The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man](#), Deseret Book, 1982, p. 339–40.

- b. Assembling the outcasts of Israel... Ephraim will not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim (Isa. 11.12-13).
  - c. The Lord will make a way for Israel (Isa. 11.15-16).
12. "In that day" the Lord will be praised, and "The Holy One of Israel" will be in Israel's midst (Isa. 12.1-6).