

Isaiah 40-49 Show Notes

Ep 171: Isaiah 40-49

Isaiah 36-37: The Assyrians Attack Jerusalem – The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BC¹

1. Assyrian messengers (Rabshakeh notably among them) arrive to negotiate terms with Jerusalem (Isa. 36.1-37.7).²
 - a. Rabshakeh urges the officials in Jerusalem to give the city up to the invaders (Isa. 36.4-10).
 - b. The dialogue between Rabshakeh and the Judeans (Isa. 36.11-22).
 - i. “Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for **he shall not be able to deliver you!**” (Isa. 36.14).³
 - c. The reaction of the people of Jerusalem (Isa. 37.1-7).
 - i. “This is a day of trouble!” (Isa. 37.3).
 - ii. Hezekiah seeks Isaiah’s counsel (Isa. 37.5).
 - iii. Isaiah responds, “Be not afraid!” (Isa. 37.6).
 - iv. “I will send a blast upon him, and he shall... return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land!” (Isa. 37.7).
2. Assyrian messengers to the Judeans, and Judean reactions (Isa. 37.8-36).
 - a. The Assyrian’s response, “Where are all the other gods and cities? How are you any different than these places?” (Isa. 37.9-13).
 - b. King Hezekiah’s reaction (Isa. 37.14-20).
 - i. Hezekiah’s prayer (Isa. 37.15-20).
 - c. Isaiah’s response (Isa. 37.21-35). Yahweh’s response comes to us through the mouth of Isaiah in these passages.
 - i. “The virgin Daughter of Zion holds you (Sennacherib) in derision! She totally disrespects you! The Daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head at you!” (Isa. 37.22).⁴
 - ii. The sign is given to Hezekiah, “But to you this shall be a sign: This year eat what grows wild, and the following year what springs up of itself. But in the third year sow and harvest, plant vineyards and eat their fruit (Isa. 37.30).⁵

¹ The Assyrian king Sennacherib invaded the western edge of Asia to put down revolts there by his vassals, who were supported by the king of Egypt. This event serves as the backdrop of many prophecies of Isaiah, such as 1. 5--9; 10.28-34; 22.1-14; 23.1-18; 29.1-24; 33.1-24, among others. **The account here portrays the event as a disaster for Assyria and an impressive victory for Judah, as does 2 Chronicles chapter 32.** The account in 2 Kings is largely identical, but it adds several vv. (2 Kings 18.14-16) which differ considerably, portraying the event as a partial Assyrian victory. *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 853.

² The arrival of the Assyrians. Assyrian records indicate that Assyrian troops vanquished forty-six Judean cities, but not Jerusalem. Isaiah had been predicting an invasion which would devastate Judah but spare Jerusalem since early in his career; cf. 1.5--9; 8.8; 29.1-24. Ibid.

³ This is a beautiful mix of history and typology, using the story of the dialogue between Rabshekah as an image that reminds us of the arguments of the Adversary in the premortal world. It is assured that he said something similar of the Savior Jesus Christ, the true king alluded to in these passages.

⁴ My translation.

⁵ Gileadi translation. He explains, “Just as Jehovah gives King Ahaz a “sign” under a similar circumstance of a threatening king of Assyria (Isaiah 7:14-20), so he gives Hezekiah a “sign.” **In fact, Jehovah’s sign to Ahaz a**

3. The destruction of the Assyrian army (Isa. 37.36-38).
 - a. “The angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000” (Isa. 37.36).⁶

Isaiah 38: Hezekiah’s Life Lengthened

Isaiah 39: Hezekiah reveals Jerusalem’s Wealth to Babylon

Isaiah 40: God Speaks Words of Comfort to His People (A Temple Text)

1. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people!” (Isa. 40.1). The Hebrew is interesting in this passage. It reads thus: נְחַמּוּ נְחַמּוּ נְחַמּוּ עַמִּי יֵאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם Literally “You all are to comfort, comfort my people! Says the Gods.” (my translation). This can be read as a bestowal of power upon Israel.⁷ This is a council in heaven text. **This is a second person masculine plural imperative.**
 - a. This text should be read in conjunction with Ps. 23, where the words, “Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,” a rod is a scepter, the symbol of kingship; the staff is a shepherd’s crook, the symbol of priesthood. **So the words say, “I am empowered by the symbols of priesthood and kingship.”**⁸
2. The Elias figure speaks *in the second room of the temple* (Isa. 40.3-5).⁹

generation earlier—of a son Immanuel (“God Is with Us”) who would eat cream and honey during a time of upheaval and invasion—was fulfilled in Hezekiah’s childhood when Tiglath Pileser III deported peoples of Israel’s ten-tribed Northern Kingdom into Mesopotamia (2 Kings 15:29). Like the son Immanuel, those who survived in the land would likewise eat cream and honey, the food of nomads (Isaiah 7:21-22). **Jehovah’s sign to King Hezekiah of just such a time of scarcity, however, has a happy ending.** Because he and his people have passed Jehovah’s test of their loyalty, Jehovah is bound by the terms of his covenant to deliver them. In spite of their suffering covenant curses reaching back a generation, Hezekiah’s people can reverse the curse and again generate covenant blessings. In a future version of these events, an end-time son Immanuel—Jehovah’s son and servant—similarly eats nomadic fare and intercedes with Jehovah on behalf of his people when an end-time Assyrian arch tyrant invades their land. [Isaiahexplained](#). Accessed 8.22.2022.

⁶ The withdrawal of the Assyrians and the death of Sennacherib. According to Assyrian records, Sennacherib was assassinated in 681 BCE, two decades after the events described here. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 858.

⁷ Baker and Ricks, p. 340-1. They explain: “In verse 2, “comfort” is an important word whose meaning is difficult for us to capture because it has changed since the King James Version was translated. In 1622, when the English word was nearer in time to its Latin origins, **the first definition of “comfort” meant just exactly what the Latin said: “with strength,” to strengthen, or to empower. “Comfort” still meant that in 1787 when the American Constitution was written, and treason was defined as “giving aid and comfort to the enemy.” (That did not mean it was treason to give the enemy an aspirin and a warm blanket. It meant that it is treason to empower an enemy.)** The most extensive analysis of the Hebrew word is by Gary Anderson, who writes, This verb “to comfort” (n-h-m) does not connote a simple act of emotional identification. Comfort can imply either the symbolic action of assuming the state of mourning alongside the mourner, or it can have the nuance of bringing about the cessation of mourning... Anderson’s definition can account for the way the **English translators used the word “comfort” to mean the bestowal of authority or power—an empowerment**—and it also adds substantial depth to the meaning of the 23rd Psalm and other scriptures where “comfort” might be read as “to give consolation,” they might also be read as “to give power and authority, thus enabling one to transcend sorrow.”

⁸ Baker and Ricks, p. 341.

⁹ David Butler explains what is going on in Isaiah 40: “All this happens in connection with an invitation to continue up “into a high mountain.” **This is the Worship of the Shalems.** Together with the phrase’s appearance in 1 Nephi 10, Alma 7, and John 1—all of which also show us or refer to the Worship of the Shalems—Isaiah 40 gives us the proper setting of John the Baptist’s words. The priest who has led the initiates to be clothed and feasted in the second room introduces the appearance of the priest coming from the Debir with the cry ‘make straight the way of the Lord.’” David Butler, [The Goodness and the Mysteries](#), p. 37.

3. “All flesh is grass” (Isa. 40.6-8). This refers to the people in the temple drama (see Matt. 6.30, where the grass is clothed).
4. Zion gets up to the mountain (v. 9), the people are fed (v. 11), they are then carried in the bosom of the shepherd (Isa. 40.11).
5. “He sitteth upon the circle of the earth” הַיֵּשֵׁב עַל-חֹוּג הָאָרֶץ (Isa. 40.22).¹⁰
6. Israel is told to “lift up” their eyes on high, as behold the Lord, as he “calleth them all by names” by the greatness of his might (Isa. 40.26). In this liturgical context, Israel is summoned to come to the Lord at the veil, as in the description of the Brother of Jared’s approach to the Lord in Ether 3.¹¹
7. Those that “wait upon the Lord” will “mount up with wings as eagles” (Isa. 40.31). This can be tied into the idea of Israel coming to the chariot of God, **being given the rites of kingship**. (See: Ps. 99.1; 1 Chron. 28.1-21; Ps. 18.10; 2 Sam. 22.22).¹²

Isaiah 41-42.17: The Divine Ruler and His Servants

1. A dialogue with the nations (Isa. 41.1-7).
2. Encouragement for Israel, God’s Servant (Isa. 41.8-20).
3. A debate that emphasizes God’s power over the cosmos (Isa. 41.21-29).

¹⁰ This can be read as “he dwells above the circle of the earth.” It can be seen (in one way) as the God of heaven, above the threshing floor, the holy of holies, calling to his people. We see this verse 26, where he calls “them all by names.”

¹¹ M. Catherine Thomas, [The Brother of Jared at the Veil](#), in [Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism](#), ed. Donald W. Parry, Deseret Book, 1994.

¹² Baker and Ricks explain, “It was there, in the Holy of Holies, at the throne of God, that the final scenes of the festive drama were conducted. **The cherubim** who surround the celestial throne of God **are represented as having wings**, by Isaiah (6:2), Ezekiel (1:6-11), Daniel (7:4-6), and John (Revelation 4). But we were told by the Prophet Joseph that “wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.” (D&C 77:4). That is also probably a way of describing their priesthood power. **Because the throne and its overshadowing wings were symbolic of the reality and power of priesthood and kingship, they were also symbolic of the invitation to receive the gift of eternal life.** The Savior used that symbolism repeatedly, as a lament addressed to those who would not accept the invitation. He said:

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37, see Luke 13:34, 3 Nephi 10:4-6, D&C 43:24).

And also as a promise to those who would:

2 [The Savior] will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer (D&C 29:2, see 10:65).

Nephi’s statement, resounding as it does with the clarity of the ancient enthronement ordinances, is a testimony of the validity of those ordinances, and an example of their fulfilment:

25 And **upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away** upon exceedingly high mountains. And **mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them** (2 Nephi 4:25).

The wings have a further and expected symbolism. It is the association of the ideas of enthronement with the promise of security and peace, as Nephi prophesied:

Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name (2 Nephi 25.13).

4. God's Servant (Isa. 42.1-9) [This is the first of four servant "songs"]
5. A Hymn (Isa. 42.10-17).

The Servant Songs of Isaiah

The first four verses of Isaiah 42 comprise one of the four "major songs" or major poetic passages in which Isaiah describes a servant of the Lord. (The other three are Isa. 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12.) This servant is not named, so readers and scholars often disagree about the servant's identity. Generally, the Jewish scholars believe the servant is either the prophet Isaiah or a representation of the people of Israel in their chosen role as the Lord's servants to the world. Christian scholars usually believe Jesus Christ is the servant prophesied by Isaiah. Latter-day Saint readers often recognize that the covenant members of the restored gospel serve as the Lord's servants. They as a people, and the prophet of the restoration, Joseph Smith, may be identified as Isaiah's promised servant.

In order to understand how any of these identities are possible, twelve major characteristics of the servant will be listed as described by Isaiah:

1. The Lord calls the servant, attests to his authority, and foretells his coming. (See Isa. 42:1, 8-9; 42:6; compare 49:1, 3; 50:4, 10.)
2. God foreordains the servant, preserving him to come forth at a specific time and clothing him with the Spirit of God. (See Isa. 42:6; 42:1; compare 49:1, 2, 5; see also Jer. 1:5.)
3. The servant is beloved of God. (See Isa. 42:1.)
4. The servant is taught from on high; though uneducated after the manner of the world, he is an articulate spokesman for truth. (See JST Isa. 50:4-5, 7; 49:2).
5. The servant is refined and sanctified through suffering and adversity. Though hated and persecuted by his own people, he will prevail over all his enemies, for the result of his work will be everlasting. (See Isa. 50:5-6; 49:2, 7; 42:4, 6; compare 49:4-5; 50:7-9, 11.)
6. The servant does not use violence or coercion, but preaches peace through gentle persuasion. (See Isa. 42:2-3; 50:6.)
7. The servant is raised up at a time when Israel is scattered. He is sent to the house of Israel and leads those in spiritual darkness to light. (See Isa. 49:5; 42:6-7; 49:8; 50:10; 49:6.)
8. The servant's mission extends to the entire world. (See Isa. 42:1, 4; 49:6; 50:10-11.)
9. The servant establishes a covenant with the chosen people. (See Isa. 42:6; 49:8.)
10. The servant prompts kings and princes to righteousness through the great power given him by the Lord. (See Isa. 49:7.)
11. The servant paves the way for those in the spirit prison to hear the true gospel and be freed. (See Isa. 49:9; 42:7.)

12. The servant comes prior to the Millennium and is instrumental in the final redemption of Zion. His mission is significant, for it prepares the way for the renewal of Jerusalem and the return of Zion. (See Isa. 49:8; 9-13.)¹³

Isaiah 42.18-44.28: God Proclaims His Loyalty to Israel

1. The servant, Israel, is described as blind and deaf, but is promised that God is with her (Isa. 42.18-43.8)
 - a. “Who is as blind as my servant?” (Isa. 42.18). Note the Joseph Smith changes this to indicate that it is the people who are blind.¹⁴
2. The arguments from prophecy and history (Isa. 43.9-21).
 - a. Fulfilment of prophecies concerning Babylon (Isa. 43.9-15).¹⁵
 - b. “For your sake I have sent to Babylon and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans raise their voice in lamentation” (Isa. 43.14).¹⁶
3. Israel’s sin and redemption (Isa. 43.22-44.5).

¹³ Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah, Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1982, p. 358-9.

¹⁴ Ludlow explains the importance of the JST regarding this passage of Isaiah: The major difference between the two translations is that the Joseph Smith Translation clarifies the ambiguous passages to make clear that the blindness lies with the people, not the servant. Furthermore, the Joseph Smith Translation gives the promise that the people can become perfect in spite of their blindness if they heed the Lord's servant. It also explains that Israel's enemies will be allowed to plunder her as punishment for her sins. In addition, by carefully studying the last two verses of the Joseph Smith Translation and matching the different referents to their various pronouns (thee/Israel; they, them/Israel's enemies or the Gentiles), one can see that the Gentiles will ignore the words of Israel until their sins merit divine wrath upon them.

The Joseph Smith Translation is necessary help in understanding these important verses. With Joseph Smith's inspired revisions, Isaiah's message to Israel becomes much clearer. The relationship between God's children is thereby more easily understood. The reader can also better appreciate why and how the Lord will bless or punish people according to their diligence in following his counsel given through his servants. Isaiah's message is valuable today, since the Lord has called many servants to deliver God's word to us in the last dispensation. The identity and role of some of these servants is discussed in the following section. Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah, Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1982, p. 358. That being said, there is a bit of poetry in this understanding of the servant (Israel – see Isa. 41.8-9; 44.1-3, 21-22) is blind and deaf. For this is the state that Israel is in at the time of Isaiah's prophecies, and for much of the Old Testament. So on the one hand, I see Isaiah sitting right where we have it, making sense. On the other hand, as some of the passages regarding the servant Isaiah speaks of, there is some ambiguity as to who he is speaking of, and in some cases the servant that the Lord sends out is the opposite of blind and deaf, as the JST indicates. So I suppose it all depends on how one approaches each piece of text.

¹⁵ It is because of passages like these that most scholars assert that Isaiah 40-66 came from a later time period, and from a later author. Typically this author is called Deutero-Isaiah, or “Second Isaiah.” See: *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 870.

¹⁶ The KJV has “and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships” (Isa. 43.14). Alter translates it as “For your sake I have sent to Babylon and brought down all the bars and turned the glad song of Chaldeans to laments.” Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, W.W. Norton & Company, p. 764. The meaning of the Hebrew noun *barihim* is disputed, but given the fact that exile is repeatedly represented by this prophet as imprisonment, the most likely sense is the bars that bolt the doors of a prison. Although the verbal stem *b-r-h* does mean “to flee,” there is no attested use in the Bible of *bariah* as “fugitive” (a mere grammatical possibility), a sense claimed by some for the word here. “Turned the glad song of Chaldeans to laments”: The Masoretic Text has *'oniyot*, “ships,” which does not make much sense, and the Chaldeans were scarcely a seafaring people. The translation revocalizes that noun as *'aniyot*, “laments.” The Jewish Study Bible is in accord with Robert Alter on this point.

- a. “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel!” (Isa. 43.22).
 - b. “I have profaned the princes and the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse” (Isa. 43.28). This supports the idea that Israel is in an apostate condition, and that the temple is no longer a place where God places his holiness.¹⁷
 - c. “O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen” (Isa. 44.1).
 - d. “I will pour my spirit upon thy seed!” (Isa. 44.3).
 - e. “They shall spring up as among the grass” (Isa. 44.4).¹⁸
4. Jehovah reasons with Israel: Idolatry is not the answer! (Isa. 44.6-28).
- a. “Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?” (Isa. 44.10)
 - b. “Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for thou art my servant: I have formed thee, thou art my servant O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me!” (Isa. 44.21).
 - c. Jehovah identifies Cyrus as his shepherd (Isa. 44.28).¹⁹

Isaiah 45: Jehovah is the Sovereign God of the Whole World

- d. The Lord has anointed Cyrus as a messiah. In these verses, **the Lord speaks to Cyrus**,²⁰ the liberator of the exiled Jews (Isa. 45.1-8).
 - i. LeGrand Baker and Stephen Ricks assert that Isaiah is teaching the temple and the First Israelite Temple Drama throughout his work, but that the chapters on Cyrus are a later edition to the text.²¹ They write, **“The break in the drama story is the Cyrus chapters which were apparently added during the Babylonian captivity** (see Flavious Josephus, Complete Works: History of the Jews 11:1,222-23). Cyrus is introduced in Isaiah 44:28 and continues through Isaiah 48. **Part of the prophecy about him is written in past tense, and is the major reason scholars insist there was a “Second Isaiah” who wrote during or after the**

¹⁷ This has led David Butler to call Isaiah an “underground prophet.” Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 191. He says, (p. 226) “Being an underground prophet, **Isaiah wrote his books in a code of temple images**, a practice followed by Nephi in his writings and also by the Gospel of Matthew in its account of Jesus’ parables.”

¹⁸ Compare this to the statement in Isaiah 40 regarding the cry of the prophet: “The of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord... every valley shall be exalted... the rough places plain... the voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass... the grass withereth, the flower fadeth... surely the people is grass” (Isa. 40.1-7). Compare this to Matthew 6.30, where the Savior speaks of the Lord clothing them. Notes Butler, “The initiates give a guided collective cry of humility comparing flesh to grass; this is nothing short of astonishing when compared with Matthew 6:30, in which the shalams humbly compare themselves to grass in connection with God clothing them.” Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 36.

¹⁹ This shorter speech focuses on the argument from prophecy and the ridiculous nature of idolatry. It gives particular emphasis to one of Deutero-Isaiah's main themes: the insistence that no other gods in fact exist. As with all of the speeches in chapters 40-66, the main point is that the one true God can and will redeem Israel. The speech reaches its climax with the identification of the person through whom God brings redemption, the Persian king Cyrus. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 872.

²⁰ Cyrus (Heb: כּוּרְשׁ) appears in Isaiah 44.28 and 45.1 of Isaiah’s writings. Cyrus was king of Persia and conqueror of Babylon. He made the decree that freed the Jews and allowed them to return to their homeland in the late 6th century BC. See: [Cyrus the Great](#).

²¹ For a multitude of examples showing how Isaiah incorporates the First Israelite Temple Drama in his text, see: J.H. Eaton, [Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah](#), SPCK, 1979.

Babylonian captivity. A careful reading of 1 Nephi 20 (which is Isaiah 48) shows that those problems, including the “I did them” in verse 3, were **not on the brass plates**, so the editorial changes in “Second Isaiah” 48 were made after Isaiah’s original writings were copied on the brass plates.”²²

- ii. “For my servant Israel I have called thee by name” (Isa. 45.4).
- e. The objection and response (Isa. 45.9-13). Some express surprise at God’s methods of redeeming the Jews from their disenfranchised state. God rebukes them in these verses. See Isaiah 10.15.
- f. Cyrus’ reward (Isa. 45.14-17).
 - i. Cyrus is promised the “labour of Egypt,” and “the merchandise of Ethiopia and Sabeans” (Isa. 45.14).
- g. The Lord is the master of the affairs of men (Isa. 45.18-25).
 - i. “Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth!” (Isa. 45.22).
 - ii. “Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear!” (Isa. 45.23).
 - iii. “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory” (Isa. 45.25).

Isaiah 46-47: The Fall of Babylon

1. Marduk compared to Jehovah (Isa. 46.1-13). The Babylonian god Bel (Marduk) and Nabu (son of Marduk) have fallen. Their images have been carried out, not for their famous New Year procession, but for captivity.
 - a. “They bear him... they carry him” (Isa. 46.7).²³
2. Babylon told to get off the throne! The Great Exchange (Isa. 47.1-9).
3. Babylon’s soothsayers mocked (Isa. 47.10-15).

Isaiah 48-49: Israel in the last days, Rebuke and Consolation

1. The Covenant-Treaty Formula of Isaiah 48
 - a. Preamble: Hear ye this, O house of Jacob (Isa. 48.1-2).
 - i. “out of the waters of Judah” (Isa. 48.1).²⁴ Compare this to [1 Nephi 20.1](#), where it adds the phrase “or out of the waters of baptism.”²⁵

²² LeGrand Baker and Stephen Ricks, [Who Shall Ascend into The Hill of The Lord? The Psalms in Israel’s Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon](#), Eborn Books, 2010, p. 73, emphasis added. This idea needs to be examined more closely. If I am understanding their argument, Baker and Ricks assert both the authenticity of the Brass Plates record and Second Isaiah. They are arguing (I believe) that both positions have merit, in other words, that there were portions of Isaiah added after chapter 40, and that what Nephi had varied from the text of Isaiah 1-66 as it is now constituted in our current Bibles. This is, to me, a middle path worth examining.

²³ The idols are carried, a burden even for the beasts; but Yahweh always carries his people and brings them to safety. The association of such ‘carrying’ and salvation is found in the ancient festal hymn of Psalm 68.20, where in the hour of Yahweh’s victory procession into Zion the cry was raised, ‘Blessed be the Lord! Day by day he carries us, the God who is our salvation!’ Eaton, p. 58.

²⁴ “The people are addressed in second plural at first, changing to sing, in verse 4... They are described as the product of Judah’s semen (verse 1), a phrase which makes it clear that the parallel ‘Jacob/Israel’ denotes the ancestor.” J.H. Eaton, [Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah](#), SPCK, 1979, p. 48.

²⁵ Ludlow explains, “A number of words and phrases are added in the 1 Nephi 20 rendition of these verses. The most significant addition is the phrase identifying the “waters of Judah” as the “waters of baptism” (v. 1).

- b. Historical Prologue: The Lord covers his dealings with Israel in the past (Isa. 48.3-8).
- c. Stipulations: The Lord states what he will do and what he expects of Israel (Isa. 48.8-13).
 - i. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger" (Isa. 48.9).²⁶
- d. Witnesses: Israel stands as a witness to God's word (Isa. 48.16).
- e. Blessings and Cursings: The Lord explains the results of keeping or breaking his law (Isa. 48.17-22).

The Servant and God's Promises to Israel, God, Covenant Israel's Court Scene: Isaiah 49

This addition fits quite well within the verse, since the people are called first by their natural name as descendants of Jacob and then by their covenant title as followers of Israel. A parallelism naturally develops if the verse is also interpreted to mean that people come first out of the "waters of Judah" (the amniotic fluids of the womb, or the "loins"; RSV, NIV, and other translations) and then out of the "waters of baptism," representing a covenant or spiritual birth. The covenant then continues through the first verses as the people also make oaths in God's name and are then called after the name of his holy city.

Interestingly, the phrase "or out of the waters of baptism" was not in the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, but appeared first in the 1840 printing. Latter-Day Saint scholar Daniel H. Ludlow provides some interesting background on this phrase:

The term "or out of the waters of baptism" did not appear in the first edition of the Book of Mormon. It first appeared in the edition of 1840 on page 53, and the sentence in which it appeared was punctuated as follows: "Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, (or out of the waters of baptism,) who swear by the name of the Lord," etc. It is not absolutely clear who was responsible for the insertion of this phrase, although the title page of this edition indicates that it was the "Third Edition, Carefully Revised by the Translator" and was published in Nauvoo, Illinois.

In the "Committee Copy" of the Book of Mormon that was used by Elder James E. Talmage and his committee in making the changes for the 1920 edition, the words "or out of the waters of baptism" were not printed in the text although they had been inserted in red ink in parentheses. However, the parentheses were crossed out by red pencil. These words are printed in the current edition of the Book of Mormon without the parentheses. (CSBM, p. 120.)

It seems unlikely that the additional phrase came from the prophet Isaiah himself or was inserted by Nephi in his copy of the text. Most likely, Joseph Smith inserted it to identify or amplify the phrase "out of the waters of Judah," a phrase that may have implied baptism to the ancient Israelites but that is meaningless to modern readers. Latter-day Saint scholar Hugh Nibley feels it was Joseph Smith's prerogative as translator to insert the clarifying phrase. (*Since Cumorah*, p. 151.)" Ludlow, p. 401-402. See also: Jeff Bradshaw and Matt Bowen, [Out of the Waters of Judah, Pearl of Great Price Central](#), Book of Moses Essay #18. Bradshaw and Bowen note that the phrase was probably not in the Isaiah text, citing both Ebenezer Robinson, who worked with Joseph Smith on the Nauvoo changes to the Book of Mormon, as well as Royal Skousen. Says Skousen, "**This change can mislead the reader into thinking that this parenthetical comment was actually part of the original text**, even perhaps concluding not only that this extra phrase is the original biblical text, but also that some scribe deliberately edited it out of the Hebrew text. ... **There is no convincing evidence that Joseph's parenthetical phrase was intended to revise the original text.** The parentheses imply that Joseph viewed this additional phrases as a marginal explanation."

²⁶ The prophet invokes a recurrent biblical idea: that God's reputation in the world would suffer if He allowed Israel to be utterly destroyed, and for that reason He in the end spares Israel, despite its disloyalty. Alter, 3272/6509, electronic version.

1. **The Summons** (Isa. 49.1-6). The Lord himself issues the summons to scattered Israel. However, since Isaiah delivers the summons, it appears that he is talking about himself as he speaks about his role with Israel:²⁷ “Listen, O isles... Thou art my servant, O Israel... I have laboured in vain” (Isa. 49.1-4). **This is the second Servant Song of Isaiah.**
 - a. The identity of the servant has been debated much in scholarship.²⁸
 - b. Ludlow gives many interpretations of the servant. He cites reasons why the servant can be the nation of Israel, Jesus Christ, or Joseph Smith.²⁹
2. The Plaintiff’s Charge (Isa. 49.7-13).
 - a. “Kings shall see (thee) and arise!” (Isa. 49.7). This is an example of the Festal Drama played out right here in Isaiah’s writings.³⁰
 - b. “Land of Sinim” uncertain (Isa. 49.12).³¹
 - c. The post exilic editing of Isaiah 49 is telling. Note Isaiah 49.13 when compared with the Brass Plates record. Isaiah 49.13 reads “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.” The same verse on Nephi’s Brass Plates record reads: “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; **for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established**; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for they shall be smitten no more; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted” (1 Nephi 21:13, emphasis added). 13). **The missing phrase, “for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established” is a promise of sacral kingship.** The “east” is the place where the righteous dwell. **The reference to their feet being “established” is a reminder of the time when the king sat upon the throne of God in the Holy of Holies, with the Ark of the Covenant as the footstool to that throne. The promise in Isaiah a promise of sacral kingship.** One gets a glimpse of it in the 40th Psalm that was probably sung as a celebration of the triumph of the great feast day of the drama. See Ps. 40.1-2

²⁷ Ludlow, p. 407.

²⁸ The identity of the servant has generated much debate. Most rabbinic commentators and some modern scholars argue that Deutero-Isaiah speaks here in the first person and that these verses Describe **the prophet's own mission**. Others argue that **the whole nation Israel is the servant**, and some suggest that an ideal Israel or a faithful subset of the nation is the servant. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 883. Knowing that Isaiah has the ability to speak in code, I see many ways to view the servant. Clearly the servant is Israel in this context (Isa. 49.3), but the servant is also one who will gather Israel, because Isaiah tells us this. “It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel – I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49.6). This servant fits the description of Joseph Smith, as well as any servant who works to bring in scattered Israel from her lost condition.

²⁹ Ludlow, p. 408-410. He goes through the text, showing that the servant 1) is selected before birth (Isa. 49.1), 2) is hidden in the Lord’s hand (Isa. 49.2), 3) is like a polished shaft (Isa. 49.2), 4) sometimes feels he has labored in vain (Isa. 49.4), 5) will be involved in the gathering of Israel. He concludes, “It appears that the servant song in chapter 49 is talking more about Ephraim than the other possibilities; however, more important than identifying the exact servant described here is understanding the servant’s characteristics and desiring to incorporate his traits into our own lives so that we can become true servants of the Lord. (See Jacob 5:61-63.)” Ludlow, p. 410.

³⁰ J.H. Eaton writes, “In Isaiah 49.7 God promises that he will exalt this lowly figure, his elect one, so that the kings will do him homage; this is similar to 52.13-15, where the kings show reverence at the enthronement of Yahweh’s servant. The subordination of other kings was a theme prominent in the festal enthronement rites (see Ps. 2; 110).” Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah*, SPCK, 1979, p. 65-66.

³¹ Some read this as “the land Syene” (Aswan?), but the identification remains uncertain. Alter, p. 3281/6509 electronic version.

“he set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.” **It is apparent that since the post-exilic Jews could no longer implement that promise, the phrase in Isaiah became an awkward reminder of the blessings of the past.** That awkwardness was removed when the phrase was simply edited out of the passage. In contrast, modern revelation uses the phrase in the context of eternal priesthood and kingship: “Who hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high, and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life” (D&C 78:16). Four psalms allude to the king’s sitting on the Temple throne under the cherubim wings. Of those, one says simply “in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast” (Psalm 57:1). See also: Ps. 17.2-15; 61.1-5; 63.3-7.³²

3. The Defendant Makes the Argument (Isa. 49.14, 21, 24).
 - a. “But Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me!” (Isa. 49.14).³³
4. The Judge’s Indictment (Isa. 49.15-20, 22-23, 25-26).
 - a. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands...” (Isa. 49.15-16).
 - b. “your walls are continually before me” (Isa. 49.16) can be read as “See, I have engraved you on my palms; I have sealed you to be continually before me.”³⁴
 - c. “I will save thy children!” (Isa. 49.25).

³² *Who Shall Ascend?*, p. 414.

³³ Because the higher a person ascends spiritually the greater the descent through trials that precedes it, so the Zion/Jerusalem category of Jehovah’s people—**those of Jacob/Israel who repent of transgression** (Isaiah 59:20)—**endures greater afflictions than before. So much, that at times those who are in the midst of their descent phase feel that Jehovah has forsaken or forgotten them.** Jehovah reminds them that he never forgets them, that he went through descent before ascent when they “pierced my hands and my feet” as he atoned for their sins (Psalm 22:16; cf. Isaiah 43:24-25; 53:4-5; 63:8-9). Zion/Jerusalem’s travail resembles that of a woman when she gives birth, the whole purpose being Zion/Jerusalem’s rebirth or re-creation on a higher spiritual level: “Who has heard the like, or who has seen such things? Can the earth labor but a day and a nation be born at once? For as soon as she was in labor, Zion gave birth to her children. ‘Shall I bring to a crisis and not bring on birth?’ says Jehovah. ‘When it is I who cause the birth, shall I hinder it?’ says your God” (Isaiah 66:8-9; cf. vv 20-22; 45:11; 54:1). Jehovah’s covenant love and loyalty far exceed a mortal mother’s toward her child. [Isaiahexplained](#), accessed 8.25.2022.

³⁴ Gileadi translation. [Isaiahexplained](#), accessed 8.25.2022. Hebrew *ḥômōtayik*, *your walls*, emended to *ḥātamtîk*.