
Isaiah 1

The time period when Isaiah prophesied is laid out. The Lord established a covenant relationship with Israel, but Israel has not been dutiful. Disobedience led to disastrous consequences as spelled out in the Mosaic law (see *Rain in Due Season* scriptures). If it were not for the mercy of the Lord, Israel would have been entirely destroyed. Nevertheless, a remnant was preserved. The sons of Jacob were guilty of making an external show of piety, yet with no substance. Israel is commanded to repent, and invited to return to the covenant relationship with the Lord. Israel could then be purified by the Redeemer who assured her, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” A lamentation is offered on the spiritual decay of Jerusalem and a better day of righteous restoration is seen to come at some future date. While the righteous will be purified, the wicked will be consumed. NOTE: Many commentators feel that ISAIAH 1 is a preface or prologue to the whole vision of Isaiah (e.g., Barnes, Delitzsch) and probably written later much like our D&C 1 which was received later by our prophet Joseph Smith (see Nyman).

v. 1. The timeline is given in which Isaiah prophesied.

1 ¶ THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

The vision of Isaiah. While the first chapter of Isaiah is considered the preface for the entire work, some consider the first verse to be the title of this preface. Calvin says: “So far as relates to the present passage, this word [vision] unquestionably denotes the certainty of the doctrine; as if it had been said that there is nothing contained in this book which was not made known to *Isaiah* by God himself. The derivation of the word, therefore, deserves attention; for we learn by it that the prophets did not speak of their own accord, or draw from their own imaginations, but that they were enlightened by God, who opened their eyes to perceive those things which otherwise they would not of themselves have been able to comprehend.” The word *vision* רָאוּ, then, implies a higher testimony of that which the prophet Isaiah saw and heard. The Chronicler uses such a title, “the vision of Isaiah the prophet” to refer to the book of Isaiah (2 Chronicles 32:32b). In the New Testament, the book of Isaiah is referred to as the book, words, prophecy or saying of *Esaias*. The *vision*, or what the prophet saw in vision: thus the word *seer*. In Samuel 9:9 we see this parenthetical explanation: “(Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.*)” Isaiah, then, *saw* as a prophet and seer to receive

divine revelation. The name of the prophet Isaiah¹ in Hebrew (אִישָׁיָהוּ) is יֵשַׁעְיָהוּ, or transliterated, it sounds like *Yeshayahu*. Yahu or Yah stands for Jehovah or *Yahweh* or *Yahve*, which would be pointed as יְהוָה (in order to avoid the profane use of the Lord’s name, some believe that the scribes pointed it so it would read as Jehovah rather than *Yahweh*, יְהוֹה), while *Yesha* (יֵשַׁע) means, among other significations, *salvation* and *deliverance*. This salvation is brought about by the Lord and can be both expiatory and redemptive as well as provide physical safety. In the Septuagint (6) the prophet is also called *Esaias*. In the Latin Vulgate (9) and its translation to English (Douay), *Isaias* (*Isaias* in Spanish). ¶ *Son of Amoz*, or ben Amotz (בֶּן-אָמוֹץ). The prophet’s father should not be confused with the Prophet Amos (אָמוֹס). Rabbinic tradition makes Isaiah the nephew of King Amaziah (Seder Mo’ed, Megilah 10b; Seder Nashim, Sotah 10b) and thus a first cousin to Uzziah, giving him an unusual amount of protection for speaking out openly. ¶ *Which he saw*. The word *saw* has the same general significance as the word *vision*, both meaning to see as a prophet, to receive in revelation. ¶ *Concerning Judah and Jerusalem*. This is a summary

¹ The prophet Hosea had jurisdiction mainly over the northern kingdom, or Israel, and greatly overlapped in time with Isaiah. Hosea’s name in Hebrew is close to that of Isaiah, and essentially means *salvation*. Joshua (who lived at the time of Moses) was also at one time called Hosea (or, Oshea) until his name was changed to Joshua, thus adding the name of Jehovah, resulting in: *the Lord is our Salvation*. The message to Israel and Judah was that salvation could only come as a result of trusting in the Lord.

² אִ, we will use this symbol to represent the Masoretic Text of the *Biblia Hebraica*. Generally, the unpointed versions were more ancient than the אִ. This and other ancient version fonts, critical apparatus fonts, as well as Hebrew fonts, are copyrighted by SIL Fonts, for whom we extend a note of gratitude.

statement, noting that the main emphasis of the prophecy would relate to the *southern kingdom* in the divided monarchy—that is, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, as well as some of the most pious members of the northern tribes who immigrated southward.³ The southern kingdom was known by the name of its stronger tribe and its capital where the Temple was built, that is, *Judah* (יְהוּדָה), or Yehudah) and Jerusalem (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם or יְרוּשָׁלָּם: Yirushalayim). Jerusalem, in Isaiah, takes on a melancholic tone, as she represents the very core of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. The Savior lamented: “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). Jewish tradition suggests that Isaiah was among the martyrs, and that he was cut asunder with a wooden saw by Manasseh, king Hezekiah’s wicked son (not to be confused with Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, grandchildren of Jacob). Isaiah was voice for the Lord in prophecies not only about Judah and Jerusalem, but also encompassing the northern ten tribes and the *goyim* (גוֹיִם), the *nations* or the *Gentiles*.⁴ The northern tribes were likewise known by their strongest tribe, *Ephraim*, but were also called *Israel*. (In order to avoid confusion, I will avoid using the word *Israel* to represent only the northern tribes.) The apostasy that took place in Ephraim was extreme, and immediate. As a result, they were the first to be carried off captive by the Assyrians. They soon lost their identity as a people and vanished to the world—but not to God—and thus came to be known as the *Lost Tribes* or the *ten lost tribes of Israel*. The apostasy that took place in Judah led to the Babylonian captivity over a century later,⁵ from whence there was a remnant who returned to the Holy Land. Judah’s removal would be longer after the promise had been fulfilled: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Genesis 49:13). The original split between the ten tribes and the two tribes took place after the death of King Solomon. ¶ *In the*

³ Among the people who the Lord brought to the American continent with Lehi, were included those of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, not from those taken captive to the north, but from families who dwelt in Jerusalem.

⁴ These two definitions, of course, are not synonymous. They give the English translation a different meaning depending on which is used.

⁵ Both the Assyrian and the Babylonian captivities seem to have taken place in multiple waves. Some have suggested that 120 years passed after the Assyrian captivity and before the Babylonian. Others suggest about 135 years as the median time between both captivities. You may wish to consult a biblical timeline of events.

days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isaiah served under all these kings of Judah.

vv. 2–9. Despite the Lord’s care, the children of Israel have apostatized. As a result Israel has been punished and would have been exterminated save for the desire of the Lord to preserve a remnant.

2 ¶ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. The heavens and the earth are here called as witnesses (cf. Deuteronomy 32:1 and D&C 76:1). Commentators often suggest that sometimes the writings of the prophets—such as Isaiah and Hosea—can best be understood when viewed in the context of a court or associated legal proceeding, where the Lord brings an accusation or *controversy* against His covenant people. But this is done in tenderness, and one can feel the Lord’s great love for His people Israel. It is always a tender call to *return* (שׁוּב) to God. This is an all-encompassing call to hearken, to pay attention. All are invited and none excluded. In D&C 1, also known as the *preface* to the Doctrine and Covenants, we have: “Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high; and whose eyes are upon all men . . . For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated” (D&C 1:1a,2). ¶ *For the LORD hath spoken. The LORD*, that is, our Savior Jesus the Christ. In the Hebrew Holy Scriptures, it is written either as unpointed, that is, without the Masoretic (מס) points, יְהוָה, or pointed to facilitate the reading, יְהוֹוָה. It is composed of four Hebrew letters, YHVH, or JHVH, and thus called the *Tetragrammaton*. The points provide the vowels and facilitate the reading of the text. The Masoretes added these reading helps hundreds of years after the Holy Scriptures were given to us. יְהוָה is a sacred name: to the Jews, too sacred to pronounce. Instead, when reading the Hebrew text, they substitute the word Adonai (LORD). The Hebrew text (מס), when translated into English in the King James Version⁶ (KJV) is transmitted as follows: (1) **lord** (all in lower case, represents the word *adonai* אֲדֹנָי or *adon* אֲדֹנָי, or any other lord); (2) **Lord** (the first letter is capitalized when the word Adonai is used in Hebrew,

⁶ KJV is sometimes called the Authorized Version (AV).

but it refers to the Lord); and finally, (3) **LORD** (the word is in all capitals, when the Hebrew was Jehovah, יהוה). There is *no distinction* between lower case and capitalized words in Hebrew, however. The word Jehovah⁷ יהוה appears in the KJV only four times; two of these in Isaiah. The American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901, on the other hand, renders the word יהוה, as Jehovah, every time we have the word LORD in the KJV. So also in the Spanish LDS Reina Valera 2009, and most of the Spanish translations of the Bible, where the transliteration of יהוה is used throughout—*Jehová*. As latter-day saints we use Jehovah in hymns of praise and certainly modern day revelation includes that holy name. ¶ The word *spoken*, דִּבֶּר, in this context, is a powerful, penetrating, piercing, and commanding call to hearken. Isaiah acts as voice, but it is the Lord himself who is making the invitation. The word of the Lord has an eternal nature to it, so time and space seem to be lost. Oh, what a privilege it is to listen to the words of the Lord, whether through Scripture, through the prophets, or through the Spirit of the Holy Ghost. “And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:4). ¶ *I have nourished and brought up children*. There are no quotation marks used in the Hebrew or in the KJV, but if there were, opening quotations would begin here (e.g., see the ERV, HCSB,⁸ NASB and some others).

⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה אֲדֹנָי אֲשֶׁר אֲהַיְתָה. And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM (Exodus 3:14). “The name Jehovah יהוה ... received a special meaning by being connected with the Hebrew verb ‘to be.’ *** Jehovah (יהוה) is a conflate form with the consonants of one word and the vowels of another. *** The contracted forms in which the name appears suggest that the original form of the word was Yahweh or Yahve (a Greek transliteration is Ἰαβέ). *** In Exodus 3:10 ff., when Moses demurred to go to Egypt, God assured him saying, כִּי אֲהַיְתָה עִמָּךְ ‘I will be with thee.’ When he asked how he would name the God of their fathers to the people, he was told אֲהַיְתָה אֲשֶׁר אֲהַיְתָה. Again he was bidden say, אֲהַיְתָה hath sent me unto you; and finally יהוה Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has sent me unto you.’ From all this it seems evident that in the view of the writer אֲהַיְתָה and יהוה are the same: That God is אֲהַיְתָה, ‘I will be,’ when speaking of Himself, and יהוה, ‘he will be,’ when spoken of by others. What He will be is left unexpressed—He will be with them, helper, strengthener, deliverer” (DOTB 2:199). It has been suggested that the Targum (ܬ) reads, I AM HE WHO IS AND WHO WILL BE with all its beautiful Messianic implications. See *The Aramaic and Palestinian Targum* by Zen Garcia, as well as Nägelsbach, Gill and Peshitta (ܫ). The latter focuses on the: I SHALL BE.

⁸ HCSB has, “Listen, heavens, and pay attention, earth, for the LORD has spoken: ‘I have raised children and brought them up ...’”

The Lord has lovingly and carefully tended and taken care of the children of Jacob. We are at once reminded of the allegory of Zenos in the Book of Jacob. “For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive-tree, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard ...” (Jacob 5:3a) Delitzsch’s translation, “I have brought up children and *raised them high*, and they have *fallen* away from me,” (emphasis added) brings out the poetical contrast between raising or lifting, and falling. The falling is related to the apostasy, that is, the *falling away*. The lifting means that the Lord did not just raise Israel, but by choosing her, He exalted her and set her apart to become a peculiar people. This meaning is certainly allowed by the Hebrew roots נָדַל and רִים (i.e., to *nourish*, to *bring up*). רִם מְנִי also means *to exalt* (see note on ISAIAH 25:1). ¶ *And they have rebelled against me*. Despite all the love and care, they have fallen away. The olive tree vineyard “grew, and waxed old, and began to decay” (Jacob 5:3b). When the Lord refers to his children, He is speaking of the covenant relationship established with Israel.⁹ In this way, Yahweh is both the Father (of those who enter into the covenant) and the Son of Elohim.¹⁰

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: [but] Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. The ox (a castrated bull) and the ass are two domesticated farm animals well known by the Israelites and used even today in third world countries for agricultural work. The ox is a powerful but very slow animal. While sometimes bulls and cows are used instead of oxen, the ox is the most common. While the Hebrew word used here for *ox* (שׁוֹר) could also mean a bull, a cow, or a calf, most translate it as ox. The ass has a reputation for being stubborn. Many translations use donkey while others stick to ass, and both are the same animal (*equus asinus*). It seems that female asses were especially valued as a riding animal (see HBD). The Hebrew Scriptures (ז) use חֲמֹר utilized for a male ass. This type was probably of a reddish color (see HBD “Chamor” under ass). The ass could be used for a beast of burden, including pulling farm implements such as the plow, or for riding. They are particularly sure footed

⁹ Adam fell but not without of a hope of being made alive in Christ. Israel fell and was scattered, but not without a hope of a gathering. In the process of this scattering, Israel was mixed with the nations of the world and in the latter-day would play a key role in helping to gather the Lord's elect from the nations of the world.

¹⁰ Mosiah 15:1–7.

and ideal for mountainous and difficult terrain.

¶ *Master’s crib*. The feed troughs where animals are fed. These beasts of burden, then, recognized the hand that fed them. While it is proverbial to speak of the ass as an animal of low intelligence, the Lord points out that yet these animals show more intellect than man.

¶ *but*¹¹ *Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider*. In contrast to the beasts of burden, Israel did not recognize where her blessings sprang from and thus offended God: “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments” (D&C 59:21). Robert Millet makes some insightful comments about the word *know*, יָדַע. He mentions that this is the same word that is used for *a man knowing his wife* (e.g., see Genesis 4:17, see Gesenius, euphemism for sexual intercourse). Millet suggests that we must go beyond a mere “cognitive understanding” of the Lord, but to truly *know* Him through a deep spiritual understanding or “personal righteousness.”¹² עָמַי, or *my people*, is a frequent and tender call used by the Lord in the prophets to refer to his covenant relationship with Israel. “And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and *they shall be my people*, and *I will be their God*: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:7, emphasis added, see *Rain in Due Season*).

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden ✓ with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. ✓ ✓

✓ of heaviness ✓ ✓ alienated, or separated

[Note: ✓ denotes a *marginal || reading, margin ||*, or *gloss*. In the KJV the double vertical lines are often used for this purpose, which we will utilize in the text rather than in the verse. This is the first such marginal || note that appears in the Book of Isaiah. Such is an interpretive comment on the scriptures placed there by the translators (in our case, the KJV, although from time

¹¹ The word *but* is not in the Hebrew text. Lowth points out that the LXX, Syriac, Vulgate and some other versions actually used the word *but*, as in (but Israel) בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. This is also supported by 4QIsa¹, yet *but* is absent from 1QIsa^a (Q). We use the Dead Sea Scrolls Bible (Q) translation for the readings, unless otherwise noted. *Figures of Speech in the Bible*, shows how these words that are missing can often strengthen the text.

¹² Millet, Robert. *Insight into Isaiah* (Episode 102). BYU Broadcasting. Draper, Richard; Ludlow, Victor; Millet, Robert; Madsen, Ann. 2008.

to time I will mention marginal readings from other versions). The purpose was to render a possible alternative translation from difficult Hebrew passages. There are two types of marginal || expressions. **I. HEBREW**. The first type is what the literal Hebrew meant. For instance, in ISAIAH 41:28, the KJV reads “... could answer ✓ a word.” The margin || indicates that the literal Hebrew for *answer* in this passage was *return*, “...could *return* a word.” In English people normally *return favors*. **II. OR**. The second type of expression is an alternative meaning. Some words were difficult for the translators to interpret, and they had to base themselves on context as well as inspiration (and I do believe the translators of the KJV were inspired men who loved the Lord).¹³ The translators of the AV have, for instance, preserved some key Messianic scriptures that more modern versions have eliminated (e.g., Zechariah 13:6). ISAIAH 1:27 is an example of an interesting marginal || reading in the KJV: “...and her converts ✓ with righteousness.” The margin || substitutes *her converts* with *they that return of her* (הַשׁוֹבְרִים). As we have said, the words related to “turn” (שׁוּב) such as *turn, return, turn back*, are Hebrew expressions that are often associated with (1) *conversion* or *repentance* on the one hand, and (2) *apostasy* on the other—depending on which direction a person is turning toward. So, the reader can picture a return to a geographic location (צִיּוֹן, Zion) or bring a person into Zion *spiritually*. In this case it most probably means both things. Furthermore, the expression “those that *return of her*” has yet another signification—that of a small remnant of Israel that will be preserved and return. These marginal || notes can add much richness to the text. Some marginal || readings greatly improve the translation, others are neutral, and yet others simply add to the difficulty, confuse matters, or give an outright incorrect translation. While our present LDS KJV footnotes do not include all of these, the former *LDS Missionary Edition with Ready References*, contained them.¹⁴ The marginal || note mark appeared on the left hand side of the text, but I have moved them to the right hand side. For the most part this was an easy task, but in some instances it took some interpretation, thus increasing the chances of error on my part. Another disadvantage of this change is that in a few cases the full impact of the marginal || reading

¹³ While there are faults in the KJV translation, there is no doubt in my mind that it remains as the best translation of the Bible in English, based on the Hebrew text. When I look for a *second opinion*, I seldom find one version that always gives me the best translation. Instead, I find a number of different translations which take turn giving me what I was looking for.

¹⁴ If you are interested in the marginal || readings, you may also wish to consult the 1900 Cambridge Edition of the King James Version.

is weakened. For instance, in ISAIAH 38:3 we read “And Hezekiah wept sore.” The footnote mark was on the left of the word *sore*, making it clear that the literal translation, when the margin || HEB. *with great weeping* would be substituted, would render, “And Hezekiah wept with great weeping.” ¶ *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.* The *nation* spoken of here is *Israel* [see ISAIAH 1:3] in its completeness (*Israel doth not know*), that is, all of the sons of Jacob. The Hebrew word GOY (גוֹי) is utilized for *nation*, and here refers to Israel. In its plural form, as we mentioned earlier, we have GOYIM (גוֹיִם), or *nations*, which often refers to the *gentile nations*, and is translated as either *Gentiles*, *nations* or *heathen* in the KJV. Israel, then, is labeled as a sinful nation, *laden* or *burdened* with iniquity. And that is what sin is, a burden, a weight. Sin removes joy or enduring happiness. When burdened with sin we do not see the beauty all around but are choked with heaviness. Sin can remove our agency (the Brethren often use the expression *moral agency*). Our choices are limited by sin, and while we are free to choose, there is a consequence associated with that choice. ¶ *A seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters.* The nation of Israel had not taught her children to remember the covenants made with the Lord. It is hard enough for children to do well when parents are a good example. It is much more difficult—but certainly not impossible—when they do not. The Lord tells us that the sin will be upon the heads of the parents when children are not taught properly. What are the children to be taught? “To understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands ... And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:25, 28) and to shun contention (3 Nephi 11:29–30). Furthermore, parents are to teach their children who is the source of the expiatory sacrifice: “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26). ¶ *They have forsaken the LORD.* Man has had, since the beginning, to choose to either forsake his sins or to forsake the Lord. Moroni spoke to the people and exhorted them not to forsake the Lord, but rather, to be more committed towards their faith: “And it came to pass when Moroni had proclaimed these words, behold, the people came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God; or, in other words, if they should transgress the commandments of God, or fall into transgression, and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their

garments” (Alma 46:21). Israel had also been under a covenant relationship with the Lord, and they had forsaken Him. ¶ *They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger.* Wicked behavior has consequences, and one of them is to drive the Holy Ghost away. ¶ *The Holy One of Israel, אֱת־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל.* This is one of the most lovely and poetic names given to our Lord, declaring Him to be Holy, and the only true and living God of Israel. This loving expression is used by Isaiah frequently. ¶ *They are gone away backward.* This is an expression to mean they have become apostate. To go away backward gives the impression of a person or a people who have allowed their base passions to dictate behavior. Of a person who has turned his back on the Lord. In Jeremiah we find, “...for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us” (Jeremiah 2:27b); “But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and *I will be your God*, and *ye shall be my people*: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers” (Jeremiah 7:23–26). ¶ UNITY OF ISAIAH. As we discussed in the introduction, there has been a great movement among Bible scholars and others to discredit the Bible. The same words found in D&C 89 can aptly be applied here: “In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days.” One effort after another has been put forth to plant the seeds of doubt in terms of the divinity and resurrection of the Lord, the inspiration of the Bible, the gifts of prophecy and many other sacred truths. All of this in an effort to put stumbling blocks in the way of truth and salvation. If it were not for the restoration of the Gospel in these, the latter days, and the bringing forth of that book of books, *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, many would have lost their resolve. The Book of Mormon, along with the Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and teachings of the Brethren in General Conference, are clearly the greatest defenders of the divinity of Christ, and of the truthfulness of the Bible. There are not a people among the earth today who have a greater belief in the Bible than the Latter-day Saints.¹⁵

¹⁵ As way of example, one of the most beautiful Messianic scriptures is: “And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of my friends.” (Zechariah 13:6). The KJV has indeed retained

¶ Besides the wresting of individual verses there is a different type of effort, on a grander scale, to weaken the scriptures. In essence, it is to claim that many of the books of Scripture were written by multiple authors, or much later than their purported date. Among the most notorious of these claims is the notion that Isaiah only wrote up to chapter 40, and that the remaining chapters were written by a deutero-Isaiah and even a third author. These scholars try to outdo each other, and have even gotten to the level of removing a substantial number of chapters and verses from the authorship of Isaiah, even within the first forty chapters. Gladly, there have been many who have ably defended the integrity of the book, both Jew and Gentile. A Jewish scholar, for whom I have developed a great love and respect, is Rachel Margalioth. In her book, *The Indivisible Isaiah: Evidence for the Single Authorship of the Prophetic Book*,¹⁶ she goes on to explain a number of turn of phrases that are used in Isaiah, both the first 40 chapters, as well as the last twenty-six. One particular section of her book is called *Thesis and Antithesis*. In it she goes on to show that the same words that are used to rebuke Israel are often used by the same prophetic author to console her. So, here Margalioth has: “**Thesis and antithesis.** [In Midrash Exodus Rabbah 15:29 we read,] ‘The mouth that said, Ah SINFUL NATION (ISAIAH 1:4), is the mouth that said: Open ye the gates, that the RIGHTEOUS NATION ... may enter in (ISAIAH 26:2). The

the inspired translation from the 1568 Bishop’s Bible: “And if it be saide vnto him, How came these woundes then in thyne handes? He shal aunswere: Thus was I wounded in the house of myne owne friendes” and the 1599 Geneva Bible: “And one shall say vnto him, What are these woundes in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Thus was I wounded in the house of my friendes.” This and other verses have been wholly corrupted in the latter days. For instance, instead of **thine hands** we may read, ‘back’ (RSV,AAT, JPS Tanakh), ‘chest’ (HCSB), ‘body’ (NIV), “between the hands,” “between the shoulders,” or “between your arms” (RV 1885, HNV, World English Bible). And instead of ‘friends’ we may even read ‘lovers’ (AAT), or “harlot’s house” (Moffatt) such as to yield an increasingly corrupt text that reads something like: “What are these sores on your chest? Those received at my lover’s home.” In Hebrew, the word בֵּינָיִם (BEYIN) most frequently does mean *between*. So that in Hebrew, one may refer to the nose as that which is between the eyes, and so on. However, even Gesenius, the great Jewish Hebraist, admits that בֵּינָיִם has other meanings, including *intra*, within, as in Job 24:11, Proverbs 26:13 and yes, Zechariah 13:6! Gesenius also uses the word amongst, such that, בֵּינָיִם הַרְחֵבֵם means “within the streets,” or rather “in the streets” (*Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 1870, p. 114). So, returning to our verse in Zechariah 13:6, we translate בֵּינָיִם יְהוָה as “in your hands.” Gladly, we do not have only the KJV tradition that preserved the correct translation, but also modern revelation. These are the words that the Prophet Joseph Smith received in a revelation 7 March 1831, “Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God” (D&C 45:52).

¹⁶ I strongly encourage the reader to consult this wonderful book.

mouth that said: A PEOPLE LADEN WITH INIQUITY (ISAIAH 1:4), is the mouth that said: THY PEOPLE ALSO SHALL BE ALL RIGHTEOUS (ISAIAH 60:21). The mouth that said: CHILDREN THAT DEAL CORRUPTLY (ISAIAH 1:4), is the mouth that said: AND ALL THY CHILDREN SHALL BE TAUGHT OF THE LORD (ISAIAH 54:13). The mouth that said: A SEED OF EVIL-DOERS (ISAIAH 1:4), is the mouth that said: AND THEIR SEED SHALL BE KNOWN AMONG THE NATIONS (ISAIAH 61:9). The mouth that said: YEA, WHEN YE MAKE MANY PRAYERS, I WILL NOT HEAR (ISAIAH 1:15), is the mouth that said: And it shall come to pass that, BEFORE THEY CALL, I WILL ANSWER (ISAIAH 65:24). The mouth that said: Your NEW MOONS and your appointed seasons My soul hateth (ISAIAH 1:4), is the mouth that said: And it shall come to pass, that from one NEW MOON¹⁷ to another (ISAIAH 66:23).’ In this midrashic statement the sages point to Isaiah’s custom of prophesying solace in the same words and expressions he employs in his rebukes. This method of turning phrases of rebuke and evil portent into blessing and consolation is common ... to all the prophets. In the case of every prophet we find prophecies of consolation expressed in the same vocabulary he employs for evil, and which is peculiar only to him.” What Margalioth has done, then, is to find such examples to share with us from throughout Isaiah. Beside their importance in pointing to the unity of Isaiah, there is yet another key principle that can be underscored here. And it is this, that the Lord loves Israel. If this is not understood—which is the case by so many of the commentators who seem to have a deep hatred towards the Jews—then we do not see that the future for Israel shall be glorious indeed. In the end of days, or in the latter days, Israel will once again be favored by the Lord. It is not possible to understand Isaiah without grasping this essential point. This turning of *rebuke* to *consolation*, or the *Hosea Principle* (see my introductory chapter, GREAT ARE THE WORDS OF ISAIAH). For instance, in In ISAIAH 54:7 we read, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.”

5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more^v: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

✓ increase revolt

Israel has been injured spiritually. ¶ *Why should ye be stricken any more?* Are not the punishments suffered sufficient? It suggests to the children of Israel a remembrance of the consequences set out in the Law for doing evil (*Rain in Due Season*). The allusion to

¹⁷ “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 66:23)

Deuteronomy 28:35, where rebellious Israel has been stricken from the sole of her foot to the top of her head is clear: “The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head.” The Douay, leaning on the Vulgate (V), reads, “For what shall I strike you any more ...?” meaning “Where [or, on what part] can I strike you that I have not already done so?” This also reminds us of Pharaoh, who although afflicted by one disaster after another, only after the Lord took his firstborn son did he permit the children of Israel to leave—and even then he had second thoughts that caused him to follow after them and ended in his own death. ¶ *Ye will revolt more and more.* Same signification as above, how far will Israel go before repudiating sin and turning around? ¶ *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.* We receive impressions of the Spirit through our heart (general impressions) and through our mind (more specific instructions) so if our head and our heart are faint and sick, then this is a sure sign of apostasy. In Hebrew, the *heart* or **לֵב** is considered the “the seat of the senses, affections, and emotions ... [and is also] the seat of will and purpose” (Gesenius).

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head [there is] no soundness in it; [but] wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. ✓

✓ or, oil

Israel’s apostasy is compared to an injured body. The injuries are extensive. The children of Jacob have suffered every type of spiritual disease. “The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head” (Deuteronomy 28:35, *Rain in Due Season*). ¶ *From the sole of the foot even unto the head.* This expression can be used both for feelings of conviction (e.g., when I first opened the Book of Mormon, and read the promise found in Moroni, as it was used in that paperback copy, I was filled with the Holy Ghost throughout my body) or in this case, of wickedness. ¶ *There is no soundness in it.* Soundness means health or lack of disease. ¶ *But wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.* Not only is there disease, but it is composed of the most serious injury. Elder Dale G. Renlund quoted this verse in Isaiah and said: “God uses disease as a metaphor for sin throughout the scriptures ... the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ views disease in His sheep as a condition that needs treatment, care, and compassion. This shepherd, our Good Shepherd, finds joy in seeing His diseased sheep

progress toward healing.”¹⁸ ¶ *They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.* Lowth has, “The art of medicine in the East consists chiefly in external applications. ... So the good Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounds of the distressed Jew: wine, cleansing and somewhat astringent, proper for a fresh wound; oil, mollifying and healing (see Luke 10:34).” These wounds that Israel has received had not begun to close or heal, nor had they been cleaned and treated with any curing ointment, nor had they been bound up or taped to keep further infection out, and thus promote healing.

7 Your country [is] desolate, your cities [are] burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and [it is] desolate, as overthrown ✓ by strangers.

✓ the overthrow of

After a brief summary of spiritual disease, and a comparison of how that disease compares to a body, now we hear how Israel would suffer the temporal ailments taught in the Law of Moses (*Rain in Due Season*) for disobedience. Isaiah sees future events as if they had already taken place, through the *Prophetic Perfect*. Scriptures often have multiple applications. This is one reason why Nephi taught us to *liken all scriptures unto us*. We know that Oliver Cowdery likened this verse to the Lost Tribes, that is, to the northern kingdom, but this does not mean that they did not apply every whit as much to Judah. All of Israel, indeed, would suffer the consequences for disobedience: Ephraim first and Judah second. Regarding Ephraim, we have this from Oliver Cowdery: “Isaiah who was on the earth at the time the ten tribes of Israel were led away captive from the land of Canaan, was shown, not only their calamity and affliction, but the time when they were to be delivered.”¹⁹ Ephraim,

¹⁸ Elder Dale G. Renlund, Our Good Shepherd, April 2017 General Conference.

¹⁹ In an open letter to W. W. Phelps, published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, Oliver Cowdery recounted some of what the angel Moroni had shown Joseph Smith the night that he appeared by Joseph Smith’s bedside, as well as in their meetings by the place where the Book of Mormon was deposited. Oliver wrote, “And it will come to pass, that though the house of Israel has forsaken the Lord... and been cast out before the face of the world, they will know the voice of the Shepherd when he calls upon them this time; for soon his day of power comes, and in it his people will be willing to hearken to his counsel; and even now are they already beginning to be stirred up in their hearts to search for these things, and are daily reading the ancient prophets, and are marking the times, and seasons of their fulfillment. Thus God is preparing the way for their return” (p. 111). Cowdery, Oliver, et al., eds. *Messenger and Advocate: The Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*. Kirtland, Ohio: Letter to W. W. Phelps from Oliver Cowdery. February 1835 and continued April 1835. Electronic text

indeed, would be carried captive by Assyria, around 721 BC.²⁰ While a small remnant would make it back to Samaria and intermingle with other peoples, the rest would be lost to the world but *not* to God. The second group to be carried away captive was Judah, and while some of Judah was absorbed into the Babylonian people, a remnant was permitted to return and build the Temple in Jerusalem. ¶ *Your country [is] desolate.* The warnings in *Rain in Due Season* include: “The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes” (Leviticus 26:43); “... and your high ways shall be desolate” (Leviticus 26:22); “...and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste” (Leviticus 26:33); and, “And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldst not obey the voice of the LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 28:62). And all of this did happen as Ephraim first, and Judah next, were carried away captive: “For he rent Israel (i.e., tore, removed the northern kingdom) from the house of David (i.e., leaving Judah, or the southern kingdom); and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the LORD removed Israel [Ephraim, or Lost Tribes] out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day” (2 Kings 17:21–23). There were many Kings of Israel after Jeroboam, but this scripture summarizes the whole of the history of the northern kingdom in those three verses, from the time of Solomon’s death to the time they were carried away captive by Assyria. We can also read about Judah’s removal by Babylon: “And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land” (2 Kings 24:14). The people of Judah were carried away in several successive waves and the land was left all but completely destitute. ¶ *Your cities are burned with fire.* We have a historical account of the burning of Jerusalem, related to her conquest: “And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a

servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man’s house burnt he with fire” (2 Kings 25:8–9). ¶ *Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.* (“Before your eyes strangers devour your land” —REB) And from *Rain in Due Season*: “I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it” (Leviticus 26:16). This then, would mean that while the children of Jacob would plant, others would harvest and consume it.

8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

And the daughter of Zion, בַּת־צִיּוֹן. This expression is meant to signify Jerusalem. Over time the word ‘Zion’ has come to mean a number of things. Zion was the name given to a fortified hill between the valleys of Kedron and Tyropoeon, even before Jerusalem was conquered by David. This fortification later took on the name of the “city of David” (HBD). For Latter-day Saints, Zion also has several additional meanings, to include (1) all of the American continent, (2) anywhere where the “pure in heart” dwell, and (3) Jackson County in Missouri: “And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the Saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord shall also be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and shall be called Zion” (D&C 45:66–67). In this verse, Zion, especially with the expression *daughter of Zion*, refers to Jerusalem. ¶ *Is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.* The idea is that of a very small dwelling, often temporary,²¹ not much bigger than the space that would be taken up by a single bed and providing a little protection against the inclemency of the elements. The purpose of these dwellings was to house a watchman that would make sure human thieves (Barnes) or animals (Lowth) would not come in and steal before the harvest. In contrast to the sea of vegetation around them, these dwellings would account for an insignificant amount of land. So would it be with Jerusalem, the rest of Judah would have been lost to the enemy and it alone would remain, with a solitude that would stand out. And like a desolated cottage is abandoned and allowed to decay, or

prepared by the Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1991, see pp. 78–80, 108–112.

²⁰ One last time, any dates given are approximate as there are several date timelines that have been suggested and I do not intend to choose one over another.

²¹ “He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh” (Job 27:18).

is removed after its usefulness is over, Barnes (cf. Lowth) suggests that Jerusalem would be likewise destroyed. ¶ *As a besieged city*. Jerusalem would be left as a besieged city. A siege can be of short or long duration, and consists of eliminating, to the greatest extent possible, all sources of water and food so those inside will be weakened to the point that they will either surrender or will not be able to put up much resistance under attack. For now Jerusalem would be allowed to stand yet the time would come when she would also be destroyed.

9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, [and] we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Except the LORD of hosts. *Hosts* means *armies*. When associated with the title *Lord of Hosts*, as it is here, it means the *armies of heaven*. The word *hosts* in Hebrew is צְבָאוֹת (whose transliteration is *tzebaoth*, or *sabaoth*²²). The same Hebrew pronunciation is retained in the Greek (σαβαωθ), both in the LXX (6) as well as in the New Testament (e.g., Romans 9:29). Only because of the Lord’s tender mercies and loving kindness, then, the punishment was not total and absolute. ¶ *Had left unto us a very small remnant*. When speaking about a remnant a similarity can be drawn between the children of Israel as a whole, and the descendants of Joseph in particular, whose coat was torn into many pieces by his brothers (Alma 46:23). We read that “Jacob, before his death, for behold, he saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said—Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment” (Alma 40:24b). We know that a remnant of Joseph was preserved through the peoples who inhabited the American continent, as well as other peoples whom the Lord has kept, which are part of the Lost Tribes. The preservation of Judah would take a different form. In Judah’s patriarchal blessing we read that a ruler would be given to the children of Judah until the Savior would come: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people be” (Genesis 49:10). The

²² The Doctrine and Covenants uses at times *Hosts* (e.g., “... written in the book of the law of God, saith the Lord of Hosts ...” D&C 85:5, and at times *Sabaoth* (e.g., “... the alms of your prayers have come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth ...” D&C 88:2). Not to be confused with Sabbath.

word *Shiloh* or tranquil (Strong) may be short for *Asher-lo*, that means “whose right it is” (LDS Footnote, Genesis 10c). Another possible signification for Shiloh is “his descendant” (DOTW) meaning, *the Messiah*. “... the Messiah who is called Shilo ...” (Genesis 50:24 JST). It is important to note that the sceptre or right to rule was indeed miraculously kept within the descendants of Judah, and more specifically, of King David. Even after the time of Christ, the people of Judah have been permitted to retain their national identity. While in Judah the power stayed within the Davidic line, in Ephraim it changed from one ruler to another in a continual saga of one *coup d’etat* after another. ¶ *Sodom ... Gomorrah*. The destruction of these two wicked cities was total and absolute: “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground” (Genesis 19:24–25). In *Rain in Due Season* we read that strangers would come upon the land and find it so devastated that it would give them cause to wonder, for they would find “the whole of the land thereof is brimstone, and salt, *and burning*, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah ...” (Deuteronomy 29:23, also see vv. 22–29).

vv. 10–15. The Lord once again asks to be heard, this time of both the rulers and of the people. All the offerings and sacrifices, equivalent to the partaking of the sacrament, have been offered unworthily and so are sources of condemnation to those who have brought them forth: “... all that be clean shall eat thereof. But the soul that eateth *of* the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which pertain unto the Lord, even that soul shall be cut off from his people” (Leviticus 7:19b–20).

10 ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the LORD, שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר יְהוָה. A call to pay attention and hearken (cp. v. 2) to the *word* (דְבַר, also see ISAIAH 40:8 notes). The Lord is about to correct Israel. God wishes to do the same for us, if we will let Him point out where we need to improve. “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness” (Ether 12:27a, see also vv. 26 ff.). ¶ *Ye rulers of Sodom*. *Rulers* probably referred to both secular leaders and priesthood leadership that had gone astray. “There could have been no more severe or cutting reproof ...” (Barnes) than to speak to Israel’s leadership in this way. Isaiah did not seem to be much

concerned about censorship. ¶ *Give ear unto the law of our God.* ¶ This was a reminder to study Scripture, *instruction* or *doctrine* (Gesenius), literally the **Torah** of our God, תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ, or Law, and to do as commanded. In its more general sense, it includes all of Scripture. ¶ *Ye people of Gomorrah.* The words *people* and *Gomorrah* begin with the same sounds, עַם עֲמֹרָה, giving them additional strength. It was not only the leadership, but also the people who needed to listen and repent. The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah was well known: “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly” (Genesis 13:13).

11 To what purpose [is] the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. ✓

✓ great he-goats

To what purpose. There was an important reason for the sacrifices under the Law of Moses, just as there is in the partaking of the sacrament today. It was to remember the Lord and His redeeming sacrifice. But when these things become a thoughtless ritual then they are worthless. And when partaken unworthily, they become a condemnation unto the partaker: “For whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul” (3 Nephi 18:29a) and furthermore “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 15:8a) and more especially so when “he bringeth it with a wicked mind” (Proverbs 21:27b). Also see 1 Corinthians 11:27–30). ¶ *is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?* The false outer expression of piety (in terms of many sacrifices or long prayers) does not make up for a lack of inner conviction. ¶ *Saith the LORD:* (אָמַר יְהוָה). This is a reminder that Isaiah was speaking the *word of the Lord*. What a privilege, indeed, is to be able to speak on behalf of the Lord as moved by the Holy Ghost, under Priesthood authority, through the principle of *Divine Investiture* (see ISAIAH 52:7). ¶ *I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts.* Full, שָׂבַעְתִּי, in the Hebrew, often means *satisfied*. But it can also mean to overeat to the point of nausea, as in the Spanish word *hostigado*, related to the overeating of a particular food until a person does not ever want to see it, smell it, or eat it again. This is what happened to the children of Israel as they murmured in the wilderness, “And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves

against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?” (Numbers 11:18–20). Lowth reminds us that *fat* and *blood* were not to be consumed by men, but rather, offered to God in sacrifice (Leviticus 3:17; 4:7–8,16–19 ff.). “The fat and the blood are particularly mentioned, because these were in all sacrifices set apart to God. The fat was always burnt upon the altar; and the blood was partly sprinkled, differently on different occasions, and partly poured out at the bottom of the altar” (Lowth). ¶ *I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.* The main idea is that man should provide a sacrifice based on obedience, one that will be acceptable to the Lord: “Hath the Lord as *great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22b). See also Amos 5:21–24,²³ for a parallel passage, in which the Lord refuses the burnt offerings and the melody of viols and instead requires: “But let thy judgment (מִשְׁפָּט, i.e., righteousness) run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (v. 24).

12 When ye come to appear ✓ before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

✓ be seen

Appear before me ... tread my courts. To come before the Lord, in the context of this verse, “tread my courts,” is a reference to the temple. LITV has, “When you come to see My face....” Leeser has: “When ye come to appear in my presence.” The Law of Moses had strict rules in terms of worthiness, or *cleanliness*, to enter the temple, as does the Lord, today. Delitzsch has: “This [verse] is a standing expression for the appearance of all male Israelites in the temple at three high festivals, as prescribed by the law, and then for visits to the temple generally.” Matthew Henry observes that such visits to

²³ “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21–24).

“his courts he calls *treading them*, or trampling upon them.” Certainly, the image of animals being herded through the sacred edifice comes to mind. Skinner has: “*to appear before me*] RV margin|| (following one Hebrew MS) suggests **to see my face**, which is grammatically easier. It is thought that here and elsewhere the traditional text has substituted the passive for the active so as to avoid the appearance of anthropomorphism.” ¶ Barnes has: “*To tread my courts*] The courts of the temple were the different areas or open spaces which surrounded it. None entered the temple itself but the priests. The people worshipped God in the courts assigned them around the temple. In one of those courts was the altar of burnt-offerings; and the sacrifices were all made there. To tread his courts was an expression therefore, equivalent to, to worship. To tread the courts of the Lord here, has the idea of profanation. Who has required you to tread those courts with this hollow, heartless service?” Or, in a state of impurity.

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; [it is] iniquity, ✓ even the solemn meeting.

✓ or, grief

Bring no more vain oblations. The Lord does not desire any more offerings born out of emptiness and meaningless externalities. This is because, once again, the offerings brought to the Lord are in remembrance of the expiatory and sacred offering of the Son of God: “Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered” (2 Nephi 2:6–7). When our offerings to the Lord are born of anything less than a broken heart and contrite spirit, they become vain oblations, an abomination and iniquity. Next, several ceremonies are listed, all of which had become meaningless because of the way they were offered. ¶ *Incense is an abomination unto me.* At the time of the Tabernacle in the wilderness the Lord instructed for an altar of incense to be *put before the veil* that was by the *ark of the testimony*, “And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon” (Exodus 30:1, 6). Incense is representative of *prayer*, “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense” (Psalm 141:2a). ¶ *The new moons.* The Jewish calendar functions from one month to the next measured in “lunarities” or “moons.” Because lunar months do not fit exactly into a solar

year, complete extra months are added to the calendar in a systematic way. The word **שִׁבְעָה** for “new moon” or “month” is derived from a Hebrew word pointed **שָׁבַע** and that means “to make new, to renew, restore” (AHCL). This was an appointed sacred day, whose first mention is found in Numbers 10:10b “in the beginnings of your months,” (sometimes translated as “new-moon” feasts, e.g., NAB, NJB, Tanakh). The sacred day began when the “thin crescent of the new moon was first visible at sunset” (TWOT). The exact beginning of each new month was important in terms of other sacred days, also. Special watchers would be stationed in the hills surrounding Jerusalem and they would start fires on the top of these watch posts to indicate that the new moon had been spotted. Israel’s foes would start fires at the wrong times to cause confusion (LDS Bible Dictionary). The new-moon feast seems to have been treated as a Sabbath (cp. Amos 8:5a “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn²⁴?”) and would be a celebration marking the beginning of each month. A large number of offerings were required (Numbers 28:11–15). ¶ *And Sabbath* (**שַׁבָּת**). When Sabbath appears together with “new moon” it is probably speaking of the weekly Sabbath rather than the 7th year Sabbath (Delitzsch). It is not the observance of the Sabbath day that the Lord abhorred, but its empty observance, devoid of true religious sentiment (see ISAIAH 58). ¶ *The calling of assemblies.* In Numbers 10:2, 10, we find that Moses was commanded by the Lord to have two *trumpets*—or **תְּצַבְרָה**—of silver made for the purpose of calling various assemblies while in the wilderness. The house of Israel was to assemble themselves at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation when these trumpets were played unless they were played as an alarm (see Numbers 10:1–10). ¶ *Even the solemn meeting.* Probably equivalent to *solemn assemblies*, the last or concluding day of assemblage (e.g., the eight day in Numbers 29:35 ff.). These solemn assemblies were especially sacred days (Barnes). The special sacredness of these meetings also characterizes today’s solemn assemblies in the restored Church. In the Doctrine and Covenants we see that solemn assemblies are mentioned in connection with study, learning, and consecration as received in the temples of our Lord (D&C 88:117 ff.; 95; 109; 124:39) wherein the Saints can be endowed with power and

²⁴ Not maize, but rather *grains* such as wheat, oats, etc. In the AV the word corn means *grain*. This is something that I learned from Rabbi Shaye J.D. Cohen. For instance, to note two examples, where in Wycliffe the term wheat is used in Genesis 27:28 and 27:32, in the KJV we have the word corn, instead. Geneva also uses wheat. The AV followed after the Bishops’ Bible in using the word corn instead of wheat. Most Bibles today use the word wheat or grain (e.g., ABP {LXX (6)}, AMP, ASV, BBE, CEV, ESV, GNB, GW, HCSB, ISV, JUB, LEB, LITV, MKJV, NASB, as well as most Spanish editions).

learning from on high (it seems that the Lord is telling us that we can receive knowledge directly through the exercise of faith unto revelation, as well as through the study of the best books ... teaching one another). Those occasions when we sustain a new prophet, seer and revelator in the Church at general conference, are also called solemn assemblies. In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we find that temple dedications as solemn assemblies, as are some very special meetings where counsel is received from the Brethren, either at the temple or sometimes in other edifices such as stake buildings. Generally, these are for special instruction to priesthood holders, and sometimes the Sacrament is passed in such solemn assemblies.²⁵

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them].

Your new moons and your appointed feasts. The Lord is rejecting all of the appointed feasts or religious celebrations, each of which was designed to remember Him (*new moons*, see ISAIAH 1:13). ¶ *My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them].* These are strong words to indicate the displeasure of the Lord at these purposeless assemblies and hollow sacrifices. The Lord and Savior would literally bear or carry that awful burden of our sins, in His eternal expiatory sacrifice, during His mortal ministry.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. ✓ ✓

✓ multiply prayer ✓ ✓ bloods

And when ye spread forth your hands. Different peoples show reverence in prayer by folding their arms, by bringing hands together either clasped or not, and some by spreading forth their hands. From my own youth, I remember an older lady spreading her arms out away from her body, in prayer, in front of a Catholic chapel in Villa Alegre, Chile. This caused me quite an impression as I had never seen this custom before. In the New Testament the Savior spoke against those who prayed to be noticed of others, “for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men” (Matthew 6:5b), “and for a pretence make long prayer” (Matthew 23:14b). In Solomon’s dedicatory prayer, this spreading forth of the arms was done in righteousness: “And Solomon stood

before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven” (1 Kings 8:22). ¶ *I will hide mine eyes from you:* These sacred words have much to say about prayer, and our personal preparation that is required. Scripture teaches us the extreme opposites of how our prayers may be received. At the one extreme, God hides His eyes and will not hear our prayers, as in this verse. Other examples include: “And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; *so they cried, and I would not hear*, saith the LORD of hosts: But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate” (Zechariah 7:9–14, emphasis added); and “They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; *and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.* Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. *Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them* in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble” (Jeremiah 11:10–14, emphasis added). Also, “They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, *the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.* In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me” (D&C 101:7–8, emphasis added). In yet another example of the *Hosea Principle* this Scripture continues: “Verily I say unto you, notwithstanding their sins, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them. I will not utterly cast them off; and in the day of

²⁵ *Encyclopeida of Mormonism*, Vol. 3, Solemn Assemblies, Richard E. Turley, Jr.

wrath I will remember mercy” (D&C 101:9). At the other extreme we have such scriptures as Psalm 138:3, ISAIAH 58:8–9a, 1 John 5:14–15, and ISAIAH 65:24. As we shall see, the Lord will not only hear our prayers but answer these even before they are uttered. ¶ *Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.* We are to avoid repetitive prayers. In fact, the Lord gives us the key whereby our prayers may be heard: “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Proverbs 8:17). To love the Lord is to keep his statutes. To seek Him early is to turn to the Lord not only in the day of our trouble, but also in the day of our peace.²⁶

²⁶ *So, how do we pray?* There is a promise in the Book of Mormon that has become my pattern to prayer: “Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:3–5). As I write these words, I am only a few years away from my 40th anniversary of my baptism and confirmation. If I am honest, I must admit that it was not easy to truly understand *how to pray*: and do so in such a way that *we can know our prayers have been heard*. Even though I am still learning how to pray, I would like to share a few things I have discovered about prayer. To me, prayer is the essence of religion. It is a communion between God and man. Scripture study and prayer are my stay and my staff (ISAIAH 3:1). When we pray, we address God the Eternal Father, and we do so in the name of His beloved Son, even Jesus Christ. In the olden days, people who traveled to faraway lands would do so with a letter of introduction. Such a letter would open many doors. By coming in the name of Christ, we can dare approach the Father in prayer. It was Christ Himself who repeatedly taught us to address the Father in Jesus’ name: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23b). We pray while we walk, while we talk, while we study, and not just when we can take the time to kneel down. If we are able to kneel there is something very special about doing so. We add our testimony that indeed the time will come when “Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ.” I like to think that the particular answer to my prayer is less important, when it is a petition, than knowing that the prayer was heard by our Father. It helps to first meditate upon some of the things that I am grateful for. Then I can kneel down and address the Father, tell Him of those things I am grateful for, speak of my love for Him, and ask one simple question. “Father, hast thou heard my prayer?” I can then ‘listen’ for the reassurance of the Spirit that indeed my prayer has been heard of the Father. For me, this is normally a feeling of comfort or warmth. I can now thank the Father for having heard me, and do so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. We now know what an affirmative answer feels like. We can now take a ‘spiritual photograph’ of what we are feeling. So we have a pattern: we ponder in a spirit of gratitude, we thank the Father, we ask Him a question, and we feel of His loving comfort through the Spirit. Through this pattern we have a key to ask other questions. “Is the Book of Mormon the book mentioned by Ezekiel 37:15–28 that, together with the Bible, would help bring the remnant of Israel and all peoples unto Christ?” “Am I making the right choice in dating such a person?” “Is this a good field for me to study at the university?” “Should I begin to look for a different job?” An affirmative answer to these questions will be much like the

¶ *Your hands are full of blood.* The verse began with the words, “when ye spread forth your hands” and now ends again with the word hands. For the hands that have been spread out to pray in hypocrisy now attempt to hide their bloody and murderous deeds: “Jerusalem,

comforting one we received when we asked if God had heard our prayer. A *negative* answer to our inquiry is *not* a spirit of fear—such a spirit comes from Satan—but rather *silence*, or a *stupor of thought* (D&C 9:9). We now have a key to asking questions regarding matters that are important in our lives. One day I realized that this is precisely the pattern of prayer taught to us in Moroni 10:3–5. “Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts” (Moroni 10:3). Here we are exhorted to be filled with a spirit of gratitude for what God has done for us. To ponder His tender mercies from the creation of Adam until now brings to mind one of my favorite scenes of all time, when the Savior walked along two of His disciples on the way to Emmaus and expounded the scriptures to them: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). What a better way to be filled with gratitude than to immerse ourselves in the Scriptures. “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). We have already spoken about the importance of addressing the Father in the name of Christ. Moroni 10:4 also calls for *faith in Christ* and confidence that we will receive an answer. So it is that we read in James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:5–6). Let us not be afraid to ask. We have been commanded of the Savior to *pray always* (Luke 21:36b). Our attitude in prayer needs to be *submissive to the will of the Father*. If we really do not want to know the will of the Father, we will probably not receive an answer. If we want to tell the Father what we want done, rather than ask that His will be carried out, we will probably not receive an answer, either. To ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, means that we will act upon the answer. God does not want us to be like the people of Judah who approached Jeremiah the Prophet to inquire of the Lord for them. The people seemed, on the surface, committed to do as commanded: “Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 42:5–6). The Prophet Jeremiah did inquire of the Lord on their behalf, but the answer enraged the people so much that they reviled the Prophet and accused him of speaking falsely (Jeremiah 43:2). “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5). Through this simple pattern of prayer to the Father in the name of Christ, then, we may receive reassurance from the Spirit about proceeding through life’s most difficult mazes. God loves us so much, that He is concerned over those things we are concerned about and says, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (ISAIAH 41:10). So, let us pray in confidence, full of assurance that God will hear our prayers. While some promises that God makes to us may take some time before they are realized, they will come to pass. (Based on my blog, *Moroni 10:3-5: A Perfect Pattern of Prayer*, 27 June 2010).

Jerusalem, [thou] that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee ..." (Matthew 23:37). Also see ISAIAH 66:3.

vv. 16–20. These verses call Israel to repentance. Through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ we can be made clean. As in *Rain in Due Season*, the choice is placed clearly before us between joy and life everlasting on the one hand, and the negative consequence of disobedience on the other. Clear guidance is given as to what constitutes godliness is given in these verses.

16 ¶ Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Wash you, make you clean; The scriptures are replete with references to ceremonial washings, including baptism for the remission of sins, as well as ordinances performed in the Temple, "how shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name?" (e.g., D&C 124:37). But this washing and cleansing is not external only, but a reflection of faith and repentance. Delitzsch suggests that "wash you" has reference to the major act of repentance when turning to God, while "make you clean" to the daily repentance of someone who has already turned his life to God. Certainly this fits in well with the concept of baptism for the remission of sins. ¶ President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that: "There are some references in the Old Testament (Psalm 51:2, 7; ISAIAH 1:16; 48:1) to washings, which could well mean baptisms . . . The Book of Mormon make the fact very clear that baptism was practiced among the Jews, and in the writings of Moses which have been restored, we learn that baptism was taught to Adam, and he was commanded to teach it to his children."²⁷ One such example includes: "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 baptism ..." (1 Nephi 20:1a, cf. ISAIAH 48:1). ¶ *Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil.*

President Ezra T. Benson explained that true repentance is more than mere confession. "It is a deep, burning, and heartfelt sorrow for sin that will drive us to our knees in humility and tears—a deep, heartfelt sorrow for sin that produces a reformation of life."²⁸ We must have an overwhelming desire to cease to do evil before the Lord, and not only that, but to desire to do good. Two of Satan's greatest lies are that (1) we can just repent later,

when it is more convenient, and (2) that we have gone beyond the point where there can be hope for us. Fear of man and lack of confidence in God can keep us from repenting. Repentance is a *principle of joy*. The moment we recognize our sins and commit ourselves to a course correction, confessing our sins and seeking to make restitution and reaching out to others when appropriate, we can then be in the path of eternal joy. When repentance is sincere we then become "cleansed by the blood of the Lamb" (Mormon 9:6, also see vv. 4–5).

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve ✓ the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

✓ or, righten

Learn to do well. It is not sufficient to cease to do evil, but it is also needful to learn to do well. To *learn* implies an effort that takes time. This is not a facile change, but a lifelong effort that requires taking one step at a time. It entails walking in the light, and abandoning darkness. It necessitates not only study of the Word, but practice of it. ¶ *Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* The Lord, through Isaiah, lists four important things that need to be added to the command to do good: (1) seek judgment (i.e., *justice, righteousness*). To seek means to actively go after something, in this case justice or righteousness. To always have an eye out for right to triumph over evil, good over bad; (2) Relieve the oppressed (*deliver him that is suffering wrong*, LXX (6); *do good to the oppressed*, Syriac —S²⁹). Succor those who have fallen under misfortune. What sort of succoring are we to do? "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matthew 25:35–36); (3) judge the fatherless (*hear the orphan's plea*, NAB). Make sure to work towards helping God's children who have no one to worry about them. (4) Plead for the widow (*obtain justice for the widow*, LXX). A woman who no longer has the protection of her husband, and this would include not only the widow, but the single or divorced mother, is as we have said, someone who is susceptible to being taken advantage, ignored, or being discounted. Man ought to honor woman and womanhood. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a millstone were

²⁷ Smith, Joseph Fielding. *Answers to Gospel Questions*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957. Volume I, p. 51.

²⁸ Benson, Ezra Taft. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1988, pp.74–75.

²⁹ For the Syriac, we use George M. Lamsa, *Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts: Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated from the Peshitta, The Authorized Bible of the Church of the East*, A.J. Holman Company: Philadelphia, 1957; and the *Biblia Peshitta and Español: Traducción de los Antiguos Escritos en Arameo*, Holman Bible Publishers, 2006.

hanged about his neck, and [that] he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). While this scripture has reference to little ones as those who have humbled themselves as a child to accept the Lord, application to the treatment of defenseless and oppressed, whether they be women, children, or foreigners (or *stranger*³⁰), fits in well. When we make baptismal covenants we agree “to be called his [Christ’s] people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:8b–9a).

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Israel’s past, no matter how evil, would at the end not stand in the way of the Holy One of Israel coming to make Israel holy. Such a magnificent work has already begun to take place with the restoration of the Gospel. Elder Orson Pratt said, “In the 21st chapter of Luke, our Savior, in speaking of the evils that should befall the Jewish nation, says, ‘And they (the Jews) shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’ This has been fulfilled literally upon the Jewish nation, and they have been scattered, according to this prediction, among all nations. Many of them were destroyed by the edge of the sword. Jerusalem was taken some seventy years after the birth of Christ, and has been in possession of the Gentiles from that day to this [26 March 1876].³¹ Jesus told them that such should be the fact, that Jerusalem should be in the possession of the Gentiles, and should be trodden down by them until a certain period—until their times should be fulfilled. The great object of the angel in restoring the Gospel was, in the first place, to fulfill the times of the Gentiles. Inquires one— ‘What do you mean by that?’ I mean that God will send this Gospel, restored by an angel, to every nations, kindred, people, and tongue in the Gentile world [i.e., Gentile nations—GB] before he will permit his servants to go to the scattered remnants of Israel [perhaps he meant Judah—GB]; and

³⁰ “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21).

³¹ This glorious prophecy has been fulfilled and the **קְרִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל** or *State of Israel* has now again become a nation, since 29 November 1947.

they will labor with, preach to and declare the work of God to the Gentile nations, and seek to bring them to a knowledge of the ancient Gospel, and to organize a Church among them, so far as they will hearken to and receive their testimony. Then, when the Gentile nations shall reject this Gospel and count themselves unworthy of eternal life, as the Jews did before them, the Lord will say— ‘It is enough, come away from them, my servants, I will give you a new commission, you shall go to the scattered remnants of the house of Israel. I will gather them in from the four quarters of the earth, and bring them again into their own lands.’³² Each one of us needs to accept the personal invitation to come unto Christ and be cleansed by the atoning blood of the Lamb of God. ¶ *Come now, and let us reason together.* These are certainly powerful words. In the profound context of Scripture, this is a pleading and loving invitation from the Lord to the children of Jacob: repent and be cleansed. This is a standing invitation to each one of us: “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). ¶ *Though your sins be as scarlet... כְּשָׁנִים / though they be red like crimson... יְאֻדִּימוּ כְּתוֹלָע*. The Talmud tradition (Seder Mo’ed, Yoma 67a) explains what would happen on Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement: “Originally they used to tie the thread of crimson wool to the entrance of the Ulam within, and as soon as the he-goat reached the wilderness, it turned white. Then they knew that the commandment concerning it had been fulfilled, as it is said: If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white wool” (Talmud, Soncino). Scarlet and crimson tend to stain. The allusion is even stronger if, as several commentators suggest, scarlet refers to a dyed garment, not just one that is soiled. This is supported by the Targum (Ⲯ),³³ “Though your sins be stained as with dye

³² Pratt, Elder Orson. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 March 1876. Delivered in the Fifteenth Ward Meeting-house, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon. (Reported by David W. Evans.) Restoration of the Gospel Probable and Scriptural—Sent First To The Gentiles, Then To Israel—This is a Gathering Dispensation or The Fullness of Times—Destiny of all Nations, see especially pp. 176–178.

³³ Unless otherwise specified, the Targum (Ⲯ) translation I am providing is the 1871 version by C. W. H. Pauli, *The Chaldee Paraphrase on the Prophet Isaiah*. J. F. Stenning’s Ⲯ translation is often the same but at times has a different rendering worth pointing out. More recently, *The Isaiah Targum* by Bruce Chilton, in the Aramaic Bible series, has been published. Beside these three Ⲯ translations, I have available to me the Ⲯ texts in Aramaic (including some important variants), published by J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah; The Bible in Aramaic* (with superlinear punctuation) published by Alexander Sperber (of more particular interest to us, Volume III, *The Latter Prophets According to Targum Jonathan*); part of which is also included in the electronic version of the Jewish Literary Aramaic version of the Prophets Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project (CAL) published by Logos Software. CAL includes an Aramaic Lexicon. An extensive Ⲯ lexicon is also written by Marcus Jastrow,

&c.” Such a color of scarlet שָׁנִי, explains Lowth, means “twice dipped, or double-dyed; from שָׁנָה, *iterare*, to double, or to do a thing twice.” Although we may wash them, often these spots will not come out. Not unlike grass stains, except even more difficult to remove. The call to repentance extends to all. The Lord is inviting us all to turn unto Him, for *are we not all beggars* before Christ? “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), *even* in the areas we may consider our greatest strengths.³⁴ From

סֵפֶר מִלִּים, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*. The Targum Jonathan is credited to Jonathan Ben Uziel, a student of Hillel.

³⁴ The Prophet Joseph Smith taught “That the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker, and is caught up to dwell with Him” (*History of the Church* 2:8). Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “When people are described as ‘having lost their desire for sin,’ it is they, and they only, who deliberately decided to lose those wrong desires by being willing to ‘give away all [their] sins’ in order to know God (Alma 22:18)” (According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts, October 1996 General Conference). The whole of Alma 41 is an exquisite scripture giving us hope that if our desires are right that we are at least part way there: “And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good” (Alma 41:3). Elder Maxwell also said: “Righteous desires need to be relentless, therefore, because, said President Brigham Young, ‘the men and women, who desire to obtain seats in the celestial kingdom, will find that they must battle every day’” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:14). Therefore, true Christian soldiers are more than weekend warriors... “Do you,” President Young asked, “think that people will obey the truth because it is true, unless they love it? No, they will not” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:55). Thus knowing gospel truths and doctrines is profoundly important, but we must also come to love them. When we love them, they will move us and help our desires and outward works to become more holy... Fortunately for us, our loving Lord will work with us, “even if [we] can [do] no more than desire to believe,” providing we will “let this desire work in [us]” (Alma 32:27). Therefore, declared President Joseph F. Smith, “the education then of our desires is one of far-reaching importance to our happiness in life” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 297). Such education can lead to sanctification until, said President Brigham Young, “holy desires produce corresponding outward works” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:170). Only by educating and training our desires can they become our allies instead of our enemies! Some of our present desires, therefore, need to be diminished and then finally dissolved. For instance, the biblical counsel “let not thine heart envy sinners” is directed squarely at those with a sad unsettlement of soul (Proverbs 23:17). Once again, we must be honest with ourselves about the consequences of our desires, which follow as the night, the day” (According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts, October 1996 General Conference). Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave some suggestions on how we can center our minds on wholesome desires: “To enable us to keep our minds centered on righteousness, we should consciously elect to ponder the truths of salvation in our hearts. Brother Packer yesterday pleaded with eloquence that we sing the songs of Zion in order to center our thoughts on wholesome things. I would like to add that we can also—after we have had the opening song [and may I add prayer] that we may follow the injunction to “pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him” (3 Nephi

18:15b)—call on ourselves to preach a sermon. I have preached many sermons walking along congested city streets, or tramping desert trails, or in lonely places, thus centering my mind on the Lord’s affairs and the things of righteousness; and I might say they have been better sermons than I have ever preached to congregations. If we are going to work out our salvation, we must rejoice in the Lord. We must ponder his truths in our hearts. We must rivet our attention and interests upon him and his goodness to us. We must forsake the world and use all our strength, energies and abilities in furthering his work. I think the Lord’s people should rejoice in him and shout praises to his holy name. Cries of hosannah should ascend from our lips continually” (‘Think on These Things,’ *Ensign* (CR), January 1974, p.45). With the Psalmist I pray: “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalms 51:10a) that I might “[lose] every desire for sin (*History of the Church* 2:8).” And then—through the grace of God and the merits of Christ, after we have put forth our best efforts—we can rejoice in the words of the Prophet Moroni: “And awake, and arise from the dust [away from our spiritual bondage] ... and put on thy beautiful garments... Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot” (Moroni 10:31-33). We often hear people explain that they do not quite understand the atonement of Jesus Christ in all of its grandeur. And perhaps the most difficult part of all is to understand the supernal gift of grace that springs forth out of the atonement and how it all works out in the eternal scheme of things. Certainly, I do not claim to understand. “... for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). What does this scripture mean? The scriptures teach us that true repentance means forsaking of our sins (Mosiah 4:10; Alma 39:9; Ether 11:1; D&C 93:48) and of course, the well known scripture: “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43). Although the Savior has already suffered for all our sins, if we do not repent we will have to suffer also: “Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit” (D&C 19:15-20). At best, I can say I am in the long process of forsaking, but have not forsaken. Sometime around 1990-1991, I was feeling very depressed and despondent because of all of my weaknesses. One day I was reading a newspaper report about someone who had been dishonest. “At least,” I thought to myself, “this is one good quality I have, I am honest.” After having these thoughts I had an open vision in which I saw the many times in my life when I had been dishonest—from both before and after my baptism. One of these scenes particularly stands out in my mind. I was a young lad and was near the door of our large home in Santiago. A poor old woman asked to see my mother. My mother is a very generous person and always gave to the poor—although a few times complained about this duty. I thought I would be doing my mother a favor so she would not have to be bothered by the poor old beggar and

Alma we read this summons: “Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you” (Alma 5:33). ¶ *They shall be as white as snow / they shall be as wool.* I picture the day, when we die, when we will have to see the movie of our life. We will be before Christ, and the stain of our sins will become evident. At that awful moment of despair, when we think all is lost, if we have given ourselves to the Lord in this life and have endured to the end in faithfulness, I picture that the Holy One of Israel will come forth, and plead our cause before the Father. “Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified:

explained that my mother was not home. The woman’s words still ring in my ears, “*¡mentiroso!* (liar!).” I could see this and many other distinct scenes pass by me. It was by no means a short list of scenes. For years I did not understand the purpose of what I had seen. Now I know that God was trying to teach me something about grace. Even in those areas where I thought I may have been “doing well” I would need the grace offered to us through Christ’s atonement. Note that the Spirit only showed me the one area I felt I had done well. I shudder to think what the rest of the movie of my life would have looked like. A little more than ten years later I experienced a related revelation of a completely different nature, one that I also did not understand for years. After my second Sabbatical leave in Chile was coming to a close (2002), the Spirit of God manifested to me that my sins had been forgiven. What should have been a moment of great joy was not, because I did not understand the meaning of what was being said to me. I had gone out with the missionaries once a week during my Sabbatical and through God’s grace the Spirit of God was manifesting to me that the Lord had accepted my offering. But all I could think about was the uselessness of it all. I knew my imperfection. Instead, I should have dropped to my knees in thankfulness. The Lord was saying, in effect, yes, I know your weaknesses, but I also can see the desire of your heart and your effort. I can now see the Lord saying: “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27). We also have: “Nevertheless, the Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things” (Jacob 4:7). So perhaps we can speak of a repentant attitude along with repentance. We may also well speak of the fruits of repentance, such as joy and peace and the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. These also are part of the gift of grace. If we have a great desire to study the word, share the gospel with others, do temple work for our deceased ancestors, improve, do good, choose the right, serve in our callings and answer affirmatively the question that Alma poses: “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:26, also see Alma 5:27–31a), perhaps these are indicators that the grace of God is working within us now despite our imperfections. We have no reason to believe that the grace required for exaltation is something different than the grace we receive in this mortal existence to help us here and now in our efforts to become men and women of God. (From my blog, *Until we have lost every desire for sin*, 25 March 2013 and *Grace—a gift born of the atonement*, 21 April 2015).

Wherefore, Father, spare my brethren [and I believe that at that time He will call us by name] that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life” (D&C 45:4–5). The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ is one that is presented in types and shadows throughout Scripture.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

If ye be willing and obedient. Once we become aware of our own *nothingness*—and this understanding of our nothingness is a gift of God that we can seek earnestly if we have any doubts—then we are in a position to put our faith and confidence in the only person who can save, even Christ Jesus. Nephi taught us that for this purpose we need to *believe* and *be reconciled in Christ*, “for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23b). James seemed to know that many would be confused about the importance of obedience in the last days—not just a statement of belief: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:17–19). A clear understanding is required of us of how both grace and obedience are needed: “This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts” (see *grace*, LDS Bible Dictionary). The Brethren teach that it is not a balance of all the good and evil in our lives that is most important, but rather, the type of person we have become. ¶ *Ye shall eat the good of the land.* This immediately draws our minds to *Rain in Due Season*. “To eat of the good of the land” stands for much more than having food. The promised blessings include a bounty of food, peace in the land, and the making of a fruitful nation. But none of the blessings are as beautiful as the Lord’s promise to establish His covenant with Israel, and then to walk with us (see Leviticus 26:12, *Rain in Due Season*; and notes on ISAIAH 2:3). These same principles apply just as much today as they did in former times: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days. And the rebellious shall be cut off out of the land of Zion, and shall be sent away, and shall not inherit the land” (D&C 64:34–35).

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].

But if ye refuse and rebel. We have the moral agency wherein we can refuse and rebel but then the corresponding consequences will follow. Delitzsch wrote, “Obeying and rebelling are both of them consequences of an act of will.” And so it is that we are free to choose our path, but in so doing we are also choosing our destiny. “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy” (Hosea 10:12a) or “They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same” (Job 4:8) and finally, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). But it is not sufficient to sow good for a time, but rather, we must endure to the end: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). ¶ *Ye shall be devoured with the sword.* The Targum (Ⓒ) renders it, “... ye shall be slain with the sword of the enemy.” Once again, a single one of the curses in *Rain in Due Season* (Leviticus 26:25) is chosen to represent all the others. Every invitation to repent, then, is an invitation to partake of the joy and happiness of the Gospel. “Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul” (Alma 42:16).

vv. 21–31. Through Isaiah, the Lord expresses that Israel has failed him and will need to be chastened, but that a day of restoration would come in that the righteous would be redeemed and the transgressors destroyed. Israel shall be ashamed of her former idol worship. All of the wicked would be burned together.

21 ¶ How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

How is the faithful city become an harlot! This is a reference to Jerusalem, who had sold herself to strange men or nations and refused her true Husband, who was willing and mighty to save. ¶ *It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it.* A lament, for Jerusalem had been the home of justice and righteousness at one time. ¶ *But now murderers.* In contrast, now the wicked, even the murderer, was the new occupant.

22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

This verse continues to contrast Jerusalem to her better days. ¶ *Thy silver is become dross.* Silver needs special care to remain lustrous and beautiful. Else it loses its shine. Not only had it lost its shine, but was full of dross or impurities. So it was that Jerusalem had not only lost her previous splendor, but had also become now full of impurities with the worship of false gods. ¶ *Thy wine mixed with water.* The purity of the wine had been corrupted by being diluted.³⁵ So the power of Jerusalem to influence the lives of men and women for good had been diluted. Jerusalem had been set up to be *a light on a hill, and the salt of the earth*, that is, to be an example to the rest of the world. Now each person who takes upon him or herself the name of the Lord is to also become an example. “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:13–14, 16).

23 Thy princes [are] rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Thy princes [are] rebellious, and companions of thieves. *Noblesse oblige*, is French for nobility obligates. Those in power—either economic, intellectual or of any other type—are morally obligated to share with the less fortunate. Jerusalem’s princes, far from imparting with

³⁵ The strength of wine is directly proportional to the sugar content (also known as degrees Brix) of the grape juice before it is fermented. One commentator suggested that wine was sometimes watered down and sold in this cheapened and diluted state. This accusation is leveled even today, as seen by several editorials in *Grape Grower* magazine (February 2000, pp. 30–31). One person suggested that a particular watered down flavored wine (where other blended juices are included in the process) should not be allowed to be sold as wine, but instead be labeled: “Water, fruit juice &” A contrary opinion is given by Lowth: “It is remarkable, that whereas the Greeks and Latins by *mixed* wine always understood wine diluted and lowered with water, the Hebrew on the contrary generally mean by it wine made stronger and more inebriating, by the addition of higher and more powerful ingredients; such as honey, spices, defrutum, (or wine inspissated by boiling it down to two-thirds, or on-half of the quantity), myrrh, mandragora, opiates, and other strong drugs. Such were the exhilarating, or rather stupifying, ingredients Such was the ‘spiced wine and the juice of pomegranates,’ mentioned Canticles 8:2. ... Thus the drunkard is properly described (Proverbs 23:30), as one ‘that seeketh *mixt* wine;’ and is mighty to *mingle* strong drink’ (ISAIAH 5:22). And hence the Psalmist took that highly poetical and sublime image of the cup of God’s wrath, called by Isaiah (51:17) ‘the cup of trembling.’” Either way, the fine wine had been corrupted by either being made into strong or diluted drink.

the needy, where stealing from them. ¶ *Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards.* Those who should have done their jobs out of a sense of obligation or love, require bribes instead. There are societies that run on bribes, where individuals pay bribes for almost everything, such as buying tickets to travel by train or to escape legal requirements. One way in which the decay of a society is manifested is through the bribes that are required of its citizens. ¶ *They judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.* This is in direct contrast to ISAIAH 1:17. The concerns of the downtrodden, the orphans, widows and foreigners who cannot pay are neglected.

24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

The *mighty One of Israel* אֲבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל. Same idea as Holy One of Israel (ISAIAH 1:4). ¶ *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.* The Lord will eliminate and avenge himself of His enemies. That is, those who having a special responsibility for watching over the Lord's little flock have instead turned wolves. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God. Her princes within her *are* roaring lions; her judges *are* evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets *are* light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law" (Zephaniah 3:1–4).

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

✓ according to pureness

And I will turn my hand upon thee. The Hebrew טָוַן frequently means "turn" or "return," but in this context, means *to do again* or *repeat*. It implies a continual castigation until Israel repents, as in *Rain in Due Season*. "And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, *and will punish you yet seven times for your sins*" (Leviticus 26:23–24, emphasis added). This idea is underscored throughout Leviticus 26. ¶ *And purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.* Another definition for dross,

beside impurities, is the scum or slag that forms around metal that is melted. Several translations render the passage much like this version: "And will smelt away your dross as with lye, And will remove all your alloy" (NAS). The words *lye* and *purity* have the same meaning in Hebrew (HBD). The general idea is that the impurities will be removed or purged as with a very strong alkaline solution or cleanser (also, see notes on ISAIAH 6:9). The Talmud tradition (Seder Mo'ed, Shabbath 139a) has: "And the Holy One, blessed be He, will not cause His Divine presence to rest upon Israel until the wicked judges and officers cease out of Israel, for it is said, And I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin. And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning, etc." (Talmud, Soncino).

26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

And I will restore thy judges as at the first. The Lord set up judges over Israel, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes" (Deuteronomy 16:18a). The Lord established then how judges were to conduct themselves: "and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy 16:18b–20). But the people wanted to be like the rest of the world. And so it is they approached the aging prophet Samuel with these words: "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). The scriptures teach us that Samuel was displeased by such a request, and prayed to the Lord as to what course to take. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (Samuel 8:7). The restoration of the *judges as at the first* also alludes to the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with its ecclesiastical order, with bishops set up as judges in Israel. Regarding the office of bishop, the Lord has said, "And whoso standeth in this mission is appointed to be a judge in Israel, like as it was in ancient days" (D&C 58:17a). And the Lord gives His judges further counsel: "To judge his people by the testimony of the just, and by the assistance of his counselors, according to the laws of the kingdom which are given by the prophets of

God. For verily I say unto you, my law shall be kept on this land. Let no man think he is ruler; but let God rule him that judgeth” (D&C 58:18–20a). Besides these judges, the Lord has set up others, including Prophets, Seers and Revelators, and the Twelve, to be judges over Israel, and over the world. ¶ *And thy counsellors as at the beginning*: The Hebrew root of the word counsel includes the definition “to decree” (AHCL). The greatest of all the judges and counselors (ISAIAH 9:6) is the Lawgiver Himself, the Messiah. In the Millennium the Lord will be among the people as He was in the beginning, when Adam and Eve were in the garden. Messiah is also given the title of the *second David*. “But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them” (Jeremiah 30:9). Hosea is quite explicit, showing that the second David would come on the scene in the latter-days. “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days” (Hosea 3:4–5). ¶ *Afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city*. The day will come when two great cities will be honored. Jerusalem of old, as well as the new Jerusalem. “...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (ISAIAH 2:3, see also, Micah 4:2). In the Book of Revelation we learn more about this holy city, the new Jerusalem, which shall descend from heaven to become part of the Celestial world. There will be no need for either a temple nor for light in the new Jerusalem: “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:22–23). In an address delivered to the High Council in Kirtland, the Prophet Joseph Smith made use of verse 26, *His judges as at the first and when the city of righteousness shall be built* in terms of the great and glorious day of restoration of Israel. In this same address Brother Joseph weaved together the magnificent words of former-day prophets, including Jeremiah, in referring to the last days, “when it shall no longer be said, the Lord lives that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but the Lord lives that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and for all the lands whither He has driven them” (STPJS, pp. 110–111, see also notes on ISAIAH 1:5).

27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts[✓] with righteousness.

✓ or, they that return of her

Zion shall be redeemed with judgment. The Lord had expected righteous judgment, or justice, to be used in defending the widow, the orphan and the foreigner. The object of such judgment was to protect and show mercy. Since the Lord will be the Redeemer, Zion’s redemption will be carried out with such everlasting mercy. “And the nations of the earth shall honor her and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there; And he hath sworn by the power of his might to be her salvation and her high tower. Therefore, verily thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn” (D&C 97:19–21). The redemption of Zion will take place as will the redemption of individuals through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior. ¶ *And her converts* (see margin ||, and they who *return to her*, **שׁוֹבֵיהָ**) *with righteousness*. There are two competing Hebrew roots that would affect the meaning of this expression. One is **שָׁבָה** (root related to *captivity*, see AHCL, TWOT, LXX (Ⓞ), Syriac (Ⓢ)), and YLT has, “Zion in judgment is redeemed, And her captivity in righteousness.” Most translators including the KJV choose, instead, the root **שׁוּב**. Many translate as *converts*, or *repentant ones*. As we have already stated, **שׁוּב** can mean to *turn* or *return* to walk in Christ. This verse is an allusion to the latter-days. Those who come unto Christ today do so by leaving mystical Babylon behind, and entering Zion. Happily, both roots seem to add meaning to the sentence, as either the captives being redeemed, or those who have returned unto Christ being redeemed—who also are captives of mystical Babylon. The invitation is unto all: “Will ye not return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?” (3 Nephi 9:13b). We have said much about the threats and curses found in *Rain in Due Season*. Great promises of redemption are also found therein (Deuteronomy 30:1–10).

28 And the destruction[✓] of the transgressors and of the sinners [shall be] together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

✓ breaking

And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners [shall be] together. Nations and individuals who do not turn to Christ with full purpose of heart will be counted as transgressors and sinners. “For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it?” (D&C 97:22).

¶ *And they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.* Those who forsake the Lord are those who place their trust and fear in man rather than God. All that are not sufficiently humble will not be able to stand when the Lord comes again. “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root or branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:1–2a).

29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “For they shall be ashamed of their idols, which they delighted in, and they are made ashamed of the gardens which they coveted.” The Hebrew word **גַּן**, in Holy Writ, has a number of meanings, including the *prophetic pronouncement* that something will indeed or surely come to pass. It is often translated as *for* in the KJV. This verse has reference to the sensuous and idolatrous practices (see Hosea) that Israel had allowed to enter into her life, usually practiced around such shady trees³⁶ and ‘gardens.’ Lowth explains: “Sacred groves were a very ancient and favourite appendage of idolatry. They were furnished with the temple of the god to whom they were dedicated; with altars, images, and everything necessary for performing the various rites of worship offered there; and were the scenes of many impure ceremonies, and of much abominable superstition.” Most idolatry today takes place as a form of *intellectual idolatry* or the love of the philosophies of men over the *Word of God*.

30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth. Those who prefer idolatry will be left without strength, as a tree whose leaves wilt. There also seems to be a specific allusion to the tree that had been looked at as a symbol of strength and procreation, but now would be found wilted and faint.³⁷ ¶ *And as a garden that hath no water.* The term *gardens* included not only what today

we consider ornamentals, but vineyards, orchards or other man-cultivated vegetation. A garden without water is scorched by the sun, and left worthless. This, in contrast to those who are planted by the living waters and place their trust in God: “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:8). Margalioth also considers the *thesis and antithesis* of this verse, in contrast to “And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (ISAIAH 58:11) and “For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” (ISAIAH 61:11).

31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench [them].

And the strong shall be as tow. Tow is a very flammable broken fiber, usually made out of flax, jute, or hemp and that can be used for spinning much like lamb’s wool is used for that same purpose (see Webster, HBD). The strong, or as stated in Malachi 4, *the proud*, will be like stubble, tow, or flammable material. ¶ *And the maker of it as a spark.* A number of translations prefer to render closer to the LXX (Ⓞ) and the Syriac (Ⓢ), “and their works” rather than *maker*. It is in consequence of people’s evil works, then, that condemnation comes: the spark that starts the stubble burning. ¶ *And they shall both burn together, and none shall quench [them].* The works of evil as well as the makers of it will be burned together. This will be especially so at the second coming of our Lord.

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³⁶ These trees were associated with idolatry.

³⁷ In ISAIAH 40:6–8, this idea of a leaf that fadeth is expanded upon. In ISAIAH 40:28–31 we note the source of true strength.

