
It is believed by most commentators that Isaiah Chapters 2 through 4 form a united section.

Isaiah 2

The chapter opens with a glorious vision upon the latter days and the millennium, revolving around the time when the Messiah will come again upon the earth, when the mountain of the Lord's mountain will stand as an ensign for all the world to see and flock to, and when metal used for arms of war will be melted down to be used as implements of husbandry. The Lord teaches Israel not to put her faith in the arm of flesh or in false idols that cannot save. The pride of man will be shown to be of no strength. All who have looked to others rather than to the Lord for succor shall be humbled. Man will seek to hide from God by going to the rocks of the hills and mountains, but to no advantage. Man cannot hide from his own iniquity or from God.

COLOR CODE: Both the Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph Smith's *Inspired Version* (JST)—also known as the “*New Translation*” of the Bible¹—provide important corrections to the text of Isaiah as we find it in our King James Version. Some of these changes are vital while others are inconsequential. Beginning with ISAIAH 2 we face this issue. ISAIAH 1 is not included in the Book of Mormon, nor are there JST changes for ISAIAH 1. Nephi explained that some “... of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb ... have been kept back by that abominable church” (1 Nephi 13:34b). It is clear that for the Old Testament most of these changes made by designing and wicked priests took place anciently, before the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Q). These *precious parts* have been restored by the Book of Mormon and by the JST. The next question, of course, is how much were the scriptures changed even *before* they formed part of the Brass Plates in the Book of Mormon? John Tvedtnes has thought along the same lines: “In my longer study of the ‘Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon,’ I note that there are times when some of the ancient versions disagree with both MT/KJV² and Book of Mormon and that this is to be expected. We shall not always find support for the Book of Mormon, nor shall we always find support for KJV, in ancient texts, because variants existed already in very early times. Because of this, the brass plates of Laban, though closer in time to the

original, need not always represent Isaiah's original intent.”³ Finally, these same points about early textual changes to *all* presently known Hebrew texts (including M and Q) are brilliantly made by the preeminent Jewish scholar, Emanuel Tov.⁴ For the most part the Book of Mormon and JST coincide. BLUE will be used to indicate *additional* words or punctuation included in the Book of Mormon, and VIOLET in the JST. If both the Book of Mormon and JST make the same additions, then TEAL is used. When there are extra words in the KJV that were removed by either the Book of Mormon or JST, they will be placed in brackets { } or < > with a ~~strikethrough~~ mark to correspond to the Book of Mormon or JST respectively. Where both the Book of Mormon and JST are the same, no brackets are used outside the strikethrough. If the strikethrough is within [], that is for the elliptical words supplied by the KJV translators (which we present in *italics* in the commentary portion of this book), it means that the KJV supplied word has not been retained. If word in []

¹ See Robert J. Matthews article on the topic, “Joseph Smith's Inspired Translation of the Bible,”

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1972/12/joseph-smiths-inspired-translation-of-the-bible?lang=eng> (also see his book, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, a History and Commentary*. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975.

² MT here, stands for Hebrew Masoretic Text (M) or pointed Hebrew Text.

³ Tvedtnes, John A. in Peterson, Daniel C., ed. FARMS Review of Books, Provo, Utah: Foundation, Vol. 6, Number 2, p. 244. The interesting paper “Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon” by Tvedtnes is found in Nyman, Monte S., and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds. *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*. Religious Studies Center Monograph Series, Volume 10. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984.

⁴ Tov, Emanuel. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd Edition), Augsburg Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2001. Textual criticism (sometimes known as *lower criticism*) attempts to point out possible changes and corruptions in our extant versions of the Scriptures. Both mistakes in copying, as well as intentional changes to the text—are included. Textual criticism should not be confused with *higher criticism*. The latter intends to destroy the integrity of the Scriptures and our confidence and faith in God. Higher critics expressly state that man cannot receive revelation from God. An increasing number of Bible versions today are produced by higher critics and deny the divinity of the Jesus Christ.

has a color and no strikethrough, it indicates that the word was used in the Book of Mormon, JST, or both, depending on the same color scheme. For ease in reading, deleted or changed *punctuation* found in the KJV will not be pointed out unless the meaning is changed. Likewise, sometimes the punctuation in the Book of Mormon and JST differ, but such differences will not be underscored, especially when the JST restores punctuation back to what the KJV had (e.g., ISAIAH 3:11, 14). Finally, where there are differences between the Book of Mormon and the JST that are not easily indicated with the system noted, additional changes will be pointed out by asterisks. If the JST restores a change away from the Book of Mormon toward the KJV, then the KJV is retained with a note. KJV spelling is kept throughout. While Brother Joseph was able to make many monumental changes through the JST, the JST does not purport to have the final changes to the scriptures. The Prophet did not have time to spend countless hours on this project, but rather, spent much of his life being persecuted, serving others, being falsely imprisoned, and ultimately, paid the price of a martyr. While one may wonder what additional inspired insights the Prophet Joseph could have left for us if his life would not have been so cruelly cut short, nevertheless, what he has left us is a treasure, a pearl of great price.⁵

⁵ Many LDS believe that the Lord permitted the prophet Joseph to use his Bible as a basis for many of the Biblical verses in the Book of Mormon. This approach is not unusual for translators, who make it a point to leave a previous translation intact, except for the needed changes. Numerous such examples abound, of which I will only mention four. 1) George M. Lamsa's Peshitta *Syriac* Version of the Bible (1957) uses the KJV almost predominantly, except for the changes in the Eastern text. 2) The *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (DSSB, 1999) team included a member who helped produce the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), so it is not a surprise that the NRSV has such a strong influence on this Dead Sea Scroll version. 3) The 1955 Jewish Publication Society (JPS) of America version of the Holy Scriptures, is based strongly on the KJV. In many early translations (including the KJV), in fact, it was the objective of the translating committee *not* to make changes to the former version, unless the changes were absolutely essential. 4) Robert Lowth, an eminent Isaiah scholar said this about his own translation: "I have ventured to call this a New Translation, though much of our vulgar translation is retained in it. As the style of that translation is not only excellent in itself, but has taken possession of our ear, and of our taste, to have endeavoured to vary from it with no other design than that of giving something new instead of it, would have been to disgust the reader, and to represent the sense of the Prophet in a more unfavorable manner; besides that it is impossible for a verbal translator to follow an approved verbal translation which has gone before him, without frequently treading in the very footsteps of it." With this background, let us return to the question of the use of the Bible by Joseph Smith. The Lord made it clear that translation took effort. Oliver Cowdery had hoped to help Brother Joseph with the translation, but was not diligent in the effort so the Lord took away his permission to do so, "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me" (D&C 9:7). The Prophet Joseph Smith translated the whole of the Book of Mormon at a phenomenal speed. When the Lord had Joseph

Smith correct the Bible, this was not all completed with a single pass through. In fact, the work was not completed when the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred. In October 1903, H. Chamberlain, a non-member, wrote President Joseph F. Smith. He wanted to know why the language in the Book of Mormon was identical to the KJV, when scriptures were quoted. "I find that Christ in quoting to the people on this side of the water, the third and fourth chapters of Malachi, quotes, according to the Book of Mormon, in the identical text of King James' version, not missing a word. I find that in many instances, in his talks with the people, and to his disciples here, he used the identical language of the King James' version, not even omitting the words supplied by the translators. [Chamberlain means the words in italics in the KJV, or supplied ellipses]. Now, I know that no two parties will take the same manuscript and make translations of a matter contained therein, and the language of the two translators be alike; indeed, the language employed by the two parties will widely differ. These translations are from different manuscripts, and from different languages, and still it appears in the Book of Mormon as King James' translation. I can conceive of no other way in which such a coincidence could have occurred, within the range of human experience, except where one writing is copied from another, and then it takes the utmost care to get them exactly alike, word for word, and letter for letter as this is. The foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rests, it seems to me, on the honesty and authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and if that is not just what it claims to be, and was not obtained just as Joseph claims it to be given to him, then you are the same as other churches, a mixture of truth and error—still practicing more truth than they, but without authority. Now, what I want to know is, how do you as a Church account for these things appearing in the Book of Mormon in the identical language of King James' version, when we know his version is faulty, and the same translators could not have made it twice alike themselves? Did Joseph copy it from the Bible, or did the Lord adopt the identical language in revealing to Joseph?" President Joseph F. Smith asked Elder B. H. Roberts to answer this query. I quote here only a very brief portion from Elder Robert's interesting response, of November 1903: "It should be understood also, in this connection, that while Joseph Smith obtained the facts and ideas from the Nephite characters through the inspiration of God, he was left to express those facts and ideas, in the main, in such language as he could command; and when he found that parts of the Nephite record closely paralleled passages in the Bible, and being conscious that the language of our English Bible was superior to his own, he adopted it, except for those differences indicated in the Nephite original which here and there make the Book of Mormon version of passages superior in sense and clearness. Of course, I recognize the fact that this is but a conjecture; but I believe it to be a reasonable one; and indeed the only one which satisfactorily disposes of the difficulty you point out." Elder B. H. Roberts goes on to quote numerous examples of how the Book of Mormon preserved a better and clearer translation than the KJV. Also of interest, from the same source, is B. H. Robert's explanation as to the Malachi prophecies in the Book of Mormon: "The prophecy of Malachi (chapter 3 and 4) quoted in the Book of the Mormon was supplied by the Savior, and the Nephites engraved portions of these scriptures in their records, and this both in the Hebrew, and what the Nephites called the reformed Egyptian" (p. 176). I fancy to all this, however, another inquiry will rise in your mind, and that is: Since Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by means of the Urim and Thummim, why is it that he did not give throughout a translation direct from the Nephite plates, instead of following our English Bible, since translation by means of the Urim and Thummim must have been so simple and so easy? It is at this particular point where, in my opinion, a very great mistake is made, both by our own people, and our friends in the world. That is, translation by the Urim and Thummim is not so simple and easy a thing as it might at first glance appear. Many have supposed that the Prophet Joseph had merely to look in the Urim and Thummim, and there see, without any thought or effort on his part, both the Nephite characters and the translation in English. In other words, the instrument did everything and the Prophet

vv. 1–5. The magnificent visions of a latter-day are seen by Isaiah. A day when the mountain of the Lord’s house, that is the Holy Temple, will be established in the top of the mountains; a day of restoration, where people will be called to the restored Church from every corner of the globe; even a millennial day, where swords will be beaten into plowshares and are no longer needed. Next, comes the glorious invitation to Israel to come and walk in the light of the Lord. These five verses also appear in a very closely related fashion in Micah 4:1–5. Since the words of scripture are inspired of the Lord, it is not unusual for those who speak as moved upon by the Holy Ghost to quote the words of Scripture. Either both Micah and Isaiah were quoting from an earlier prophet, from each other, or were independently inspired with these words directly from the Lord. The Prophet Joseph Smith’s own writings are full of either direct or indirect quotes, allusions and paraphrases of scripture. So much so that a newer edition of the well-known work *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (TPJS) has now been re-issued under the title of *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (STPJS). This latter edition is the same as the former, except that it contains footnotes indicating the source of the hundreds and hundreds of scriptures used by Brother Joseph. When a prophets use the writings of others, it was not with the intent of making them appear as their own, but rather, with the assumption that all who would read them would *know* their origins. And not only would know their origin, but their context and historical background. This is once again, a reason why the *learning of the Jews* is so necessary to understand the Book of Isaiah. The first four verses in ISAIAH 2 were among the scriptures that Angel Moroni quoted to Joseph Smith according to the Oliver Cowdery narrative (see note to ISAIAH 1:7).

nothing, except merely to look in the Urim and Thummim as one might look into a mirror, and then give out what he saw there. Such a view of the work of translation by Urim and Thummim I believe to be altogether incorrect. I think it caused the Prophet the exercise of all his intellectual and spiritual forces to obtain the translation; that it was an exhausting work, which taxed even his great powers to their uttermost limit; and hence, when he could ease himself of those labors by adopting a reasonably good translation already existing, I think he was justified in doing so . . . I trust that the suggestions here offered, as an explanation of the difficulty you present, will have the effect of removing it out of your way; but whether they will be altogether satisfactory or not, this I would suggest to you: consider more especially the positive testimony that exists for the truth of the Book of Mormon, particularly following the injunction of Moroni, in chapter ten, verses four and five of this book, wherein he makes the promise that those who will ask God the Eternal Father for a testimony of the truth of the Nephite record, shall receive such a testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost; ‘and by the power of the Holy Ghost,’ as Moroni teaches us, ‘we may know the truth of all things’” (184–185). (*Biblical and Modern Evidences of the Book of Mormon: Bible Quotations in the Book of Mormon*, by B. H. Roberts, pp. 173–189.)

1 ¶ THE word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

The emphasis of this introduction is on the word רָאָה . *saw*, for seer, and on Judah, or the southern kingdom, with Jerusalem as its center.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, [~~that~~] when the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established ✓ in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it;

✓ or, prepared

And it shall come to pass. Latter-day Saints will notice the similarity of the expression to the frequently used *and it came to pass* in the Book of Mormon. Because the Hebrew Scriptures are almost void of punctuation, the word “and” is used frequently. The Hebrew character that represents the word “and” is called *vav*, or *waw*, and is expressed as the letter ו . When the ו is coupled with the word יָבִיחַ , that is, *to be* or *to become*, then it is read as either *and it came to pass* or *and it shall come to pass*.⁶ Such use of the conjunction or introductory particle is so frequent that some versions have tended to drop it, while others such as the KJV and the ASV have been more true to the original (TWOT). This dropping of the “and” as well as the “and it came to pass” seems to have been a general phenomenon of translators today, who have moved away from a more literal translation. For example, in ISAIAH 2:3, The *and* in “And many people . . .” is dropped by the HNV, WEB, NIV, NRSV, NAB, and NJB, to name a few. In ISAIAH 1:31, the *and* in “and the strong . . .” is dropped by the HCSB, HNV, NASB, WEB, NIV, NRSV, NAB, NJB, NRSV and even in the Tanakh Jewish translation. ¶ *In the last days.* This usage is similar to the frequently used eschatological expression, *in that day* (see ISAIAH 2:11, 17, 20). Both speak of a future time when prophecy will be fulfilled. The Jewish exegete Kimhi said, “Wherever the latter times are mentioned in Scripture, the days of the Messiah are always meant” (Lowth). ¶ *When the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains.* The “mountain of the Lord’s house” is THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, the Holy Temple. In the last days, says Isaiah, the Temple would be established or built in the top of

⁶ In ISAIAH 2:2, רָאָה .

the mountains. The tops of the mountains have been used for such purposes since time immemorial. Moses talked to the Lord on the top of Mount Sinai before the Tabernacle, which functioned as the Temple in the wilderness, was built. Likewise, the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–9) operated as a Temple. There Peter, James, and John received specific priesthood keys, very much like what took place 3 April 1836, in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110 and *Transfiguration, Mount of*, in LDS Bible Dictionary). There, they probably were also *endowed with power from on high* (see Luke 24:49; D&C 38:32; 124:39). Another place to which people gather from around the world has been the Tabernacle and the Conference Centers from which General Conference is transmitted. ¶ *And shall be exalted above the hills*. Many of these temples are, like the Salt Lake City Temple, literally built in the tops of the mountains, and are exalted above the hills, such as the Oakland Temple, which is frequently used as a navigational light by those in the sea and air, the Santiago, Chile Temple, and the Anchorage, Alaska Temple, to name a few. The eyes of the world are upon these edifices. And of course, how about Jerusalem itself, where one of the great latter-day temples will be built? So also the temple to be built in Jackson County. ¶ In response to Joseph Smith's question "When will Zion be built up in her glory, and where will thy Temple stand, unto which all nations shall come in the last days?" (D&C 57 section heading) the Lord responded: "And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse" (D&C 57:3). But where are the hills and the mountains wherein such a temple will be built? What could be said of the Jerusalem, can also be said of the Temple in Jackson County, as if the Lord so desires it, all these things can be done. Delitzsch suggests: "The prophet here predicted that the mountain which bore the temple of Jehovah, and therefore was already in dignity the most exalted of all mountains, would one day tower in actual height above all the high places of the earth. The basaltic mountains of Bashan, which rose up in bold peaks and columns, might now look down with scorn and contempt upon the small limestone hill which Jehovah had chosen (Psalm 68:16–17)⁷; but this was an incongruity which the last times would remove, by making the outward correspond to the inward, the appearance to the reality and the intrinsic worth." Furthermore, the Lord would transfer the holiness of

Sinai to Zion. Delitzsch has: "What had been commenced at Sinai for Israel, would be completed at Zion for all the world." Interestingly, Delitzsch suggests that one way that Zion might be built higher in a more literal way, is when the New Jerusalem is set upon it. As LDS, of course, we believe that the New Jerusalem will be in Jackson County. ¶ President Snow taught: "The city of Zion will be built in Jackson County. The site for the city of Zion was pointed out by the Prophet Joseph Smith as Jackson County, Missouri, and there some of our people settled in 1831, but were subsequently driven from their homes. This event, while it delayed the building of the city, did not change the place of its location. The Latter-day Saints fully expect to return to Jackson County and 'build up Zion.' Their exodus to the Rocky Mountains and their sojourn in the stakes of Zion, as the places are called which they now inhabit, they regard as preparatory to that return, and as events that had to be in order to fulfill scripture, notably these words of Isaiah: 'O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain' [ISAIAH 40:9]. 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it' [ISAIAH 2:2]."⁸ And what of the temple in Jerusalem in Judea? "Yea, let the cry go forth among all people: Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom; behold and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour. Let them, therefore, who are among the Gentiles flee unto Zion. And let them who be of Judah flee unto Jerusalem, unto the mountains of the Lord's house" (D&C 133:10–13). ¶ *And all nations shall flow unto it*. Several commentators have mentioned how Isaiah's image using the word *flow* implies a large number of people in a continual stream (e.g. Barnes, Matthew Henry). Isaiah uses this theme in several places, such as: "For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream ..." (ISAIAH 66:12a). President Hinckley had these interesting comments to make regarding this verse in Isaiah: "I believe that prophecy applies to the historic and wonderful Salt Lake Temple. But I believe also that it is related to this [speaking of the new Conference Center] magnificent hall. For it is from this pulpit that the law of God shall go forth, together with the word and testimony of the Lord."⁹ Similar comments have been pronounced of the old

⁷ "Why leap ye, ye high hills? [this] is the hill [which] God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell [in it] for ever. The chariots of God [are] twenty thousand, [even] thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, [as in] Sinai, in the holy [place]" (Psalms 68:16–17).

⁸ Snow, President Lorenzo. *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*. Edited by Clyde J. Williams. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, (2 January 1902, MS, 64:2), 1984, pp. 182–183.

⁹ Hinckley, Gordon B. "This Great Millennial Year," Sunday Morning 170th Annual General Conference.

Tabernacle in Temple Square. Those who have long layovers at the Salt Lake City Airport have the opportunity to get on a van for a trip into town to tour the visitor's center and Temple Square. All temples throughout the world attract the gaze of the people who pass them. Before temples are dedicated, they afford a special opportunity for nonmembers to visit and feel the overabundance of the Spirit. Even where there is no temple nearby, our spiritual gazes are upon the temple where sacred vicarious ordinances are carried out on behalf of our ancestors.

**3 And many people shall go and say,
Come ye, and let us go up to the
mountain of the LORD, to the house of the
God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his
ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out
of Zion shall go forth the law, and the
word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD. This verse, as so many in Isaiah, is pure poetry. This is an invitation: to all who are not members, to partake of the waters of baptism; to all who have already entered the waters of baptism, to further prepare to receive sacred ordinances; and for those who have partaken of the ordinances, to remain worthy and serve our kindred dead by performing the necessary ordinances on their behalf. Avraham Gileadi explains the context of the words *go up*: “The verb ‘go up’ or ‘ascend’ in this verse (Heb. **יַעֲלֶה**) is a pilgrimage motif and key word. Two or three times a year, in the seasons of religious festivals, the ancient Israelites ‘went up’ or ‘ascended’ to Jerusalem from throughout the land of Israel to make a pilgrimage to the temple of the Lord (see Psalm 122:1–4; cf. Zechariah 14:16–18). This pilgrimage was traditionally made in remembrance of the exodus out of Egypt under Moses, the period of wandering in the wilderness, and the return to the land of the fathers under Joshua. Later, it became a prophetic type of the latter-day return of Israel from throughout the earth (cf. Jeremiah 31:6), and Isaiah uses the imagery of a pilgrimage to Zion in this very context in 30:29; 35:8–10; and 51:10, 11. By means of the key verb ‘go up’ or ‘ascend’ in ISAIAH 2:3, he thus again identifies the idea of Israel's return with the scene of the nations going to Zion depicted in this verse, and the return itself with a latter-day setting.”¹⁰ ¶ *To the house of the God of*

Jacob. Like *Holy one of Israel* (see ISAIAH 1:4), this is a loving title given to our Savior. The *God of Jacob* brings to our mind a loving, personal God. Those who have had the privilege of being born in this day when the fullness of the Gospel has been restored upon the earth will be especially sensitive to the call of the Good Shepherd, to come and partake of the wedding feast, and most specially, to come unto Christ and unto His temple. ¶ *And he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* When we accept the invitation to partake of baptism, and then receive the Holy Ghost through the ordinance of confirmation, then we can be taught from on high. So literally, *He will teach us of his ways.* This is no matter of speech, no vain promise; we can indeed receive a flow of revelation, comfort, peace, and knowledge. Without a doubt, this invitation to follow the Savior's example, and to *walk in His paths*, is among the most striking and lovely scriptures to be found anywhere. In the most beautiful and poetic verse in Leviticus 26, the Lord would bless an obedient Israel with His presence: “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Leviticus 26:12, *Rain in Due Season*). This can be our joy, this is what we have to look forward to if we are obedient. ¶ *For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.* Elder Brigham H. Roberts, in a General Conference address, asked: “Why the law from Zion? Why the word of the Lord from Jerusalem?”¹¹ In this magnificent address to the Saints, Elder Roberts goes on to explain that out of Zion (the American continent) there would grow a system of government, where individual freedoms would predominate, and which would be based on the voice of the people, such that it would be a land of liberty.¹² Elder Roberts then goes on to explain his views about the beautiful role that Jerusalem would play in the last days. He suggests that out of Jerusalem the revelation of the Lord would proceed. In doing so, he repeatedly warns Latter-day Saints against narrow or ethnocentric views that might minimize the importance of Jerusalem. “When we take into account the greatness of our own dispensation of the Gospel, I think sometimes we overlook the grandeur and the greatness of the ‘Dispensation of the Meridian of Times.’ It must always be remembered that the great Atonement, the central fact of the Gospel, was wrought out at Jerusalem; that there the sacrifice was made; that there the Son of God

¹⁰ Gileadi, Avraham, “Isaiah: Four Latter-day Keys to an Ancient Book,” in Nyman, Monte S., and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds. *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*. Religious

Studies Center Monograph Series, Volume 10. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984, p. 133.

¹¹ Roberts, Brigham H., April 1908 General Conference Report, pp. 107–110.

¹² President Harold B. Lee was another individual who frequently pointed out the relationship between this prophetic scripture, and the important role that would be played by the Constitutional form of government found in the USA. See, for instance, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, compiled by Clyde J. Williams, p. 364.

took upon Him our sins; there our transgressions were laid upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. *** Jerusalem must forever be a holy shrine, a place to which the eyes of all nations will turn for light and inspiration; what more natural, then, than that it should become a holy city, the capital of the eastern world, if you will, the holy sanctuary whence shall issue the word of the Lord in future even more abundantly than in the past.”

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks ✓ — nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

✓ or, scythes

And he shall judge among the nations. In ISAIAH 1:26 we discussed the role that latter-day judges would play in the re-established Church, in the day that the Lord would *restore thy judges as at the first*. Here we are told that the millennial day will come when the Holy One of Israel will own His people again and personally reign upon the earth as the Judge of Israel. Sooner or later, of course, we will all be judged by the *Keeper of the Gate* who “employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name” (2 Nephi 9:41b). ¶ *And shall rebuke many people.* The Lord invites us all to repent while it is yet time, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:19). Alma the High Priest taught, “And now I say unto, all you that are desirous to follow the voice of the good shepherd, come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things; and behold, their names shall be blotted out, that the names of the wicked shall not be numbered among the names of the righteous, that the word of God may be fulfilled, which saith: The names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people; For the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand” (Alma 5:57–58a). The Lord rebukes us because He loves us. ¶ *And they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.* Of those who have lived upon the earth, only the just will be brought forth in the morning of the first resurrection and permitted to abide the millennial day when there shall be no war and Christ will reign personally. There will be no need of swords, whose metal will be put to better use, such as for agrarian implements. ¶ *Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn*

war any more. Isaiah will have much more to say about the joyful and peaceful felicity that will exist during the millennial reign. Much of the joy we feel in this lifetime is the joy given to us by the Holy Ghost, so that we are able to feel at peace even in the midst of growing trouble around us. Those who desire this peace need not wait until the millennium to experience it, but can feel it now by walking in the light of the Lord. The extent of the millennial joy, however, will be widespread, as the waters that cover the oceans.

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD; yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. Once again, that beautiful invitation to *walk in the light of the Lord* and thus keep His commandments: “And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12). Those who love the Lord will desire to so walk, “for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them” (Hosea 14:9b). “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1). The Lord will prove each one of us in this life. Formerly, He put Israel to the test, too, “...that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no” (Exodus 16:14b). I love the way that is phrased, *whether they will walk in my law, or no*. As discussed in ISAIAH 2:3, this reminds us of the glorious promise in *Rain in Due Season*: “And I will walk among you, and *will be your God, and ye shall be my people*” (Leviticus 26:12). If we keep the commandments, then, and walk in His light, we shall have the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, or the Comforter, to illuminate our way. The Lord even promised the Second Comforter to those who truly humbled themselves, His own companionship. As in ISAIAH 2:3 there is the “let us,” or the idea that we do not do this alone, but invite all who will listen to come along. ¶ *Yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways.* This is, once again, an invitation to turn, שׁוּבוּ, and make whatever course corrections are needed, and follow the Savior. Nephi taught that if we are not brought into the light, it is because we ask not: “Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark” (2 Nephi 32:4). Jacob, the brother of Nephi,

exhorted: “O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One” (2 Nephi 9:41a). When the invitation is accepted, and we enter in the way and continue it, we can be guided by the Spirit in all things and thus walk with the Lord: “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

vv. 6–9. The people have abandoned the Lord, as they have turned to admire the customs of other nations, and have sought after diviners rather than the Lord, and have permitted their children to be intermarried with those outside the covenant. Their trust has been on the work of their own hands, even their worldly treasures and mighty armies. Israel has stooped down to idol worship.

6 ¶ Therefore, O Lord, thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from [✓] the east, and ~~are~~ hearken unto soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please [✓] [✓] themselves in the children of strangers.

- ✓ or, more than
- ✓ or, abound with

Therefore, O Lord, thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob. Isaiah, who is permitted to see into the future, can see that the Lord would permit the children of Jacob, both Ephraim and Judah, to be carried away captive by Assyria and Babylonia, respectively. ¶ *Because they be replenished from the east.* The LDS footnotes suggest that the people are filled with the beliefs of aliens. Instead of being a light on a hill for all to see, they “mingled among the heathen, and learned their works” (Psalm 106:35, also see vv. 34, 36 ff.). Several Bible versions interpret this verse similarly: “filled with customs from the east” (ASV); “filled with influences from the east” (NAS); “full [of practices] from the East” (Tanakh). The LXX (Ⓞ) translates these words as “their land is filled as at the beginning,” suggesting as the Psalm, that the influence of the settlers had been overcome by the influence of the original Canaanite inhabitants of these lands, people who had done that which was wicked in the eyes of the Lord. The Syriac (Ⓢ) and Douay (Latin Vulgate) (Ⓟ) translation into English agree with the general approach of the LXX (Ⓞ), “because they are self-satisfied as in the olden days,” and “because they are filled as in times past.” Some translations introduce the idea that they are filled with diviners, fortunetellers or superstitions (NRSV, NAB, NIV). The difficulty in this

passage is that the Hebrew **מִן־הַמִּזְמֹרֹת** can mean “on the east” or “of old, formerly” (AHCL). Either way, then, what seems to be certain, is that whatever they are filled with is not from God. ¶ *And hearken unto soothsayers like the Philistines.* Instead of turning to the Lord, Israel was quick to turn to soothsayers and diviners or others who would prophecy of future events. In an earlier time, Saul had been the example of such desire to lean on the arm of flesh rather than the might of God (see my notes on Saul’s fall in ISAIAH 26). ¶ *And they please themselves in the children of strangers.* This section has been interpreted as having business dealings with other nations, “strike bargains” (NAS). Some versions are less clear as to whether they clasp hands in business or in marriage: “strike hands with the children of foreigners” (ASV), and “clasp hands” (NRSV, NIV). The LXX (Ⓞ) and Syriac (Ⓢ) suggest that marriage was involved, “and many strange children were born to them,” and “they have reared many alien children.” Of all the commandments given to Israel, one of the most compelling was to marry in the covenant. The Lord had specifically asked Israel not to allow herself to be influenced by the ways of the surrounding nations, and the previous inhabitants of Canaan: “And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them” (Leviticus 20:23). Israel, then, had not passed the test of walking in His statutes, and so the price would have to be paid: The Lord had warned and forewarned, “And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish” (Deuteronomy 18:19).

7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots:

In the Mosaic Law, the Lord warned Israel and commanded her not to multiply either horses nor silver and gold: “But he¹³ shall not multiply horses to himself ... Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (Deuteronomy 17:16a, 17). The Lord wanted Israel to put her trust in Him. Men often prefer to put their trust in themselves, or in their neighbor. The Lord says, *prove me now herewith* (Malachi 3:10). But the man answers, “I cannot come to Church with you, for it is Sunday when I make more money than the rest of the week!” *Their land also is full*

¹³ That is, the king that the Lord would set over Israel.

of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures. Israel was filled with riches. One could say that she had a *strong economy*. Riches can be the result of prosperity and blessings from God—but how often is God acknowledged by individuals and by nations? Riches can also come from the exploitation of the poor, the overtaxing of the people, or burdens placed on other nations. ¶ *Their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots.* Besides economic strength, dominant nations can be filled with military might. In the scriptures, horses and chariots are often used to represent military strength. The Lord makes it clear that when He is on our side, we need not fear the strength of our enemies: “But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen” (Hosea 1:7); “When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, *and* a people more than thou, be not afraid of them” (Deuteronomy 20:1). One of the great messages we receive through Isaiah, then, is that we need to place our trust in God, even—or shall we say, especially—when the matter at hand seems impossible, and “Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them” (2 Kings 6:16b).

8 Their land ~~also~~ **is also** full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:

Their land is also full of idols. אֱלִילִים is generally used for idols. The singular of אֱלִילִים is אֱלִיל, meaning *worthless* (HAL, BDB). Cheyne suggests that אֱלִיל is a contraction אֵל (no) and אֵיל (strong, noble) and that the word *idols* may well be translated *no-gods* or *nonentities*. Not only has Israel leaned upon the arm of flesh, but has turned to *no-god*. Is it not interesting that the very men who refuse to follow the Lord are often moved by superstition? Or by intellectual idolatry? ¶ *They worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.* One of the recurring messages of Isaiah is the absurdity of worshipping manmade idols (e.g., ISAIAH 44:15–17). As we apply issues of idolatry to ourselves, we must avoid the philosophies of men and intellectual idolatry (ISAIAH 55:8–9).

9 And the mean man boweth **not** down, and the great man humbleth himself **not**: therefore forgive them not.

And the mean man boweth not down, and the great man humbleth himself not. Without the Book of Mormon and

JST corrections and restitution of both of the dropped “not,” this verse would seem to continue to have reference to idol worship. Instead, this is a summary statement of the preceding verses, in which man refused to humble himself before the Lord. Man was willing to bow down to the influences of foreign nations, soothsayers, the power of economic and military strength, as well as to idols. To all of these things would man bow down to, but yet would not humble himself before God. The English word *mean* in “mean man,” (or in the 1611 KJV, “meane man”) as used in the language of the day, signified someone of low, common, or insignificant stature or importance. Gesenius makes a distinction between the two Hebrew words, one often used for a *common* man, *adam*, אָדָם, in contrast to a more *noble* one, *ish*, אִישׁ. In ISAIAH 5:15, we see that both of these men would be humbled: “And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled.” ¶ *Therefore forgive them not.* Rabbi J.H. Hertz coincides well with the LDS perspective on sin: “This fundamental thought, viz. that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked, is an essential doctrine of Judaism as of every higher religion. They may differ as to the nature and form of Divine retribution, but the belief that right is rewarded and wrong punished is part of an ethical faith, a belief vindicated and confirmed by the experience of humanity.”¹⁴

vv. 10–22. Man’s sins will not go unpunished, even if he seeks to hide from the lord in the furthest caves and mountains. Instead, man will be humbled and the Lord will be exalted. The Glory of the Lord will be too much for people to look upon, when he comes to judge the nations of the earth. All nations, peoples, and individuals will humble themselves before the Lord. Idolatry will finally be recognized as useless.

10 ¶ **O ye wicked ones, enter into the rock, and hide thee* in the dust, for the fear of the LORD and {fōr} the glory of his majesty** shall smite thee.**

* JST, hide ye

** JST, and his majesty (“the glory of” deleted)

O ye wicked ones, enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust. The wicked will seek protection and a hiding place from the wrath of God in rocks, holes in the earth, and caves. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they likewise tried to hide where they could:

¹⁴ *Commentary from Pentateuch & Haftarahs* (ed. Dr. J.H. Hertz) on *Rain in Due Season* chapters. 2nd edition, 1978, p. 542.

“When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits” (1 Samuel 13:6). Such hiding will be as useless and ineffective as Adam and Eve’s attempts “to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden” when they feared His wrath (Moses 4:14b). Certainly, hiding from God is senseless, for “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:24a). ¶ *For the fear of the LORD and the glory of his majesty shall smite thee.* When the Lord appears, His glory and majesty will have so much force that man will not be able to stand in the presence of the Lord, unless he is quickened. For instance, at the time of Solomon, when the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies within the temple, we read that “the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord” (1 Kings 8:11).

11 And it shall come to pass that the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men* shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

* JST, man

And it shall come to pass that the lofty looks of man shall be humbled. Man can show his pride in the way he looks at others, as well as in how he wishes to be looked at or considered. ¶ *And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down.* Until I heard President Benson’s talk, *Beware of Pride*,¹⁵ I had never supposed that pride was such a rampant sin, even in my own life. I had thought to myself, “What do I care about homes and cars, about lands and jewels and clothing?” My father and mother were to me a righteous example of persons who were not ostentatious despite their own wealth. But I was well acquainted with both the rich and those who wanted to appear that way. Their way of walking and holding themselves up, the affectation of their voices, and the extravagance in outer show. To me they appeared shallow, full of pretense; distinction of classes the reality of the day as I grew up. In contrast, among the rich Latter-day Saints, this affectation does not seem to exist. Instead, they are often willing to give generously and only ask that no one know of their gift. These people are willing to “treat themselves as a real person” to borrow the expression I once heard from a farm worker. I am sure there are such good people in all

religions, but I am only speaking from experience. But, returning to the issue of pride. I never supposed that I was a prideful man until I heard President Benson, and my eyes were opened. I have had such a high need for achievement in such things as dressage (youth to middle age), my work in labor management at the University of California, and even in the study and understanding of the scriptures. More and more I have come to understand, however, that where we excel it is a gift from God, and that a more sure way of succeeding is to have the Spirit of the Lord upon us, consecrating all of our doings to the Lord. And then giving thanks to the Lord, for our success. The moment we feel it was us who achieved a goal—rather than the Lord helping us reach our potentials—then we are in the deepest of errors. There is nothing wrong, then, with a desire to improve and to excel, as long as we are not competitive. The Prophet Obadiah spoke about pride: “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord” (Obadiah 1:3–4). What is to be done, then? While I have been working at this, I cannot yet say that I have been *stripped of pride*. I know I will have achieved such a goal when I can be just as excited about someone else’s success in a field I deeply care about, as I would about my own accomplishment, which talent is a gift of God. But the task before us is clear, either we humble ourselves or the Lord will have to humble us: “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). ¶ *And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.* It is so very comforting to know that the day will come when the only power will be that of the Lord, that the cruelty of man and the fiery dart of the adversary will be subjugated.

12 For the day of the LORD of Hosts [shall be] soon cometh upon all nations; yea, upon every [one that is]; yea, upon the proud and lofty, and upon every [one that is] who is lifted up, and he shall be brought low.

For the day of the LORD of Hosts soon cometh upon all nations. We are fast approaching the fulfillment of eschatological prophecies. The following was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Behold, verily I say unto you, the angels are crying unto the Lord day and night, who are ready and waiting to be sent forth to reap down the fields” (D&C 86:5). In other words, reap down Idumea or the world. This section of the Doctrine and

¹⁵ Benson, Ezra Taft. *Beware of Pride*. April 1989 General Conference, Saturday morning session.

Covenants was given 6 December 1832. President Wilford Woodruff taught: "... When I have the vision of the night opened continually before my eyes, and can see the mighty judgments that are about to be poured out upon this world ... God has held the angels of destruction for many years, lest they should reap down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, that those angels have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over this people and this nation now, and are hovering over the earth waiting to pour out the judgments. And from this very day they shall be poured out. Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. Remember this, and reflect upon these matters. If you do your duty, and I do my duty, we'll have protection, and shall pass through the afflictions in peace and in safety."¹⁶ ¹⁷ ¹⁸ There are many other revelations which have likewise been fulfilled or soon will be. But what a grand day it will be when the Lord will come again *and all flesh shall see it together* (ISAIAH 40:5b): "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight, for the hour of his coming is nigh" (D&C 133:17b). ¶ *Yea, upon every one*. There are at least two ways to look at the second coming. One of them is the second coming itself. Another one, which should be just as sobering, is that for *every one* of us, we shall die *soon* (and in a manner of speaking thus be brought to the second coming). Man never knows when he will meet death and eternal accountability. In our youth time often seems to stand still, but as we mature time seems to move forth with haste and sometimes an almost dizzying speed. "And now, as I said to you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed" (Alma 34:33, also see 34 ff.). This warning and call for repentance is unto all, and none are exempted. For those who do not watch for the signs of the times that day will catch them by surprise: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden distraction cometh upon them ..." (1 Thessalonians 5:2–3a). Borrowing an expression from the same Pauline text and placing it in a different context, I like to think that although no one will know the day or the hour, those

who watch will be as *a woman with child* when travail falls upon her. The moment and day are still a surprise, but the general season for the birth is known. Paul invites believers to be prepared, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:4, 6). ¶ *Yea, upon the proud and lofty*. Knowledge and wealth are two common sources of pride: "O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts" (2 Nephi 14:15a). ¶ *And upon every one who is lifted up, and he shall be brought low*. Continuing with the theme in ISAIAH 2:11, it is good to remember the source of our blessings, lest it be that "Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 8:14a).

13 Yea, and the day of the Lord shall come upon all the cedars of Lebanon, [that] for they [are] high and lifted up; and upon all the oaks of Bashan;

Yea, and the day of the Lord. That is, the day of judgment that will come upon all men. ¶ *Shall come upon all the cedars of Lebanon*. The Targum (⚡) has "and upon all the kings of the nations, the strong and the mighty." There are a number of expression to indicate those who are mighty in power or influence, one of them being the cedars of Lebanon (*Cedrus Libani Conifera*, see Barnes and Holman), a magnificent and commanding tall tree (also see notes on ISAIAH 10:34). It seems people have been calling each other names from time immemorial. One such case that particularly stands out is the conflict between Amaziah ben Joash, king of Judah and Jehoash ben Jehoahaz ben Jehu, king of Israel (see 2 Kings 14). Amaziah, king of Judah has been successful in a war against the Edomites (v. 7). Gaining much confidence in himself, he proceeded to send a message to Jehoash, king of Israel, in the colorful language of the time, "Come, let us look one another in the face," that is, let us measure how our strengths stand against each other in battle (v. 8). In response, Jehoash tells him to be content with his achievements, and not to push his luck through pride. It is at this point that Jehoash calls himself a *cedar* of Lebanon, and the king of Judah a *thistle* of Lebanon: "And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that *was* in Lebanon, saying, ... Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory of *this*, and tarry at home: for why shouldest thou meddle to *thy* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee? But Amaziah would not hear. Therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the

¹⁶ *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, 8 April 1894, Volume 58.

¹⁷ Smith, Joseph Fielding. *Church History and Modern Revelation*. Salt Lake City, Utah: The Council of The Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946, p. 119.

¹⁸ *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Student Study Guide*, D&C 86. See Susa Young Gates, "The Temple Workers' Excursion," *The Young Woman's Journal*, August 1894, 512–13).

face at Beth-shemesh ... And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to their tents” (2 Kings 14:9–12). Beside the idea of the men who have exalted themselves as the cedars of Lebanon, the multiple applications and fulfillment of scripture often have a quite literal application upon nature.

Delitzsch wrote: “What the prophet foretold began to be fulfilled even in the Assyrian wars. The cedar woods of Lebanon were unsparingly destroyed; the heights and valleys of the land were trodden down and laid waste; and, in the period of the great empires which commenced with Tiglath-pileser, the Holy Land was reduced to a shadow of its former promised beauty.” The elements of nature, of course, are never lifted up against the Lord, but are always ready to sing praises to Him: “Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars ... Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven” (Psalm 148:9, 13). Speaking of the writing style of the Hebrews, Lowth explained: “These verses afford us a striking example of that peculiar way of writing which makes a principal characteristic of the parabolical or poetical style of the Hebrews, and in which their prophets deal so largely; namely, their manner of exhibiting things divine, spiritual, moral, and political, by a set of images taken from things natural, artificial, religious, historical; in the way of metaphor or allegory. *** Thus you will find, in many other places beside this before us, that cedars of Libanus and oaks of Basan are used, in the way of metaphor and allegory, for kings, princes, potentates, of the highest rank.”

¶ *For they are high and lifted up.* Just like Amaziah king of Judah was lifted up in pride and was subsequently brought down, so will any who put their trust in any other than the Holy One of Israel. ¶ *And upon all the oaks of Bashan.* The oak was another mighty tree. Bashan is believed to have been a fertile area northeast of the Sea of Chinnereth (called the Sea of Galilee at the time of Christ) known for its agriculture and oak trees (LEB, Holman).

14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills, and upon all the nations which [that are] lifted up, and upon every people;*

* Note: Paragraph division as Book of Mormon, rather than JST. In JST, “And upon every people” is part of the next paragraph.

And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills. Both hills and mountains represent refuge on the one hand, and stand as symbols of importance and status on the other. ¶ *And upon all the nations which are lifted up, and upon every people.* Complete nations and peoples

will be affected and accountable, as none who are lifted up in pride shall escape.

15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall;*

* Note: Paragraph division as Book of Mormon, rather than JST. In JST, “And upon every people” is first line of this paragraph.

And upon every high tower. Towers were constructed both for fortification, and to increase the distance that could be seen from afar. They stood for a symbol of strength. The Lord had set Jerusalem to be such a strength and example, “I have set thee *for* a tower *and* a fortress among my people” (Jeremiah 6:27a). ¶ *And upon every fenced wall.* Or, fortified wall around a fenced city. It can also be a symbol of strength and power: “The rich man’s wealth *is* his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit” (Proverbs 18:11).

16 And upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. ✓

✓ pictures of desire

Sydney B. Sperry observed, “...the Book of Mormon has a reading of remarkable interest. It prefixes a phrase of eight words not found in the Hebrew or King James Versions. ...the ancient Septuagint (Greek) version concurs with the added phrase in the Book of Mormon.... The Book of Mormon suggests that the original text of this verse contained three phrases, all of which commenced with the same opening words, ‘and upon all.’ By a common accident, the original Hebrew¹⁹ (and hence the King James) text lost the first phrase, which was, however, preserved by the Septuagint. The latter lost the second phrase, and seems to have corrupted the third phrase. The Book of Mormon preserved all three phrases.”²⁰ ¶ *And upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all the ships of Tarshish.* Ships can constitute two sources of power, military might as well as trading power. Many have considered Tarshish in relation to Spain, but other possibilities are also offered: “Most likely of Tartessus at the southern tip of Spain but possibly of Tarsus in Cilisia. ... ‘ships of Tarshish’ may designate sea going vessels like those of Tarshish or else ships bearing metal cargo like those of Tarshish” (HBD). ¶ *And upon all pleasant pictures.*

¹⁹ Rather than original, Sperry meant the **¶** as well as the other Hebrew texts that we have today, none of which are the original signatures.

²⁰ Sperry, Sydney B. *Book of Mormon Compendium*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1968.

Many translators believe the Hebrew translated as “pictures” means sea crafts of some type (e.g., Tanakh, NRSV, REB, NAB, NAS), but not all. The NJB translates this as “and for everything held precious,” as does the English translation of the Vulgate (V), “and upon all that is fair to behold” (Douay), as likewise Delitzsch, who feels like Jerome, that the more literal *works of curiosity* means “and upon everything beautiful to look at,” such as works of art. The Targum (T) renders it “And upon all that dwell in beautiful palaces.”

17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down. Man can make the choice of humbling himself, or of being humbled. ¶ *And the haughtiness of men shall be made low.* To be haughty means to be exceedingly arrogant or proud. Men are quick to give themselves too much credit. ¶ *And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.* Sooner or later, however, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear” that Jesus is the Christ (ISAIAH 45:23b). I suspect this will take place in the midst of great joy and gratitude.

18 And the idols he shall utterly ✓ abolish.

✓ or, shall utterly pass away

Many suppose that idolatry and idols are a thing of the past. While at the time of Isaiah one of the major manifestations of idolatry was bowing down to dumb idols who could not utter a word, idol worship is much more than adoration of a dead piece of wood or metal: “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall” (D&C 1:16).

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, ✓ for the fear of the LORD shall come upon them, and for the glory of his majesty shall smite them, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

✓ or, dust

And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth. This thought builds on that of ISAIAH 2:10. The land of Israel was full of caves in the rocks, such as where the Dead Sea Scrolls (Q) were found. Yet man cannot hide from the judgment that will come. Not in rocks, not in caves, not in bomb shelters, not in man-made forts and buildings. While at first men shall try the futility of hiding in the rocks, after realizing the inefficacy of such, will wish to be buried by those same rocks: “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb”

(Revelations 6:15–16). The only true refuge will be the *Rock of Our Salvation*. ¶ *For the fear of the LORD shall come upon them.* Evil men often look in terror at the prospect of death, when they know that they will face God, “... with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked” (Mormon 6:7b). ¶ *And the glory of his majesty shall smite them.* Two things come to mind here. First, the literal “brightness of His glory” (Targum, T), a brightness that is blinding and that shames the brightness of the sun. Second, such powerful, pure righteousness of the Lord, that man would tremble with fear on account of his iniquities unless he was purified in preparation to meet the Lamb (see ISAIAH 6). ¶ *When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.* The focus of these words is upon the latter days, including the times preparatory for the Lord’s second coming, when He shall *shake terribly the earth*. The message of repentance is to go out to all the world in preparation for His second advent, “For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is not eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated” (D&C 1:2). The hearts of those who do not heed this message of love, and prepare to meet the Lamb, will fail. “And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.”²¹ And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound” (D&C 45:26–27). And important final note here, is that it is man’s own guilt which shall condemn him: “For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God: and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence” (Alma 12:14). Alma the younger spoke of the torment

²¹ Also see ISAIAH 66:5.

he faced before he repented, as he was *racked with eternal torment* at the very thought of having to face God: “Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds” (Alma 36:15).

20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, [✓] and his idols of gold, which ~~they~~ he hath made ~~[each one]~~ for himself [✓] to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

- ✓ the idols of his silver
- ✓ or, for him

In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which he hath made for himself to worship. Man will realize the worthlessness of his man-made treasures. ¶ *To the moles and to the bats.* One possibility is that so worthless will be gold and silver, that man will use them as pest control, to drive away moles and bats from the caves and thus leave them open for human habitation. Joseph Fielding Smith offered this suggestion: “We are all familiar with ISAIAH chapter two, at least the first five verses. . . . We have frequently quoted these verses, but we have failed to study the verses which follow, and they all have to do with our present day. One significant thing in it is that the Lord says we would throw our idols of gold and silver which men worship in these days, to the moles and the bats, and we have nearly done this, have we not? You do not have much gold and did not the Government take it and bury it? This is close to giving it to bats and moles.”²² Lowth similarly wrote, “They shall carry their idols with them into the dark caverns, old ruins, or desolate places, to which they shall flee for refuge; and so shall give them up and relinquish them to the filthy animals that frequent such places, and have taken possession of them as their proper habitation.” In the context of the next verse, man will leave behind his “treasures” in an effort to escape and seek hiding.

21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for the fear of the LORD shall come upon them, and for the glory of his majesty of his glory* shall smite them, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

*Note: majesty of the Lord (JTNT)

This verse, like poetry, comes back to the recurring theme introduced in ISAIAH 2:10 and 19: men will look for refuge in the rocks, but to no avail. Through repetition the unity of the thought is kept together.

22 Cease ye from man, whose breath [is] in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. It is not unusual in the prophets to find alternate thoughts between lamentation and a desire for the justice of the Lord to come upon those who have done wickedly. In response to the Lord’s, “Surely, I come quickly,” as with the author of the Book of Revelations, Isaiah seems to be saying, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelations 22:20b). ¶ *For wherein is he to be accounted of?* With King David, we could ask the Lord in gratitude, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:4).

FIRST POSTED: 13 May 2000

²² Smith, Joseph Fielding. *The Signs of the Times*. “Restoration of Israel and Judah.” Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1952. Talk delivered October 28, 1942, Barratt Hall, p. 57.

