
Isaiah 6

ISAIAH 6 is one of the most glorious chapters in Scripture. Isaiah sees the Living God and is commissioned to preach the gospel. Important implications about the nature of God cannot be swept aside as a consequence of the resulting theophany. Isaiah's stewardship is a type of that of the Savior: "Here am I; send me."

vv. 1–4. Isaiah's glorious vision was much like that of Ezekiel and that of John the Beloved,¹ he had seen the Savior seated on His throne.

1 ¶ IN the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train ✓ filled the temple.

✓ or, the skirts thereof

In the year that king Uzziah died, around 750 BC. Kay points out that 758 B.C. was a jubilee year, marked with associated forgiveness (see ISAIAH 6:7). The Targum (Ⓢ) reads instead, "In the year in which King Uzziah was smitten with the leprosy." With reference to the latter, Barns explains: "The Rabbins say that the meaning is, that he then became *civilly* dead, by ceasing to exercise his functions as a king, and that he was cut off as a leprous man from all connection with the people, and from all authority." At any rate, Henry

¹ "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:1–11).

explains that Isaiah was called to preach, and "Those who are to teach others the knowledge of God ought to be well acquainted with him themselves." This certainly was the case with the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was intimately acquainted with the Lord. How he wished that others could come to an understanding of spiritual things: "It is my meditation all the day, and more than my meat and drink, to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind."² The Prophet Joseph Smith was well acquainted with God, and had seen both the Father and the Son. Brother Joseph had a great desire, as we said, for all to be partakers of the same knowledge: "There are but a very few beings in the world who understand rightly the character of God. The great majority of mankind do not comprehend anything, either that which is past, or that which is to come, as it respects their relationship to God. ... The scriptures inform us that 'This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.'"³ ¶ The Talmud tradition (Seder Nashim, Yevamoth 49b) has amora⁴ Rabbah Bar Nahmani speaking as if he were addressing himself directly to Isaiah and asking the Prophet to explain a seeming contradiction: "Raba said: Your teacher Moses said, 'For men shall not see Me and live' and you said, 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up'" (Talmud, Soncino). ¶ Yet we know that there was no contradiction, only a corruption of the Scriptures in some places—as well as a misunderstanding of them. Here, Isaiah was being called to the ministry. Such a calling is not to be taken lightly. Nor does man have a right to enter into such without the proper authority: "Behold, I command you that you need not suppose that you are called to preach until you are called ... Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men." (D&C

² *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith.*

³ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts, 6:303–304.

⁴ Talmudic Jewish scholar (The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia).

11:15, 21); “Again I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church” (D&C 42:11). ¶ Matthew Henry, who died before the Gospel was restored, admitted: “None are allowed to go for God but those who are sent by him; he will own none but those whom he appoints.” Furthermore, those who are called must *teach by the Spirit*: “And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). ¶ *I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up*. Many read this verse to mean that it was the throne which was exalted (e.g., Ibn Ezra, Delitzsch, and Barnes). I have, rather, always felt it was the Lord Himself who was exalted, but among the exegetes only find agreement from Kay. And now, over fifteen years later (August 2016), I also find agreement from Shalom Paul [in his exegetical words regarding ISAIAH 57:15—GB, **עַל־כִּסֵּא רָם וְנִשָּׂא**, *upon a throne, high and lifted up*], “According to the straightforward reading of ISAIAH 6:1, **רָם וְנִשָּׂא** refers to the divine throne. The Masoretic vocalizers, however, placed a pausal accent under **כִּסֵּא**, since according to the Masoretes only the Lord himself is ‘high and lofty’ (see S. Kogut, *The Bible: Punctuation and Exegesis* [Jerusalem, 1994], 139, 216–17, 238 [Heb.].” ¶ We can contrast the exalted nature of the Lord in a latter chapter: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (ISAIAH 57:15, cf. 52:13). Even before the foundation of this world, our Savior was exalted and revered; He was the Yahweh⁵ of the Old Testament. He who sat on the throne magnified the throne. ¶ Isaiah had seen the Lord!

⁵ John the beloved testifies that Yahweh is Jesus. It is clear from these verses in Isaiah that the Seraphim are giving glory to Yahweh. For instance, see ISAIAH 6:3, **Holy, Holy, Holy** is **Yahweh Tzebaoth**: **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**; as well ISAIAH 6:5, “**The King Yahweh Tzebaoth**,” **אֱתֵת־הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**. Since these Isaianic verses refer to Jehovah, now we can see that **יְהוָה** is Jesus the Christ, according to the Testimony of John regarding these same verses: “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things *spoke Jesus*, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him*” (John 12:36–41, emphasis added).

Jehovah (or Yahweh) was the name for the premortal Messiah. This is admitted by a number of exegetes. For instance, Delitzsch says: **יְהוָה צְדִיקְנוּ** (Jehovah our Righteousness) is also used as a name of the Messiah,—a Messianic name [one also included in Jewish teachings] (vid. *Midrash Mishle 57a*, where this is adduced as one of the eight names of the Messiah).⁶ ¶ But here we depart from the beliefs of our fellow Christian brothers, who believe in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, wherein God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one and three in a way that cannot be explained. And that Jesus Christ is the incarnate expression of that Holy Trinity. Before I had ever heard of the Prophet Joseph and his glorious vision in which he saw both the Father and the Son, or before I ever held a copy of the Book of Mormon in my hands, it was revealed to me that the Godhead is composed of three distinct beings but one in purpose (see introduction). For a long time I did not know how peculiar a doctrine it was. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many;⁷ and that makes a plurality of Gods, in spite of the whims of all men ... I testify that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods ... The heads of the Gods appointed one God for us; and when you take [that] view of the subject, it sets one free to see all the beauty, holiness and perfection of the Gods” (TPJS, pp. 372). Joseph Smith taught that beginning with Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” what we have is not a correct translation of God, which should read Gods in the plural, or Elohim. A better rendition is that found in Abraham: “And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth” (Abraham 4:1). Joseph taught that the original in the Bible read “In the beginning the head of the Gods brought forth the Gods,” or, as others have translated it, “The head of the Gods called the Gods together” (TPJS, p. 371). Brother Joseph taught that the Hebrew word for beginning, *Bereshit* (**בְּרֵאשִׁית**), is a corruption with someone adding the letter *bet* (**ב**) to it, and should have been rendered *rosh* (**רֹאשׁ**), or head,

⁶ See Delitzsch on ISAIAH 9:6, plus here there is a reference to the Lord as Messiah in Jeremiah, **יְהוָה צְדִיקְנוּ**: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**” (Jeremiah 23:5–6).

⁷ “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:5–6).

instead, with the **ת** attached (**תְּאַשֵׁת**) being simply a grammatical termination (TPJS, p. 371). **תְּאַשֵׁת** and **תְּאַשֵׁת** both can also have reference to the beginning, thus having a double meaning.⁸ Professor, W. H. Chamberlin, of BYU, wrote an excellent paper on the plural nature of the word Elohim of which we quote but a very brief summary.⁹ We know that Christ is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. The commentator on the Jewish Pentateuch and Haftorahs wrote: “[Genesis 1:1] is a majestic summary of the story of Creation: God is the beginning, nay, the Cause of all things” (Hertz). ¶ Brother Joseph also taught that that in John 17:21, the expression “*be one*” would more correctly be translated from the Greek as *be agreed*¹⁰: “‘I am agreed with the Father and the Father is agreed with me, and we are agreed as one.’ The Greek shows that it should be agreed. ‘Father, I pray for them which Thou hast given me out of the world, and not for those alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be agreed, as Thou, Father, are with me, and I with thee, that they may also be agreed with us,’ and all come to dwell in unity, and in all the glory and everlasting burnings of the Gods” (TPJS, pp. 372–373). ¶ **Anthropomorphic**

⁸ See, for instance, Brown-Driver-Briggs, BDB.

⁹ W. H. Chamberlin of the Brigham Young College Logan Utah, “Use of the Word Elohim.” *Improvement Era* 1902. “Two words, El, of which Elim was the plural form, and Eloah, of which Elohim was the plural, were applied generally to Deity by the Hebrew people. All these forms are found in the other Semitic languages, and are, therefore, very ancient in origin. Under severest discipline the people of Israel were educated in the school of monotheism, in order that God’s nature might be revealed to man, and in order that unity might be introduced into the moral life of man. Under this discipline, the people of Israel must have learned to apply the plural form Elohim, which their fathers had used of Deity, in speaking of the one God whom they had been taught to serve. The Hebrew language would allow them to do this, for a few nouns, when used by them in the plural, seemed to magnify the original idea. In such cases the plural form was treated grammatically as singular. An example may be found in Job 40:15 where the plural form behemoth is used to intensify the image of the animal there being described, as is shown by context. In the same verse, the behemoth is referred to by the singular pronoun he. But the use of Elohim, in this sense, by the later writers of Israel, is not necessarily opposed to the view that in the earliest documents or writings which the Hebrews possessed, it was applied to a plurality of Gods. The objection to this view has been made that, with the plural form Elohim, in Genesis 1, the singular verb is used. Such a use of a singular predicate with a plural subject is, however, common in Hebrew [see] page 111 of *Harper’s Hebrew Syntax*.”

¹⁰ Regarding *εν* (*εἷς, μία, ἓν*), see the various lexicons for concurrence with the Prophet Joseph, including the *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* (concept of agreement); *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (unanimous, as well as concept of unity between the Father and the Son, as well as with the Church, 2:440); *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (of union and concord); *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (to be united most closely, in will or spirit; and not given to dissensions); *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature* (be of one mind).

Nature of God. Delitzsch has, “There the prophet sees the Sovereign Ruler ... seated upon the throne, and in human form (Ezekiel 1:26), as is proved by the robe with a train, whose flowing ends or borders (*fimbriae: shüilm*, as in Exodus 28:33–34) filled the hall. The Septuagint, Targum, Vulgate, etc., have dropped the figure of the robe and train, as too anthropomorphic. But John, in his Gospel, is bold enough to say that it was Jesus whose glory Isaiah saw¹¹ (John 12:41).” Such anthropomorphic theophany has some people throughout time uncomfortable. Many Jewish and Christian philosophers of today and yesteryear believe that God is a formless being, else, they argue, how could he dwell in the heart of men? How could His influence be so widespread? How could God be perfect and powerful if He is limited to a physical body? After the Hellenization of Israel,¹² during the intertestamental period, these strange notions of a God without a physical body came to prevail among both Jew and Gentile. Recently, a number of interesting books, quite a few written by Jews, have fallen into my hands, showing that indeed the ancient peoples did believe that God had a body. J. F. Stenning, in the introduction to the Jewish *Targum of Isaiah* explains: “Since the main object of the Targumist was to render the Hebrew original intelligible to the ordinary people it is not surprising to find that its chief characteristic is the use of paraphrase. This is especially noticeable in the case of the Prophets, where a strictly literal translation would often have failed to convey the meaning of the Hebrew. But the desire to give an intelligible reproduction of the Hebrew text was not the only motive which prompted the translator: he was also concerned to avoid any rendering which seemed to conflict with later religious ideas. The most striking illustration of this motive is afforded by the treatment of those passages which relate to the Divine Being. From the standpoint of later Jewish theology the primitive representations of God in the Old Testament, and especially the anthropomorphic figures applied to Him ...” (p. xii). Rawlinson is honest enough to ask: “How we are to reconcile Exodus 33:20¹³ with this passage, Job 42:5, and Ezekiel 1:26–28, is uncertain.” The Ezekiel verses read as follows: “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the

¹¹ See my footnote on the same topic, above.

¹² Shayne J. D. Cohen suggests that all Jews were Hellenized; the question is to what degree. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*.

¹³ See notes on ISAIAH 6:5. We read in Exodus: “And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). This text has been greatly corrupted, however, and the original was “And he said unto Moses, Thou canst not see my face at this time, lest my anger be kindled against thee also, and I destroy thee, and thy people; for there shall no man among them see me at this time, and live, for they are exceedingly sinful. And no sinful man hath at any time, neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live” (JST).

likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.” A quote of interest from Shayne Cohen is: “The God of the Hebrew Bible is for the most part an anthropomorphic and anthropopathic being, that is, a God who has the form and emotions of humans. He (it is a he) walks and talks, has arms and legs, becomes angry, happy, or sad, changes his mind, speaks to humans and is addressed by them, and closely supervises the affairs of the world. ... Philo is particularly careful to sanitize the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic passages ... Perhaps some Jews were concerned about the very unphilosophical image of God in the Hebrew scriptures, but most Jews were not. Apocalyptic visionaries and mystics persisted in seeing God sitting on his throne surrounded by his angelic attendants. The rabbis had no difficulty in believing in a God who loves and is loved and with whom one can argue. ... In the fourth century most of the monks in Egypt understood the anthropomorphisms of scripture literally. ... After hearing a pastoral letter from the Bishop of Alexandria and sermon from his abbot which insisted that the scriptural anthropomorphisms were to be understood allegorically because God has no shape, one elderly monk arose to pray but could not.”¹⁴ This last story is quoted by Robinson, who gives additional detail: “One Serapion, an elderly monk of great reputation, found himself unable to pray to the new God ... [and] falling to the ground he groaned: ‘Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me, and I have none to grasp, and I know not whom to adore or to address.’ Ultimately the anthropomorphic monks simply rebelled and refused to accept the new view, successfully forcing the bishop Theophilus into an abrupt about-face.”¹⁵ Do the Rabbis react to the anthropomorphism as do the philosophers? Is God really concerned about the doings of man? “The answers the Rabbis give indicate no concern with the problem of anthropomorphism. Is it possible to say that

¹⁴ Cohen, Shayne, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, vol. 7 of the *Library of Early Christianity*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987, pp. 86, 87.

¹⁵ Chadwick, *The Early Church*, and Chadwick, *Western Asceticism*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press and Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958 & 1976, respectively, in Robinson, *Are Mormons Christian?* 1991, pp. 83–84.

‘the Lord went before them by day?’ Rabbi (Judah the Prince) replies by telling of how Antoninus would himself take the torch and light the way for his sons in the darkness, and that he would say to the notables who offered to perform that service: ‘It is not that I have no one to take the torch and light the way for my sons. But it is thus that I make known to you how beloved my sons are to me, so that you should treat them with respect.’ And Rabbi adds, ‘In like manner, the Holy One blessed be He made known to the nations of the world how beloved Israel is to Him: He Himself went before them, so that they (the nations) should treat them with respect’ (Mekilta, I. pp. 185–186). Obviously, no attention is paid here to the problem of anthropomorphism” (Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind*, pp. 274–275). Alfred Edersheim, a Jewish scholar who converted to Christianity had this to say about changes made to the scriptures in the LXX (6), “Difficulties—or what seemed such—are removed by the most bold methods, and by free handling of the text; it need scarcely said, often very unsatisfactorily. More especially a strenuous effort is made to banish all anthropomorphisms, as inconsistent with their ideas of the Deity” (Edersheim, Alfred, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 3rd Edition, 1886, p. 28). The philosophers and others, then, have tended to put their own limitations upon God. Many attempts have been given to minimize the importance of Isaiah’s vision, as well as that of Joseph Smith.¹⁶ I declare, that I know with every fiber of my being that indeed Joseph Smith did see the Father and the Son, and that Isaiah saw Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. I know, for the Spirit of the Lord has revealed it unto me (see introduction). ¶ *And his train filled the temple.* The train, or as in the margin ||, the skirts, could be representative of the faithful Saints, dressed in white raiment (cf. Revelation 4:4). Rawlinson suggests that *train* means “*the skirt of his robe*” rather than “*train of attendants*,” and shows that indeed one of the meanings of the word is the latter. While for some the temple represented here is that of Jerusalem (e.g., Barnes, Lowth), for others it is one in heaven (e.g., Delitzsch) like the one seen by John the beloved, or in some way a combination of both.

2 Above it stood the seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

Seraphims, or more correctly, *seraphim* (שֶׁרָפִיִּים), which is the plural of *saraph*¹⁷ (שֶׁרָפָה). These seraphim

¹⁶ Joseph Smith—History, verses 23–25, Pearl of Great Price.

¹⁷ Seraph in English.

stood above, or perhaps about Him.¹⁸ In other Scripture we read: “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelations 4:8); Regarding these the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “Q. What are we to understand by the eyes and wings, which the beasts had [in the verses in Revelation 4]? A. Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, they are full of knowledge; and their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.” (D&C 77:4). In Ezekiel 1 these creatures are further described under the name of cherubim: “As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning” (Ezekiel 1:13–14, also see Ezekiel 10 & 41). In the Targum (Ⓢ) the seraphim are translated as “holy ministers.” In Hebrew the root term *saraph*, שָׂרַף, or שָׂרָף, or plural *seraphim*, שָׂרָפִים, is pronounced essentially the same as in English. The root, means to burn or consume, and can also mean a possibly venomous serpent” (AHCL, BDB, TWOT). The use for the serpent may come from the “burning” pain or effect of its poison (BDB, TWOT). We also see שָׂרָף in ISAIAH 14:29 and 30:6, where it is translated as “a fiery flying serpent” in the AV. It is clear that the Lord abides in everlasting and glorious burnings (ISAIAH 33:14b). The seraphim were “angelic creatures ... These angelic beings were brilliant as flaming fire, symbolic of the purity and power of the heavenly court” (TWOT). Such a meaning corresponds well with Joseph Smith’s own description: “And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!” (D&C 109:79b). In the Pseudepigraphical work 2 Enoch, we read that Enoch had a similar experience to that of Isaiah. Enoch is said to have seen “cherubim and seraphim” around the throne, “six-winged and many eyed” (2 Enoch 21:1, MSS J, Andersen), and among them also “the fiery armies of the great archangels” (2 Enoch 21:1, MSS J, Andersen), or “the fiery armies of the incorporeal ones, archangels ...” (2 Enoch 20:1, MSS A, Andersen). Perhaps the word incorporeal here means pre-mortal, unembodied spirits, before these beings obtained a body upon the earth. Angels do not

¹⁸ Sperry, Sidney B. Book of Mormon Compendium. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1968, p. 193.

have wings,¹⁹ as Charles Penrose explained: “The popular notion that angels are winged beings, because it is stated by some scripture writers that they saw them “flying through the heavens,” is a fallacy. Cherubim and Seraphim spoken of by Ezekiel and Isaiah, are not to be classed with the angels, for the angels are of the same race and descent as men, whether in body or in spirit, and do not need wings for locomotion, nor do they appear in birdlike form. They are of the family of Deity in different degrees of progression and are ‘in the image and likeness’ of the Most High.”²⁰ We also know that some aspects of these descriptions are symbolic, a representation of light, knowledge, and power to move and act.

3 And one cried unto another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts; the whole earth [is] full of his glory.

✓ or, this cried to this

✓ ✓ or, his glory is the fulness of the whole earth

And one cried unto another, and said. We know little about the nature of the crying from the book of Isaiah. While the exact approach is not certain, various possibilities have been suggested. “The meaning is not that they all lifted up their voice in concert at one and the same time ... but that there was a continuous and unbroken antiphonal song. One set commenced, and the others responded, either repeating the ‘Holy, holy, holy,’ or following with ‘filling the whole earth is His glory’” (Delitzsch). In 2 Enoch we read that this was a “singing with [a] gentle voice in front of the face of the LORD” (2 Enoch 21:1, MSS J, Andersen). Another Pseudepigraphical work that speaks in great detail in

¹⁹ My daughter Cristina said: “And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” (Genesis 3:14), Do you suppose that before that serpent had legs?” *Out of the mouth of babes!* (Psalm 8:2a). Certainly, the thought had crossed my mind. Perhaps we may think of the Seraphim as glorious beings around the throne of God, including angels, who have much power as indicated by the symbolism of the eyes and wings. Instead of the loss of legs, perhaps the serpent in Genesis 3:14 is the representation of the fallen angels, including Satan, who have lost their fire, or *light*. “There are fallen angels, too, who were cast down for transgression, as mentioned by Jude (verse 6), chief among whom on this earth is Lucifer or Satan, who has sought on many occasions to appear as an ‘angel of light’ to deceive and lead astray, and who tempted the Son of God, but failed in his efforts as he did with Moses and with the Prophet Joseph Smith (see Luke 4:1–13; Visions of Moses 1:12–22; D&C 128:20). That great spiritual personage was an angel of God in his ‘first estate,’ and yet never had a body of flesh, but ‘was in authority in the presence of God’ as a spirit, before he rebelled and was ‘thrust down.’ (D&C. 76:25–28.)” (Charles W. Penrose, “Who and What are the Angels,” *Improvement Era*, August 1912.)

²⁰ Charles W. Penrose, “Who and What are the Angels,” *Improvement Era*, August 1912.

regard to the beautiful hymns of praise that are sung to God and the Lamb, is the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah (AscenIs) to which we have already alluded to. There are portions of this manuscript that are sublime beyond description. Isaiah is pictured as journeying through seven heavens, in order to see how the condescension of Jesus Christ would take place. Isaiah was first taken above the firmament to the first heaven. Each heaven had some similarities, such as a throne and the singing of praise towards the “the One who sits in the seventh heaven, the One who rests in the holy world, and to his Beloved” (AscenIs 7:17, Knibb). The glory of the angels on the right hand side was superior to the ones on the left, and so were their voices. All sung in one accord, however, toward the throne in the middle. The second heaven was like unto the first, except that “there was great glory in the second heaven.” They, likewise were united in praise. A personage was sitting on the throne, who was filled with more glory than both those on the left and on the right. Isaiah is said to have fallen on his face to worship, so great was the glory of this being, but was forbidden by his guide, “Worship neither throne, nor angel from the six heavens, from where I was sent to lead you, before I tell you in the seventh heaven” (AscenIs 7:21, Knibb). With each step toward a higher heaven, the glory of the persons in these heavens, as well as their singing, was greater, all the way to the fifth heaven. From the sixth heaven and above, there were no differences between those on the left and the right, nor was there a throne however. But the glory of the personages as well as of their singing continued to increase. Isaiah was, as he moved up through each of these heavens, transformed so his countenance began to be glorified more and more, and his voice was given like ability to those around him. The praises now also included those toward the Holy Ghost: “And there they all named the primal Father and His Beloved, the Christ and the Holy Spirit” (AscenIs 8:18, Charles). So very bright was the light in the sixth heaven, that “I thought the light which I had seen in the five heavens but darkness. And I rejoiced and praised Him who hath bestowed such lights on those who wait for His promise. And I besought the angel who conducted me that I should not henceforth return to the carnal world” (AscenIs 8:21–23, Charles). When Isaiah arrived at the seventh heaven, we read, “And then I heard the voices and the hymns of praise which I had heard in each of the six heavens—which I had heard as I ascended there; and all (the voices and hymns of praise) were directed to that Glorious One whose glory I could not see ... And all the praise which was sent (up) from the six heavens was not only heard, but seen” (AscenIs 10:1–2, 5). What happens next is beautiful beyond description; our Beloved Savior is commissioned to descend through each of the heavens, by the Father, until he takes upon Himself mortality. In

each of the heavens the Savior changes His glory to match where He is. While those in the sixth heaven were allowed to recognize and worship our Savior, from there on, no knew who He was, for the Christ was made like unto those among whom He walked. (AscenIs, Knibb; AscenIs, Charles). I would love to say more, but shall leave the reading of this beautiful narrative to those who wish to rejoice and have their hearts filled—for I cannot read and meditate upon these things without tears of joy and gratitude. There are a number of special and sacred lessons to be gained from such a reading, especially by the LDS. For instance, these writings concur with the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith that God the Father presides in the Godhead; that the Godhead is composed by three distinct beings but one in purpose, and that the Holy Spirit is an actual male being, and not some disassociated matter. Knibb says, somewhat astounded, “What he has to say about the Trinity is of particular interest ... a superior status is attributed to the Father in that ‘the Lord’ and the angel of the Holy Spirit are presented as worshiping him.”²¹ Now I feel I have a better understanding of what is meant by the *condescension* of God, spoken about by Nephi (1 Nephi 11:14 ff.), who seems to have been privileged to see much of what Isaiah was shown, in terms of the miraculous birth, life upon the earth, death by crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ (see AscenIs 9:12–14; 11:1 ff.). The similarities between these writings and those of Nephi in this regard are compelling (see notes under ISAIAH 53:2). ¶ *Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts* (see also, Revelation 4:8). In Enoch we have: “Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD Sabaoth, Heaven and earth are full of his glory” (2 Enoch 21:1, MSS J, Andersen). In Hebrew the equivalent grammar of increasingly more holiness, as in holy, holier, or holiest (or holy, more holy, most holy) is not represented in the same way. By a three-time repetition of the word holy, קדוש, through a *trishagion*, the Hebrew (קדוש) conveys the same idea, perhaps in an even more powerful fashion. The Targum (ܩܕܝܫ) offers an interesting reading: “Holy in the highest and exalted heavens is the house of his Shekinah, holy upon the earth is the work of his might, holy for ever, world without end, is the Lord of hosts.” Before leaving this section that makes use of the repeated holiness of the Lord, several commentators have suggested that it is from this experience that Isaiah was moved to call Yahweh by yet another sacred name, that of **קדוש ישׂראל** “Holy One of Israel.”²² ¶ *The whole*

²¹ Michael A. Knibb, “The Ascension of Isaiah,” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (James H. Charlesworth, Editor), Volume 2, p. 154.

²² “All the prophecies of Isaiah carry this name of God as their stamp. It occurs twenty-nine times (including ch. x. 17, xl.iii. 15, xlix. 7), viz. twelve times in ch. 1–xxxix., and seventeen times in ch. xl.–lxvi. As Luzzatto has well observed, ‘the prophet, as if with a

earth is full of his glory. The Targum (Ⓒ) reads, “The whole earth is full of the brightness of His glory.” Jerome suggested, that the whole earth would be full of His glory, “and that the Jewish temple alone should not be, as formerly, the place of the Divine glory, for the whole earth should be filled with it” (Jerome, in Clarke).

4 And the posts of the door^v moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

✓ thresholds

And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried. Or, “And the posts of the threshold of the temple moved at the voice of him that cried” (Targum, Ⓒ). Delitzsch suggests that it was “the foundations of the thresholds” that shook. As the passing of a train shakes the ground, and lightning the sky; oh how beautiful it would be if our hearts would tremble to do the work of the Lord. The very foundations shook as they did when the Lord descended upon Sinai: “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exodus 19:18). The *fear of the Lord*, to me, is not the trepidation and anxiety brought upon by terror, but rather, a great internal desire to please the Lord. To be more concerned with what the Lord would have us think, say, and do, than with that of any other consideration. We read, “... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (ISAIAH 66:2b). ¶ *And the house was filled with smoke.* Smoke is representative of prayer, as it reaches God. “And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (Revelation 8:4). **Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord,** **הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה**. Smoke also represents the Glory of the Lord: that the Lord has accepted man’s offering or dedication.

vv. 5–8. Isaiah feels awe, for he has seen the living God. One of the seraphs takes a live coal from the altar and applies it to Isaiah’s lips, thus cleansing Isaiah of his sins. Isaiah is commissioned to preach the Gospel.

presentiment that the authenticity of the second part of his book would be disputed, has stamped both parts with this name of God, “the Holy One of Israel,” as if with his own seal.’ The only other passages in which the word occurs, are three times in the Psalms (Psalm 71:22; 78:41; 89:19), and twice in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 50:29, 51:5), and that not without an allusion to [the writings of] Isaiah” (Delitzsch).

5 ¶ Then said I: Woe [is] unto me! for I am undone;^v because I [am] a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

✓ cut off

Then said I: Woe is unto me! for I am undone. Woe means anguish and despair. To be undone, like the margin ||, means to be cut off. Some suggest that Isaiah had been reduced to silence. The Hebrew word for *I am undone* is **גִּדְמִיתִי**, and its root, **גִּדְמָה** or even, some suppose from the unused root, **דָּמָה** (pronounced *damah* and *dum*, respectively). As a result, Isaiah was not able to join in the singing of praises, for he had not yet been cleansed by the atonement. “There is something exceedingly affecting in this complaint,” suggests Clarke, demanding a certain amount of introspection. “I am a man of unclean lips; I cannot say, Holy, holy, holy! which the seraphs exclaim. They are holy; I am not so: they see God and live; I have seen him, and must die, because I am unholy. Only the pure in heart shall see God; and they only can live in his presence for ever. Reader, lay this to heart; and instead of boasting of thy excellence, and trusting in thy might or comforting thyself in thy comparative innocence, thou wilt also be dumb before him, because thou hast been a man of unclean lips, and because thou hast still an unclean heart.” ¶ *Because I am a man of unclean lips.* All men who have reached the age of accountability are unclean: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10). Yet we know that Isaiah was a righteous and noble man, “Among the great and mighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous [was] Isaiah, who declared by prophecy that the Redeemer was anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, were also there” (D&C 138:38, 42). The prophets are great men who have lost their desire for sin: “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” (TPJS, p. 51). Yet, Isaiah felt overwhelmed by being in the presence of Yahweh. ¶ *And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* Isaiah felt unclean, and in contact with others who were unclean. Under the Law of Moses, any physical contact with that which was unclean made a person unclean and required a physical purging: “And whosoever toucheth any thing that was under him shall be unclean until the even: and he that beareth any of those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until

the even” (Leviticus 15:10). We must even more so guard ourselves from coming into contact with that which is spiritually degrading: “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD” (ISAIAH 52:11). ¶ *For mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.* This is one of the key lines upon which much of this discussion revolves: Isaiah had *seen the living God!* This seems natural to us as LDS. Not so to the Jews of a later period, as well as the Christian churches, for they believed that man could not see God and live. The Jewish tradition is that Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, sawed Isaiah through with a wooden saw, because Isaiah had claimed to have seen²³ the Living God. Belkira²⁴ brought railing accusations against Isaiah and the prophets as follows: “And Isaiah himself has said, ‘I see more than Moses the prophet.’ Moses said, ‘There is no man who can see the LORD and live.’²⁵ But Isaiah has said, ‘I have seen the LORD, and behold I am alive.’ Know therefore, O King, that they [are] false prophets. And he has called Jerusalem Sodom, and the princes of Judah and Jerusalem he has declared [to be] the people of Gomorrah.’ And he brought many accusations against Isaiah and the prophets before Manasseh ... Because of these visions, therefore, Beliar was angry with Isaiah, and he dwelt in the heart of Manasseh, and he sawed Isaiah in half with a wood saw” (AscenIs 3:7b–10; 5:1, Knibb).²⁶ A few

²³ The God of the Jews is an anthropomorphic one (also see notes on ISAIAH 5:6). Many scriptures make this absolutely clear: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27); “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30); “And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exodus 33:11); “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:10). Now, Isaiah had been added to this select group who had seen the Lord face to face. Joseph Smith, Jr., Lorenzo Snow, and others would follow in the latter-days.

²⁴ A number of names for Satan are used in the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah, including Belkira, Beliar, and Sammael Satan, and some variations of these. “According to Jewish tradition Sammael was originally one of the chief archangels, but after inciting the serpent to tempt Eve he became the leader of the Satans. It is in such a role that he appears in AscenIs, where Sammael seems to be merely another name for Beliar. ... Malkira, used here as an additional name for Sammael, means in Hebrew “king of evil”; elsewhere this name occurs as a variant of Belkira, the name of the Samaritan opponent of Isaiah” (Knibb, footnote u, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, Charlesworth, J. H., editor, p. 157).

²⁵ See notes on ISAIAH 6:1, including JST for Exodus 33:20.

²⁶ “According to the tradition preserved in the Babylonian Talmud (Yeb 49b) Isaiah was put on trial by Manasseh on a variety of charges; included among these is the charge made in the Ascension (3:8f.) that Isaiah claimed to have seen God, despite the fact that Moses said that no one can see God and Live. ... According to the Jerusalem Talmud Isaiah hid in a cedar to escape from Manasseh, but the fringes of his garment stuck out and betrayed his presence. Manasseh ordered the tree to be cut, and Isaiah was discovered” (Knibb, M. A., in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2,

more words from the story of Isaiah’s martyrdom are of interest: “And while Isaiah was being sawed in half, his accuser, Belkira, stood by, and all the false prophets stood by, laughing [maliciously] ... And Belkira said to Isaiah, ‘Say, “I have lied in everything I have spoken; the ways of Manasseh are good and right, and also the ways of Belkira and who are with him are good.”’ And he said this to him when he began to be sawed in half” (AscenIs 5:2, 4–6). Why is it that Satan seeks to make people *deny* what they know to be truth? The Lamanites, for instance, “... put to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ. And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ ...” (Moroni 1:2b:3a). Zeezrom tried to bribe Amulek so Amulek would deny Christ. “And Zeezrom said unto him: Behold, here are six onties of silver, and all these will I give thee if thou wilt deny the existence of a Supreme Being. Now Amulek said: O thou child of hell, why tempt ye me? Knowest thou that the righteous yieldeth to no such temptations? Believest thou that there is no God? I say unto you, Nay, thou knowest that there is a God, but thou lovest that lucre more than him” (Alma 11:22a–24). So again, why is it that Satan tries to get men to deny Christ? The answer was given by Christ himself, as recounted by Nephi, “But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me” (2 Nephi 31:14, cf. words of Sherem in Jacob 7:19). ¶ The notion that man cannot see God is indeed a mistaken one. In Exodus we read: “And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). Who is *He* in “And he said”? It is the Savior who is speaking, even Yahweh. Verses 17 and 21 make it clear that these verses, including verse 20, refer to יהוה. Yet there are multiple references about the children of Israel seen the Lord in the Old Testament. These include Isaiah’s vision. In future times, because of the condescension of our Savior, there would be thousands who would see Him. So we must understand this verse as speaking to seeing the Lord in his glory. The Inspired Version corrects this verse to read: “... for there shall no man among them see me at this time, and live, for they are exceeding sinful. And no sinful man hath at any time,

Charlesworth, J. H., editor, p. 151). In The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews we find that there were those “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25). A list of people of faith is included, as well as the martyrs of the faith, and how they died, including “They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword ...” (Hebrews 11:37a).

neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live” (JST Exodus 33:20). After Christ was resurrected and took upon Himself a glorified an exalted body, we read: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). Joseph Smith had not only seen the Living God, but also the Father! Furthermore we read about transfiguration as: “The condition of persons who are temporarily changed in appearance and nature—that is, lifted to a higher spiritual level—so that they can endure the presence and glory of heavenly beings.”²⁷ It is interesting that while the philosophers insist on a God without form or feelings, the believer in God—who hears about the true nature of God, both Father and Son with exalted bodies, as separate distinct glorified beings—can only express, “I knew that in my heart all along!”

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, [✓] [which] he had taken with the tongs from off the altar;

✓ and in his hand a live coal

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand. Isaiah—like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—has realized that he is “naked” or impure in the presence of God. This is a wonderful realization, indeed. Moses said: “Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed. But now mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him” (Moses 1:10b–11). The desire to turn and follow the Lord can only come as we realize our nothingness, and the infinite worth of the atoning sacrifice brought about by Him in whom there is no sin. Isaiah is in a state of humble despair, and of recognition of his un-holiness. ¶ *Which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.* At the very moment of despair, He who is Most Holy commands a seraph to take a live coal from the expiatory altar. The allusion to the entering of the High Priest on Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement, **וּמִן כְּפָרִים**, within the veil of the Most Holy Place (also called the Holy of Holies, **קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדָשִׁים**,”) with burning coals and sweet incense²⁸ is an

²⁷ *Transfiguration* in the LDS “Guide to the Scriptures.”

²⁸ “And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail” (Leviticus 16:12).

unmistakable type and shadow of the atonement. We now partake of the Sacrament in memory of the expiatory sacrifice. Henry wrote, “[The high priest] took a censer of burning coals and a dish full of the sweet incense and then went into the holy of holies, set the coals down upon the floor, and scattered the incense upon them, so that the room was immediately filled with smoke. The Jews say that he was to go in *side-ways*, that he might not look directly upon the ark where the divine glory was, then he must come out *backwards*, out of reverence to the diving majesty . . .” (Henry). And furthermore we read, “Standing before the ark, he deposited the censer of coals on the floor, emptied the plate of incense into his hand, poured it on the burning coals; and the apartment was filled with fragrant smoke, intended, according to the Jewish writers, to prevent any presumptuous gazer prying too curiously into the form of the mercy seat, which was the Lord’s throne” (Faussett). The coal was so very hot that it required tongs to remove it from the altar.

7 And he laid [✓] [it] upon my mouth, and said: Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

✓ caused it to touch

And he laid it upon my mouth, and said: Lo, this hath touched thy lips. James explained that when a man can control his speech, that he can control every aspect of his being: “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2). Thus, the importance of the lips. The Sacrament that we partake each Sabbath day, likewise, touches our lips. ¶ *And thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.* When a person who has been baptized worthily partakes of the Sacrament, and covenants to always remember the Lord, such a person may rejoice in the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 4:3). This powerful gift “acts as a cleansing agent to purify a person and sanctify him from all sin” (LDS BD).

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here [am] I; [✓] send me.

✓ Behold me

This is the same question the Father asked in our pre-mortal existence: “And the Lord²⁹ said: Whom shall I

²⁹ LORD, here, refers to God the Father, Elohim (see LDS FN)

send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27a). When the Father asked for volunteers, Jesus Christ stood up to take upon himself this infinitely difficult and almost incomprehensible task of being the Savior of mankind. Jesus desired all the glory to go to the Father: “But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me, Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2). This sequence with Isaiah seems to be a type and a shadow of what the Savior went through. Isaiah was ready, he said, “Here am I; send me.” In those Heavenly councils did we also volunteer for specific jobs to be had during this mortal probation? Are we living up to those obligations and pre-mortal covenants? Do we seek to glorify God? Elder Maxwell taught: “The men and women of Christ magnify their callings without magnifying themselves.”³⁰

vv. 9–13. Isaiah understands that his task will be a strenuous one. The people will hear with their ears but not comprehend with their hearts, and thus will not be converted. Isaiah desires to know how long it will be that such a state of blindness will prevail.

9 ¶ And he said: Go, and tell this people-- Hear ye indeed, ✓ but understand they understood not; and see ye indeed, but perceive they perceived not.

✓ or, without ceasing; HEBREW, in hearing

The Hebrew text (מִי) is corrupted at this place and makes it seem as if the Lord was telling Isaiah that He did not wish the people to understand, be converted, and healed. The Book of Mormon preserved the correct rendering of the text: “And he said: Go and tell this people—Hear ye indeed, but they understood not; and see ye indeed, but they perceived not” (2 Nephi 16:9). The Targum (ܬܪܓܘܡ)³¹ reads very closely to the Book of Mormon: “And he said, Go and speak unto this people that hear indeed but understand not, but see indeed but know not.” Delitzsch and Kay note that the Lord here does not call Israel “my people” עַמִּי, but rather by the more impersonal, “this people” לְעַם הַיּוֹדָה (see notes on ISAIAH 3:12, and *Rain in Due Season* introductory chapter).

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their

³⁰ Neal A. Maxwell, *Men and Women of Christ*, p.13.

³¹ Stenning.

eyes—lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and be healed.

This verse shows a typical chiasmus pattern:

- A. Heart, “*Make the heart of this people fat,*”
- B. Ears, “*And make their ears heavy,*”
- C. Eyes, “*And shut their eyes,*” then a reversal,
- C. Eyes, “*Lest they see with their eyes,*”
- B. Ears, “*And hear with their ears,*” and back to
- A., Heart, “*And understand with their heart.*”

And as a result of that, “And be converted, and be healed.” We find in Zechariah: “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 7:8–14). ¶ *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.* The LXX (Ⓞ) seems to give the proper meaning, not that the Lord had made people’s hearts and minds dull, but rather, this was a description of what already existed: “For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed.” ¶ *Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and be healed.* This whole expression (ISAIAH 6:9–10)³² forms part of an uninterrupted,

³² So also Jeremiah, “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. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee” (Jeremiah 7:23–27, emphasis added).

unified statement taken to its most happy conclusion (conversion³³ followed by spiritual healing through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord) for those might have been willing to heed and return unto the Lord. Throughout the Standard Works one can find invitation after invitation to *turn* or *return* unto the Lord. Isaiah is told that the people would not accept such an invitation with its sublime consequences, but would rather, instead, choose obstinacy and spiritual death. Thus the lamentation: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37). Bryan Weston shared a few thoughts about how hens protect their chicks. He said that the hens, when they sense danger, will spread their wings in a protective fashion and all the chicks will run for cover, after which the hen covers her brood. The hen is willing to give her life, if needed, to protect her chicks.³⁴ Even though the hen offers the chicks protection, and even her life if need be, only the chicks who run for cover and hide under the hen obtain that refuge. The chicks that do not seek for asylum fend for themselves. So it is with Christ’s invitation to us. There are at least two important teachings to be derived from the Scriptures regarding such matters of inviting. **The first** is that from the beginning of days the Lord has sent his messengers to *invite all to come unto Christ*. “...and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33b). The Scriptures are replete with such invitations to come. **The second** principle is that of mercy. A person who has been warned may be subject to more serious consequences if he does not heed the invitation. While the Spirit will touch our hearts to do something, it is never done in a forceful or compulsive manner. The Spirit does not nag. If we ignore the Spirit, eventually *the Spirit withdraws*. This is a source of mercy, for

³³ President Lee taught, “The greatest responsibility that a member of Christ’s church has ever had is to become truly converted—and it is just as important to stay converted. But again I ask, what is conversion? Some clues are given by the Lord. In answering a question as to why He spoke in parables, He quoted a scripture from Isaiah: ‘Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.’ (ISAIAH 6:10.) As you can see, one is converted when he sees with his eyes what he ought to see; when he hears with his ears what he ought to hear; and when he understands with his heart what he ought to understand. And what he ought to see, hear and understand is truth—eternal truth—and then practice it.” (*Stand Ye In Holy Places: Selected Sermons and Writings of President Harold B. Lee*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1988, p. 92).

³⁴ A. Bryan Weston, “Pioneers, Gatherings to Zion, and the Lord’s Loving Kindness.” 1977 CES Book of Mormon Symposium.

otherwise the condemnation would be even greater, as people would *sin against the greater light*.³⁵ “For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3). Alma teaches, “And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying: It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction” (Alma 12:9–11a). In the New Testament, the Savior teaches: “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:10–15). ¶ Why is this such a serious matter? To be healed of the Lord? The Lord explains that when we have repented and turn back to our wicked ways, we are worse off than before: “[When] ...the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself,

³⁵ I wonder if that is not the reason why the Lord’s disciples did not receive the Holy Ghost (John 14:16–18) as a constant companion until *after* He ascended back to the Father. Otherwise the people would have had a witness from two members of the Godhead, and their rejection of Christ would have been a greater cause for condemnation.

and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first” (Matthew 12:43–45a).

11 Then said I: Lord, how long? And he answered said: Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate; ✓

✓ desolate with desolation

Then said I (אָמַר): Lord, how long? This is the question of the ages. It could mean anything from how long would Isaiah have to preach, to how long before the people would open their eyes, to how long before the coming of the Messiah, or how long would there be suffering. One of the attributes we are upon this earth to learn is patience. ¶ *And he said (אָמַר): Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.* Note that the Book of Mormon and JST render the literal Hebrew, אָמַר, said rather than answered. ¶ Above all, this verse seems to point to the end of times, and is alluded to in ISAIAH 24:10 and 12, among others. The preaching and teaching would have to go until the very end, whether by the mouth of missionaries or else as a consequence of natural disasters. The Essenes (who lived in Qumran, the community who preserved the (Q) Dead Sea Scrolls) felt the time of desolation would be soon—which indeed was true ... for them. The Romans heaped destruction in Judea around 70 AD. Likewise, this scripture can be likened unto us. The time will come when all these things shall be fulfilled and we will have to stand before the bar of God. The Brethren have cautioned us against complacency, but also admonished us not to become paralyzed by thoughts of doom and gloom.³⁶

12 And the LORD have removed men far away, and for [there] shall [be] a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

And the LORD have removed men far away. Or, “... and the Lord have removed the children of men far away” (Targum, T). This seems to have reference to the scattering of Israel. So enormous has been the effect of the scattering, that among some earlier Jews, the Rabbis held that “if at present a non-Jew weds a Jewess, such a union was to be respected, since the stranger might be a

³⁶ Packer, Boyd K. *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1991, pp. 51–52. Also see, “Guilt is a warning to heed; repent and prepare for long life,” LDS Church News, Deseret News. 1997. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company.

descendant of the ten tribes.”³⁷ ¶ *For there shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.* Or, “and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land”

(ASV). The word translated as forsaken in the KJV,

הֶעֱזַבָהּ (the forsaking) is also translated as the

desolation (עָזַב) and related synonyms. The root, עָזַב, indeed means to leave, abandon, desert, or forsake. The idea in the KJV seems to indicate that the people had greatly forsaken the Lord in the midst of the land (which certainly was true), while most translations give the idea that the land was abandoned (which was also true).

13 But yet in it there [shall be] a tenth, and [it] they shall return, and shall be eaten, ✓ as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance ✓ ✓ [is] in them, when they cast [their leaves; so] the holy seed [shall be] the substance ✓ ✓ thereof.

✓ or, when it is returned, and has been broused³⁹

✓ ✓ or, stock, or, stem

I have chosen four translations from diverse sources: (1) “But while a tenth part yet remains in it, it shall repent. It shall be ravaged like the terebinth and the oak, of which stumps are left even when they are felled: its stump shall be a holy seed” (Tanakh). (2) “And they that remain in it shall be a tenth, and again they shall be burned and shall be made like the terebinth or like an oak which is fallen from its stump. The holy seed is the source thereof” (Syriac, S). (3) “But yet in it shall be a tenth; And it shall revive (or restore), though it be [given] to barrenness; For as the ilex, or the oak, though felled down, Hath its vitality remaining in it, So the holy seed shall have a vitality within it” (SOT). (4) “And there shall be left in it righteous men (צְדִיקִים [righteous men]; in the Royal Polyglot omitted), one out of ten: they shall return, and they shall be for poverty, as the terebynth and the oak when their leaves fall, they are like to dry trees, nevertheless, they are moist to raise up seed from them; thus the captivity of Israel shall be gathered, and shall return to their land, for the seed which is holy is their plantation” (Targum, T). Much of the beauty and strength of a particular passage is in the word plays and allusions to other scriptures. Kay, for instance, noticed the great similarities found this verse

³⁷ Referring to the Talmudic book of Yebamoth (16b), in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, by Alfred Edersheim, Vol. I, p. 15

³⁸ The Targum uses the word צְדִיקִים whose root is צָדַק (cf. with Hebrew lexicons, for root צָדַק) and also means to remove, make desolate, or depopulate.

³⁹ Or, burnt (ASV)

and Leviticus 27:20, 32: “And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’S: it is holy unto the LORD ... And concerning the tithes of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.” Let us examine the various parts of the verse separately. ¶ *But yet in it there shall be a tenth, and they shall return.* A tenth is a significant number, as it pertains to tithing. Henry has, “It is that which, under the law, was God’s proportion; they shall be consecrated to God as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant ... [they] shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them, and they shall be turned.” Yet they would be consumed again, and only a remnant of that would remain: a tenth of a tenth, if you please. While the people of Israel paid their tithes to the Levites, these, in turn, would pay a tenth to the priests. “Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe” (Numbers 18:26). The remnant represents either those who are left behind during the deportation of Judah into Babylon, or those who return from the Babylonian captivity. ¶ **Remnant that stayed behind during the Babylonian deportation.** Some suggest that this remnant consisted of the “poor of the land” who were left behind in Judah under the rule of Gedaliah—who had been made ruler of Judah by the king of Babylon. “Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; Then they came to Gedaliah ...” (Jeremiah 40:7–8a). The Jews who had escaped from Judah across the Jordan also made their way back to Judah. “Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much” (Jeremiah 40:11–12). Jeremiah (and also Gedaliah) promised this remnant that they would be safe if they would serve the *Chaldeans* (i.e., here used interchangeably with *Babylonians*). Promises of protection were made void, however, if the people chose to lean upon Egypt and flee there for refuge. “And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed,

and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape” (Jeremiah 44:12–14) and “Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or their’s” (Jeremiah 44:28, for a more complete overview see Jeremiah chapters 40–44). Sadly, the people of Judah did not trust in the Lord and fled to Egypt despite the explicit warnings. “And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler. ... And Gedaliah sware to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you. ... And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees” (2 Kings 25:22, 24, 26). Those who rebelled against Gedaliah took Jeremiah captive with them into Egypt, along with the remnant that had been left in the land of Judah. Matthew Henry summarizes as follows: “We have attended Jerusalem’s funeral pile, and have taken our leave of the captives that were carried to Babylon, not expecting to hear any more of them in this book: perhaps we may in Ezekiel; and we must in this and the four following chapters [referring to Jeremiah 40–44] observe the story of those few Jews that were left to remain in the land after their brethren were carried away, and it is a very melancholy story; for though at first there were some hopeful prospects of their well-doing, they soon appeared as obstinate in sin as ever, unhumiliated and unreformed, till, all the rest of the judgments threatened in Deuteronomy 28 [*Rain in Due Season*—GB] being brought upon them, that which in the last verse of that dreadful chapter completes the threatenings was accomplished, ‘The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again.’” ¶ **Remnant who returned from the Babylonian deportation.** *Ephraim*, or the Northern kingdom, was taken captive by the Assyrians. They were soon lost to the world and became known as the Lost Tribes. *Judah*, or the Southern kingdom, the smaller of the two kingdoms, was deported into Babylon. After 70 years of Babylonian captivity or

Diaspora, when the Jews would be allowed to return to Judea, there would be relatively few who would do so. The Hebrew for the word *return* in the KJV is שָׁבָה.

Meanings for the root שָׁבָה include mostly the notion of being taken captive or prisoner. A related root, to which the word seems to be associated or derived, is שׁוּב, whose meaning is to turn, return, turn back, repent or be converted. In this verse, then, the idea is that the people would return שָׁבָה to the Holy Land and to the Lord. ¶ *And shall be eaten, as a teil-tree, and as an oak.* Even that tenth that returns, however, will be eaten, smitten, ravaged, or burnt, too. After the death of Christ, the scattering of this tenth took place. The Hebrew for the KJV *eaten* is בָּעַר. It often means to be burned or consumed. ¶ *Whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.* Out of Judah, and out of David, was born Messiah (the Anointed One). As a trunk of an oak or terebinth tree could seem dead, and a tree can grow again, so would it be that God would grow no ordinary tree out of the stump of the Davidic line, for it would be a *Holy Seed*, even the *Holy One of Israel* in the flesh, *Jesus the Christ*. In ISAIAH 11, with important allusions to the Messiah, to the prophet Joseph Smith, and to the restored Church, the ideas in this verse are greatly

expanded upon. A second allusion is to the role of the scattering and gathering of Israel, which would be scattered to every corner of the globe as seed is scattered. The Northern Kingdom, or Ephraim, would at first be scattered by the Assyrians; the Southern Kingdom, or Judah, would at first be scattered by Babylon. But the Lord would gather holy seed (contrast this with ISAIAH 1:4) in due time, as spoken by the prophet Zenos, in Jacob 5. This remnant of Israel would be put through the refiner's fire. The restoration of Israel is one of the core beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As LDS we testify that indeed the process of restoration has begun to take place throughout the world beginning with Ephraim. Those who stay firm in the faith will be transformed through the cleansing of the Holy Ghost and through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We may be touched by the live coal of the atonement, and not be destroyed at the Second Coming. Those who thus endure will have within them holy seed, that is, the opportunity to receive of the Celestial glory and have eternal increase of posterity.

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