
Isaiah 7

Some commentators feel to group ISAIAH 7 through 9:7 (e.g., Barnes, and cf. Clarke) while others suggest that ISAIAH 7 all the way through 14 are very strongly connected (Kay). Lowth says that in these chapters we see “the manifestation of Messiah; the transcendent dignity of his character; and the universality and eternal duration of his kingdom.” Isaiah warns King Ahaz of Judah, to stay—or lean—upon the Lord and not upon the strong nations of the day. The *Immanuel* prophecy is given: that is, the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the light that would shine in darkness. Punishments that would come to an unbelieving people are announced against Judah.

HISTORICAL NOTE: After the death of Solomon (922 BC),¹ Israel was split in two. Although from time to time the kingdoms of Ephraim and Judah had acted together in friendship during the period of the divided kingdoms, the relationship between them was strained at best.

VV. 1–9. The chapter opens as Syria and Ephraim—governed by King Rezin and King Pekah respectively—joined forces against King Ahaz of Judah. From 2 Kings 15:32–38, one may gather that such antagonism was not new, but carried over from the times of King Jotham (father of Ahaz). The exact timing and chronology of these events, however, are not clear from the Biblical narrative.² Some have supposed that the contention was fueled by Jotham’s unwillingness to join forces with these nations against Assyria. Now, the plan was to unseat Ahaz and place a puppet king, the son of Tabeel, on the throne, and thus force Judah into submission. We find ourselves with a very agitated

¹ Dates are approximate, and follow those given by John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd Edition.

² The scriptures in 2 Kings 15 had already given us the summary of events for the life of King Jotham, ending up with the traditional formula: “Now the rest of the acts of ... and all that he did, are they not written ...” (v. 36). The actual death of Jotham is not mentioned until v. 38, while the alliance of the two kings against Judah is sandwiched in between these two verses (v. 37). This is probably what has led commentators and historians to suggest that Ahaz inherited this trouble from Jotham. The actual point in time may be further obscured because kings often ruled as co-regents before their fathers died. An argument to place the date after the death of King Jotham is that nations often took advantage of the death of a strong monarch to wage a war against their enemies. Beside the question of the date, there is yet another question: did the combined forces of Syria and Israel attack Judah more than once? There are some who feel that this is the second time that such an alliance had come against Judah during the time of Ahaz. From the scriptures it is hard to ascertain this question. What seems to be clear is that Syria and Israel actually did come upon Judah and caused some major damage, even though they “could not prevail against” her. Regarding such chronological uncertainty, Delitzsch says, “Indisputable as the credibility of these events may be, it is nevertheless very difficult to connect them together, either substantially or chronologically, in a certain and reliable manner”

King Ahaz at the news *of wars and rumours of wars*. Isaiah was sent to invite Ahaz to put his confidence in the Lord, rather than a foreign power. Ahaz was more inclined to lean on Tiglath-pileser³ of Assyria.

1 ¶ AND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, [that] Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

AND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah. Amaziah, was the father of Uzziah (sometimes known as Ozias or Azariah), who was the father of Jotham, who was the father of Ahaz, who was the father of Hezekiah, who was the father of Manasseh. Regarding the King, we read: “Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God” (2 Kings 16:2a). These are piercing words. The scriptures tell us a little regarding what made him such a wicked king: “But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the

³ While Owen C. Whitehouse calls Ahab’s action in seeking Assyrian help one of *intelligence* (DOTB, Vol. 3, p. 736), the move was hardly so, and a “fatal misstep” instead (Bright, p. 273). Rogers compares Ahaz to his grandfather Uzziah, “Ahaz was a weakling—of that the sequel leaves no doubt whatever; but he was also stiff-necked and unwilling to take counsel, however excellent. The wisdom of the prophet Isaiah, who was also an acute statesman, was lost on him. But in the nature of the case a man who, like him, gave little heed to the religion of Jehovah would be less likely to listen to a prophet’s words than to the words of foreign kings. His introduction of the manners, customs, and worship of foreign nations shows how open he was to outside influences (2 Kings 16:10, and comp. 2 Kings 23:12). Coward though he was personally, he was king of a land with great resources for defensive war, as Uzziah had sufficiently shown” (Rogers, Robert William, *A History of Babylonia and Assyria*, Volume II, p. 127.)

fire,⁴ according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree” (2 Kings 16:3–4). To say that “he walked in the way of the kings of Israel” (*Israel* here stands for the Northern Kingdom, also known as Ephraim) was a great insult. These ten tribes had been led by idolatrous rulers. He had done no better than the ancient inhabitants of Canaan: “...for every abominable thing which the LORD hates, they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods” (RSV, Deuteronomy 12:31b, cf. 2 Kings 17:17, 31), or “... for even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods” (TPAH, Deuteronomy 12:31b). The idolatrous worship in high places was associated, according to some scholars, with immoral sexual rituals. It is likely that such sexual transgressions were one of many forms of idolatry. When Ahaz died, he did not merit to be buried with the rest of the kings of Judah. “And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel” (2 Chronicles 28:27a). The greatest wickedness of Ahaz was that of not putting his trust in the Living God. ¶ *That Rezin king of Syria*. Or rather, *Aram* (אֲרָם), as the word Syria does not appear in the Hebrew text (אֲרָם).⁵ Aram lied above the Northern Kingdom of Israel, north of Galilee. Asshur and Aram were children of Shem, and fathers of Assyria and Syria respectively: “The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram” (Genesis 10:22). The Aramaic language was spoken at the time of Christ. ¶ Damascus was one of the best known cities in Syria. At the time of our narrative, Rezin was king of Syria. The scriptures have little to say about Rezin, other than his joining forces with Pekah. According to Nägelsbach, Rezin was the last king of Syria before it became absorbed by Assyria. ¶ *And Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel*. Regarding Pekah, the King of the Northern Kingdom, we know that: “In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign

over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years.⁶ And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD ...” (2 Kings 15:27–28a). Pekah seized the throne by murdering king Pekahiah (see 2 Kings 15:23, 25). Most of the kings of Judah were direct line descendants of the former king. In contrast, most of the kings of Israel usurped power by murdering the previous king. According to the Biblical account, it was on the 17th year of Pekah’s reign, that Ahaz began to reign in Judah (2 Kings 16:1). ¶ *Went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it*. Some exegetes feel that the Isaiah and Kings narratives are at odds with the one in Chronicles.⁷ Others suggest that multiple events are described in these chapters, not a single war. Thus, making it possible for Judah to have suffered the serious reversed mentioned in 2 Chronicles 28, yet for Jerusalem herself not to have fallen to the enemy at that time. Whether part of one war or many we read: “And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel” (ISAIAH 8:8). So when we read, “*but could not prevail against it*,” the narrative refers to Jerusalem.

2 And it was told the house of David, saying: Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

✓ resteth on

And it was told the house of David, saying. The house of David is another expression for Judah, the Southern Kingdom. David was born of the lineage of Judah, and the Savior would be born of the lineage of David. Ahaz, then heard about this trouble. ¶ *Syria is confederate with Ephraim*. Syria and Ephraim had joined forces to come against Judah. Henry observes, “Ephraim did indeed envy Judah (ISAIAH 11:13) and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail; for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh.”⁸ ¶ *And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*. In the strong biting force of Isaiah’s language, we find out that Ahaz, and all of the people of Judah also, trembled with fear: their hearts were agitated as trees

⁴ “He even burned his son as an offering,” RSV. In the Chronicles narrative, it implied that Ahaz “burnt his children in the fire.” Note the plural. (See 2 Chronicles 28:1-6.)

⁵ “The name [Syria] does not occur in the Masoretic Text (אֲרָם) nor the Peshitta of the Old Testament (ܣܝܪܝܐ), but is found in the Septuagint (Σ), in the Peshitta of the New Testament (Σ) and in the Mishna. In the Septuagint (Σ) it represents ‘Aram’ in all its combinations, as Aram-zobah, etc.” (ISBE). Regarding Aram we read: “The word [Aram] means high, or highlands, and as the name of a country denotes that elevated region extending from the northeast of Palestine to the Euphrates. It corresponded generally with the Syria and Mesopotamia of the Greeks and Romans.” (*Eaton’s Bible Dictionary*).

⁶ Bright feels that the actual reign of Pekah was much shorter: “Perhaps he had in fact exercised semi-autonomous authority in Gilead (cf. v. 25) since the death of Jeroboam ...” (Bright, p. 273).

⁷ See 2 Kings 16; and 2 Chronicles 28.

⁸ “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Genesis 49:10).

violently moved by the wind. “Ahaz, what a wicked man!” I thought some years ago as I was studying this verse of Isaiah. “Why did you not place your confidence and trust in the Lord?” The Spirit of the Lord rebuked me, “You are like Ahaz!” And then I remembered what had happened the previous week. I had gone to a soccer referee clinic, in which the referee director was chastising some of the referees for an incident that had transpired the previous Saturday. “But it was not my fault,” I had protested at the meeting, and began to defend myself; and worse, I had begun to lay blame elsewhere. The referee director turned to me and quietly said, “Gregorio, I was not talking about you ...” I had, in essence, fell into my own trap: “...and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth” (Leviticus 26:36b, *Rain in Due Season*). But the Lord is merciful, and He does not teach us a lesson without giving us another chance, that is, another opportunity to learn from that lesson. It was a short while after that I was publicly criticized in my position at the University of California. Gladly, the words of the Spirit were still ringing in my ears regarding my overdefensive attitudes. This time I placed my trust in the Lord. Although I felt a little numb from the unjustified attack, I responded with a simple but frank apology. What happened next was interesting. Several of the people involved wrote privately and congratulated me on the hard work and success of my program. The colleague who had written the original letter accepted my apology. This little incident proved to be a great blessing in my career as an academic of the University of California. I hate to think of the consequences that a defensive response would have caused. ¶ When we rely on the Father, He sends a defender: “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you” (2 Chronicles 20:17). Alma taught his son as follows: “And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day” (Alma 36:3).

3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah: Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;

✓ That is, the remnant shall return

✓ ✓ or, causeway

Then said the LORD unto Isaiah: Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shearjashub thy son. Isaiah was sent to speak to Ahaz. Isaiah was to take his son—pronounced *Shear-Yashuv* שְׂאָר יָשׁוּב, whose name in Hebrew means “A remnant shall return” — to visit with Ahaz. In ISAIAH 6:13 we read about the remnant that would return. Isaiah and Hosea were two prophets who were instructed by the Lord to give their children names that would help them better teach the message that was intended for the people. The Lord used several types of teaching tools to make His point, including making an object lesson out of the names given to the children of the prophets. We have said that the word apostasy in Hebrew literally means “turn around backwards,” as in “they are gone away backward” (ISAIAH 1:4b). Wade suggests: “Isaiah, in taking his son with him to meet the king, perhaps hoped to convey to Ahaz a tacit warning not to precipitate by unbelief the calamity of which the boy’s name was ominous.” McFadyen says: “The prophet takes with him his son **Shear-jashub**, whose name means *a remnant shall turn* (i.e. to Jehovah), and who is therefore in his own person, even though no words be spoken, a living embodiment of Isaiah’s message of judgment and hope for a better Israel to be.” Such a return implies repentance and a course correction, as much as the turning around backwards signifies an apostasy. Isaiah, as a prophet and servant of the Lord was in tune with the Spirit, and heeded the command to go and speak to the King Ahaz of Judah and take his own son along for an object lesson. ¶ *At the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.* Isaiah and his son where to go to the “end of the aqueduct of the upper pool, at the highway of the fuller’s field” (SOT). The Targum (Ⓒ) reads “at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, which is by the way of the field of the spreading of the fullers.” Webster explains that fuller means someone who ‘fulls’ cloth, and *full* means to “to shrink and thicken (woolen cloth) by moistening, heating, and pressing” (Webster). Fuller כּוֹבֵס, comes from the Hebrew root כָּבַס, “to tread” and is used to describe how clothes were washed by treading (HBD, BDB) them by foot with putrid urine as a cleanser, and thus an activity carried out beyond the city walls—because of the smell! (HBD). In the LDS BD we find, “Their work was to cleanse garments and whiten them. The soap they employed consisted of salts mixed with oil, and was of two kinds, made with carbonate of soda or with borax. The Fuller’s Field ... was close to the walls of Jerusalem, possibly on the east side.” The term also appears once in the New Testament, “And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them” (Mark 9:3). ¶ We shall meet with the same location, “the conduit of the upper pool in the highway

of the fuller's field," in ISAIAH 36:2, when the king of Assyria sent an envoy to meet with Hezekiah, king of Judah. ¶ Why was King Ahaz outside the city walls by the upper pool? Barnes suggests that perhaps it was the fear of an impending siege, and that even in those early times the inhabitants of Jerusalem were seeking a way to protect their water source. Yet it would be Hezekiah *ben* Ahaz who would eventually build an underground structure to protect the water, when he was threatened by Assyria. "And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? (2 Chronicles 32:2–4). In fact, Hezekiah, in contrast to his father, would almost repeat Isaiah's words (see ISAIAH 7:4–14 that follows) in the process of calming those who were afraid of the then impending attack by Sennacherib King of Assyria. Kay observes: "In 2 Chronicles 32:7, 8, when Hezekiah was standing near the spot where this prophecy was delivered, he all but quotes both Isaiah's words in v. 4 and the great name *Immanu-el* **עִמָּנוּ אֵל**. 'Be ye strong and courageous; fear not, neither be dismayed, because of the king of Assyria and of all the multitude that is with him: for with us (*immanu* **עִמָּנוּ**) is a Greater than is with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us (*immanu* **עִמָּנוּ**) is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles" (p. 79). See also ISAIAH 36–39.

4 And say unto him: Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted[✓] for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

✓ let not thy heart be tender

And say unto him: Take heed, and be quiet. Take heed means to listen up and take council, to obey. *Take heed* **הִשָּׁמֶר**, as Kay points out, is the frequent admonition of Yahweh to the children of Israel, "It is the word that is used so often in law (e.g., Exodus 34:12; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:12; 12:13, 19, 30), when Israel is cautioned against heathen alliances and practices." Obedience is one of the most essential elements of religion, that of subjecting our own will to that of God. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are

the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:5–6). *Be quiet* is an invitation to calm down, to be still, to listen: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10a). Rawlinson notes the contrast with "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (ISAIAH 30:15a). ¶ *Fear not, neither be faint-hearted*. This is an invitation not to fear anything but God. The sentiment is first recorded in Deuteronomy: "... let not your hearts faint, fear not" (Deuteronomy 20:3), and repeated by Jeremiah as well: "Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee ..." (Jeremiah 30:10a). Calvin says, "It is impossible, I acknowledge, not to *fear* when dangers threaten, for faith does not deprive us of all feeling ... for no man has made such proficiency [of faith] as not to have any remains of that distrust against which we ought continually to strive." Henry adds, since "God is found of those who seek him not, much more will he be found of those who seek him diligently." So, let us seek after the Lord! Also, remember this beautiful scripture: "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17). ¶ *For the two tails of these smoking firebrands*. Or, "... because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands" (NAS). The word *firebrand* is synonymous to someone who stirs the pot, or is a troublemaker. A *smoking firebrand* gives the impression of a bully who is more smoke than fire. Several commentators describe it as torches that once burnt brightly but now have nothing more to give than annoying smoke. To Nägelsbach, it is "the charred stick of wood that may have been used to stir the fire." ¶ *For the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah*. Or, "By the fierce anger of Rezin, and by the son of Remaliah" (Syriac, **ס**). The **ס** leaves out the words "of Syria." These smoldering tails represent Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel. Most commentators feel these words are full of sarcastic contempt for Pekah, since Isaiah only calls him the son of Remaliah. "It is by way of contempt that the king of Israel is not called by his own name. The Hebrews and Arabians, when they wish to speak reproachfully of any one, omit his proper name and call him merely the son of this or that, especially when his father is but little known or respected. So Saul names David, in contempt, the son of Jesse; 1 Samuel 20:27, 31 (Hengstenberg in Barnes). To the Arabians of the desert, even today, "it is an insult of the worst sort to ask a man his father's name—such a question is equivalent to telling an adult male that he, 'with all his inches of beard, is nothing save by virtue of being his father's son.'"⁹ Two sources of possible

⁹ Youssouf, Ibrahim Ag; Grimshaw, Allen D.; and Bird, Charles S. "Greetings in the Desert." In *A Cultural Approach to Interpersonal*

contempt towards the son of Remaliah are (1) the way Pekah gained power, by assassinating his predecessor, Pekahiah, and (2) the idea that Judah would be attacked by her very brothers, the Northern Kingdom. *Fierce anger against us can do little*¹⁰ if we are willing to put our trust in the Lord.

5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying:

Syria (through Remaliah) and Ephraim (through Pekah) had plotted harm, or taken evil counsel, against Judah. No evil counsel will triumph against a people the Lord wishes to protect. Regarding the Lord's Church today, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "...the Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly and independently, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country and sounded in every ear; till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done."¹¹

6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it[✓], and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, **yea [even] the son of Tabeal.**

✓ or, waken

Communication: Essential Readings (Leila Monaghan and Jane E. Goodman, editors), Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 58.

¹⁰ See the April 2004 General Conference talk by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy, "But if not." Elder Simmons said: "Centuries ago, Daniel and his young associates were suddenly thrust from security into the world—a world foreign and intimidating. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and worship a golden image set up by the king, a furious Nebuchadnezzar told them that if they would not worship as commanded, they would immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 'And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?' The three young men quickly and confidently responded, 'If it be so [if you cast us into the furnace], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand.' That sounds like my eighth-grade kind of faith. But then they demonstrated that they fully understood what faith is. They continued, '*But if not, . . . we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*' That is a statement of true faith. They knew that they could trust God—even if things didn't turn out the way they hoped. They knew that faith is more than mental assent, more than an acknowledgment that God lives. Faith is total trust in Him."

¹¹ Smith, Joseph Jr. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Edited by B. H. Roberts. 2nd ed., rev. Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-51, 4:540.

Let us go up against Judah, and vex it. The margin || suggests that they would go up against Judah to wake her up, to help her realize her obligation. Other words for *vex* include annoy, disturb, bother, irritate; but here, to attack her. ¶ *And let us make a breach therein for us.* To make a *breach* has reference to the fact that Jerusalem was fortified, and they planned to make a whole, aperture, or opening in wall through which they could enter and take the city. פקד often has violent connotations as in the **ripping open** of pregnant women or bursting into a city to capture it by force (see Gesenius, BDB, Nägelsbach). **Breach** can also mean, as Kay explains, to "**take by storm**" (2 Chronicles 32:1). The verb is used for the final 'breaking up' of Jerusalem at the end of the Chaldean siege, Jeremiah 39:2; 52:7)." A breach, then, in this context, meant that pressure was put upon the wall until it would give in one spot. Likewise, in our own personal lives, Satan attacks us in our weakest points (or even where we might, in prideful confidence, believe *all is well*¹²), coming against us with his battering rams. We must lean on the Lord for strength. ¶ *And set a king in the midst of it, yea even the son of Tabeal.* We know little of this *ben Tabeal* (i.e., God is good),¹³ but can assume he would have been either a puppet king, or someone who was of the same philosophy of the Ephraimite and Syrian kings. This idea of setting kings loyal to the conquering powers is seen often during this time period in the orient.

7 Thus saith the Lord GOD: It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

Isaiah spoke on behalf of the Lord, that despite all the planning, plotting and evil counsel against Judah, nothing would come of it. Kay suggests: "Whatever Ahaz's guilt might be, God would be faithful to His covenant with David." Certainly, "no unhallowed hand" would be permitted to touch Judah and Israel without the consent of the Lord.

8 For the head of Syria [is] Damascus, and the head of Damascus, [is] Rezin; and within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people. ✓

✓ from a people

¹² Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Our Strengths can become our Downfall, BYU Devotional Address, 7 June 1992; October 1994 *Ensign*.

¹³ This name has its origin in Syriac (ܫ) rather than the Hebrew tongue (Kay) and the spelling in the Hebrew (רז) has been changed so the name instead reads "Good for nothing" (Holman, Nägelsbach).

Kay as well as Nägelsbach perceptively point out that the *head* of these nations is a man! In contrast, “Behind Jerusalem and the house of David, stands the Lord as the true head in chief of Israel” (Nägelsbach). When the titular head of Judah, Ahaz, would not trust in the true Head,¹⁴ he would be removed. This would be true until the House of David had fulfilled its mission with respect of the Messiah. The idea of the scripture here in Isaiah is similar to the often quoted, “as night follows the day, so will...” The first fact here is that “as surely as the head or capital of Syria was Damascus,” and the second fact is “as surely as the head or leader of Damascus was Rezin,” just as surely it would follow that “Ephraim (Northern Kingdom) would cease to be, and would be broken up, all within the space of *three score and five years*, that is, 65 years.” The head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord. President Brigham Young taught: “The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth. (9:289).”¹⁵

¶ Ephraim would be taken captive to the north, and the ten northern tribes would be lost to the world. This prophecy was fulfilled, explains Lowth, “to the total depopulation of the kingdom of Israel by Esarhaddon, who carried away the remains of the *ten* tribes which

¹⁴ This point, about *who is*, or shall we say *ought to be*, our head reminds me of one of the most tender and striking exegeses presented by a BYU religion scholar M. Catherine Thomas at a CES meetings regarding Paul's writings: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God” (1 Corinthians 11:3-12). Sister Thomas was able to explain how the word *head* needs to be understood in its proper context to our Head, Christ, and to the Temple ordinances. But our Head is Christ, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:16-18). M. Catherine Thomas. “Paul and the Daughters of Eve,” CES New Testament Symposium, 1992.

¹⁵ Young, Brigham. Discourses of Brigham Young. Compiled by John A. Widtsoe. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978, p. 137.

had been left by Tiglath Pileser, and Shalmaneser, and who planted the country with new inhabitants. That the country was not totally stripped of its inhabitants by Shalmaneser appears from many passages of the history of Josiah, where Israelites are mentioned as still remaining there, 2 Chronicles 34:6, 7, 33; 35:18; 2 Kings 23:19, 20.” Delitzsch also calculates that “we get exactly sixty-five years from the second year of the reign of Ahaz to the termination of Ephraim's existence as a nation (viz. Ahaz 14; Hezekiah, 29; Manasseh, 22; in all, 65) ... [assuming] this took place in the twenty-second and twenty third years of Manasseh ...”¹⁶ Kay agrees, “If the second year of Ahaz (741 B.C.) be taken as the starting-point, the 65th year would be 677 B.C.—the 22nd year of Manasseh; in which (according to the ‘Seder Olam’) he was carried away (2 Chronicles 33:11) by the Assyrian armies to Babylon. It is most probable that the importation of Cuthaeans into Samaria (2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2),—the event which sealed the doom of Ephraim,—took place at the same time. From that time onward Ephraim has been scattered and lost among the nations.” ¶ What do we know about Esarhaddon? He was the son of Sennacherib, the King of Assyria who came so close to overpowering Jerusalem at the time of Hezekiah King of Judah, were it not for the intercession of the Lord (see ISAIAH 37). The accounts in Isaiah and Kings are silent about what involvement he may have had in the murder of his father (see 2 Kings 19:36–37). Very little is known about this campaign by Esarhaddon against Israel. From the present threats by Tiglath-pileser (who reigned between 745–727 BC), other kings of Assyria included Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC, who began the horrible three year siege of Samaria), Sargon II (721–705 BC, during the fall of Samaria in Israel), Sennacherib (704–681 BC, related to the troubles with Judah) and Esarhaddon (680–669 BC).¹⁷ These deportations took place in waves. The policy of Assyria was to move people around and thus reduce their political strength. But there were some Israelites left who were not deported and who intermingled with a new people, thus

¹⁶ “Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.” (2 Chronicles 33:11) This marked an important break in the kingdom of Manasseh after which he was restored to the throne. Delitzsch suggests that this would have been a natural time for Esarhaddon to have taken the rest of Israel captive (beside those who were left behind and never taken, and eventually mingled with other peoples and became the Samaritans. Returning to Manasseh, King of Judah, we read, “And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God” (2 Chronicles 33:12-13).

¹⁷ See Bright, *History of Israel*. Chronological Chart VI.

forming a much loathed group from the perspective of the Jews, the *Samaritans*.

9 And the head of Ephraim [is] Samaria, and the head of Samaria [is] Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established. ✓

✓ or, Do ye not believe? it is because ye are not stable

Using the very same logic and construction, we likewise see that as it follows that (1) the head or capital of Ephraim was Samaria and (2) the head or leader of Samaria was Remaliah's son (Pekah), so (3) would it follow that Judah would also suffer for her disobedience (as Ephraim would suffer for hers). Judah would be permitted to return to her land, but this return would be relatively short-lived. ¶ Lowth, leaning upon Secker and Durell, suggests that perhaps the original reading was not "If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established," but rather, "If ye will not believe *me* ye shall not be established." The Hebrew for *surely*, כִּי, could have been misread for that of *me*, בִּי. Lowth notes support for this concept in the Chaldee, "If ye will not believe in the words of the prophet."¹⁸ Lowth often gets carried away with suggested changes in the text, however. ¶ Ahaz here stands for all of Judah, being a type and a shadow. And why would Ahaz not be established? Ahaz would turn to Assyria and idolatry for help rather than to the Lord. Speaking of the second clause in this verse, Kay suggests: "There is an assonance in the Hebrew between the two clauses which cannot well be transferred. The effect is:—"Be firm in faith, or ye will not be made firm in fact." God's faithfulness is as the strong mountains; if ye would be strong, ye must plant your feet on His promise." The paronomasia is as follows¹⁹:

תֵּאֱמִינוּ	לֹא	אִם
will-ye-believe	not	If
תֵּאֱמִנוּ	לֹא	כִּי
shall-be-ye-established	not	surely

When we lean upon the Lord for our stay and our staff, we can act in confidence: "... for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward" (ISAIAH 52:12b).

¹⁸ Or rather, "the words of the prophets." See also, *The Aramaic Bible*.

¹⁹ Cf. with Green.

vv. 10–25. The Lord, through Isaiah, offers Ahaz the opportunity to put Him to the test, by asking for a sign. Ahaz, like Satan, distorts the scriptures and through false piety refuses to accept a sign. The Lord gives a sign anyway: the *virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*. Thus, the birth of the Christ child is predicted over 600 years before it takes place. The death of the kings of both Israel and Syria, presently a threat to Judah, is also announced.

10 ¶ Moreover, the LORD spake again ✓ unto Ahaz, saying:

✓ And the LORD added to speak

The Lord spoke again to Isaiah, giving him a message for Ahaz. The prophets have, from the beginning of times, prophesied of the coming of the Messiah and have testified of Jesus Christ. From the Talmudic Tractate, we have:

כל הנביאים כולן לא
תבאו אלא לימות המשיח

That is, "All the prophets prophesied not but of the days of the Messiah," (Sanhedrin 99a).²⁰ There is an interchange of voices between those of the Prophet Isaiah and the Lord. This interchange is so natural, that it takes place not only between the Prophet and the Lord, but also between Yahweh and Elohim. Through the principle of *Divine Investiture* the Lord speaks for Elohim (John 12:49, also see Introduction).

11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depths, ✓ or in the heights above.

✓ or, make thy petition deep

Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God. Is this not in a way, what is happening to those who receive the Book of Mormon and the message of the restored gospel truths? "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4–5).²¹ Is not the Lord saying to

²⁰ This from the Talmud, as quoted in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (3rd Edition), Alfred Edersheim, E.R. Herrick & Company, New York: New York. 1886, p. 1.

²¹ The truth will be manifested with as much strength as is needed for that individual to know for a certainty that this truth came from God.

us, “prove me now herewith ...” (Malachi 3:10)? Ask me for a sign. It is wonderful and truly astonishing. Ahaz had the opportunity to ask for a sign from the Lord. ¶ *Ask it either in the depths, or in the heights above.* Ahaz was asked to put the Lord to the test: to prove Him.²² Whether it be in the heights above, such as what took place in the dial of Ahaz (ISAIAH 38:8) or in the depths of the earth. The Scriptures are full of promises if we are willing to keep the associated commandments: “And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21). The key is that the Lord *wants us* to obtain these blessings.

12 But Ahaz said: I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

Satan attempted to tempt Jesus by twisting the scriptures to fit his evil purposes, with the words “it is written.” So did Ahaz distort the scriptures under Satan’s influence: “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God ...” (Deuteronomy 6:16). Kay observes: “In speaking of Ahaz, God had condescendingly said: ‘Ask of the Lord, thy God.’ Ahaz replied distantly: ‘I will not tempt the Lord;’ omitting the privileged expression ‘my God.’ The prophet now supplies the missing term: ‘Will ye weary out my God?’” Nägelsbach has, “The insult to his God is the *chief matter* to the Prophet. Notice that by ‘my God’ here [ISAIAH 7:13], he in a measure retracts the ‘thy God.’” King Ahaz was too proud to humble himself before the Lord, or to put the Lord to the test. Ahaz had no trouble, however, debasing himself—and desecrating the temple—before the King

There is an important pattern in the verses Moroni 10:3-5. The Lord will manifest the truth through personal revelation to the individual who has a grateful disposition, and asks the Father sincerely in the name of Christ. When as a youth of 15 I opened the Book of Mormon and read those words for the first time, I was overpowered with the warmth of the Spirit of the Holy Ghost.

²² The lack of rain was apparent during my 1988 Sabbatical trip to Chile where I taught a course for the University of Chile. The Lord has told us that if we walk in His statutes, and keep His commandments, that we will have “rain in due season” (Leviticus 26:4). As I now prayed for the needed moisture in Chile, I felt the time was not right, not just yet. Instead, I felt to pray that when the time would be right, that I would be prompted to ask for rain. Several months later, such a day came when I did pray for rain. I had been informed that the barometric pressure was such that there were no chances of rain. As I prayed for rain before retiring for bed, the Spirit chided me somewhat. That eventually it would rain—in a week or a month—and I would attribute it to the Lord. I felt inspired, instead, to pray that it would rain *before* the night was over. I broke into a cold sweat of fear as I tried my faith in prayer. A few hours later I was awakened by my wife who told me it was raining. It poured for ten hours. The Lord has a great love for each one of us. It is His desire to pour rain upon us, not just physical rain, but the type of rain that will help us bring forth fruits of repentance and of good works. But we must ask and we must walk in His ways.

of Assyria (2 Kings 16:7–19). It is somewhat ironical that the very people who Ahaz sought to make an alliance with, would be the ones who not much later would cause so very much harm to Judah. King Ahaz sought Assyria as a protector against Syria and Ephraim. The history of Judah shows that this move was of only temporary satisfaction, as Judah then had to pay tribute to Assyria and lost strength through adopting her idolatrous ways (2 Chronicles 28), for we read: “And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him [i.e., Ahaz], and distressed him, but strengthened him not” (2 Chronicles 28:20). Had Ahaz trusted in the Lord, matters would have ended differently. Let us, rather, not be afraid to put our confidence in God, and be ever ready to follow the Brethren and whisperings of the Spirit. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

13 And he said: Hear ye now, O house of David; [is it] a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

And he said: Hear ye now, O house of David. Ahaz was of the house of David, from the tribe of Judah. But here the meaning seems to be deeper, calling upon the house of David to be a witness of what Ahaz was saying this day, and his refusal to put his trust on the Lord. The sign to follow was given to the *house of David, not to Ahaz.* ¶ *Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?* Or, “... is it not enough for you to try the patience of men, that you try the patience of my God also?” (Berkeley).

vv. 14–16. Faithful Christian commentators all agree that ISAIAH 7:14 has reference to the miraculous birth of the Savior. There has been much effort, however, for others to attempt to destroy all Messianic scriptures, including this one.

14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign—Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

✓ or, thou, O virgin, shalt call

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign.

Therefore or **וְיָבִיא**. Kay has, “There is a similarly weighty *Therefore* in ISAIAH 28:16;²³ where a most comforting promise to the faithful, and a most solemn

²³ “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” (ISAIAH 28:16).

menace to the perverse, are combined, as here.” This sign is given—not for Ahaz—but to those who would look forward to the birth of Messiah. The sign was given to Judah, or the house of David, and to all those who waited for Messiah. And also for a sign and a wonder for all who believe in Jesus the Christ and see in Him and in none else the fulfillment of this wonderful sign. ¶ *Behold, a virgin shall conceive.* Barnes writes, “This interjection [i.e., behold, lo, הִנֵּה] is a very common one in the Old Testament. It is used to arrest attention; to indicate the importance of what was about to be said.” Delitzsch says that in Isaiah, הִנֵּה is used to introduce a future event. The expression is not עֲלָמָה but rather הַעֲלָמָה, and should have been rendered “*the virgin*” (as does LITV). Likewise, in Isaiah 7:16 it is not “a child” but rather “*the child*,” הַנֶּעַר. The use of the word *the*, makes it so it “points to some special virgin, preeminent above all others” (Rawlinson). Every effort has been set forth to attempt to explain that עֲלָמָה does not mean *virgin*, but simply any *young woman*. TWOT well indicates that “There is no instance where it can be proved that עֲלָמָה designates a young woman who is not a virgin” (TWOT). There is no agreement on the exact publication date of the LXX (6, the Hebrew to Greek translation of the Old Testament), but all agree it was finished well before the birth of the Savior (at least 80 years before). The translators used the word παρθένος, *virgin*. They had no way of knowing the pivotal significance this would have. ¶ This scripture in Isaiah was used to *comfort* Joseph, espoused to Mary: “the argument that convinced Joseph was the fact, pointed out to him by the angel, that such an event had already been predicted by Isaiah” (TWOT): “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife” (Matthew 1:22–25). The testimony of the Book of Mormon is also clear on this subject: “Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God” (1 Nephi 11:18b); “And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10). ¶ *And shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* The male child that the virgin would give birth to would be called Immanuel, or *God is with us*, or *with us is God*. Nägelsbach explains that the Savior would “spring as a son of a virgin from the apparently

dried up root” of the house of David. The Hebrew for Immanuel,²⁴ or rather *Immanu-el*, is אֱלֹהֵינוּ אִמָּנוּ, where *El*, אֱלֹהֵינוּ means *God* and אִמָּנוּ, *with us*.

15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good.

Butter and honey shall he eat. Or perhaps, curd²⁵ and honey. Some have suggested that this is food intended for royalty while others for the common people. I suspect that curd and especially wild honey were the foods for those who traveled in the desert wilderness.²⁶ And certainly, Jesus was involved in much such travel—as he went to Egypt and returned to the Holy Land upon the death of Herod. They traveled past Judea onto Nazareth in Galilee. His family traveled yearly from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover (Luke 2: 41). This included the better known visit when He was twelve, and was found at the Temple expounding Scriptures with the learned. Once the Savior entered His full ministry we know he constantly traveled in the wilderness: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head” (Matthew 8:20b). ¶ *That he may know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good.* That is, that Messiah would be born of a mortal mother and immortal Father. In other words, Messiah would be afforded the same opportunity given to every person who has come upon this earth: that of taking upon himself a mortal tabernacle with all its attendant frailties. Another characteristic of mortality is that those who reach the age of accountability must continually make choices between right and wrong; between good and evil. In the Scriptures we read that the Savior “was

²⁴ Barnes explains: “Nothing was more common among the Jews than to incorporate the name, or a part of the name, of the Deity with the names which they gave to their children. Thus, *Isaiah* denotes the salvation of JEHOVAH; *Jeremiah*, the exaltation or grandeur of JEHOVAH, each compounded of two words, in which the name JEHOVAH constitutes a part. Thus, also in *Elijah*, the two names of God are combined, and it means literally, God the JEHOVAH. Thus also, *Eliab*, God my father; *Elidada*, knowledge of God; *Eliakim*, the resurrection of God; *Elisha*, salvation of God.”

²⁵ Barnes writes, “The word rendered butter (חֶמֶת), denotes not butter, but thick and curdled milk. This was the common mode or using milk as an article of food in the East, and is still. In no passage of the Old Testament does butter seem to be meant by the word.”

²⁶ “So the LORD alone did lead him, and *there was* no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape” (Deuteronomy 32:12-15).

in all points tempted like as *we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15b). So “that he may know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good,” then, is an allusion to the great condescension of God,²⁷ that Yahweh indeed took upon himself a mortal tabernacle.

16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good. It seems that Isaiah has now stopped speaking of the Christ child and is now giving Ahaz yet another sign. Such a sign was to take place very soon, one that Ahaz would come to recognize and remember. It would be in relation to Isaiah’s own son. There are several definitions that one might use to say that a child is of an age to understand the difference between good and evil. A child (1) begins to have a measure of understanding between 3 and 8 years old; (2) at 8 enters the age of spiritual accountability; and (3) at 12 years old, the age of accountability or coming of age for Jewish children. ¶ *The land that thou abhorrest* (אֲרָץ) shall be forsaken (אֶזְנֶיבָהּ) of both her kings. Gill explains: “... but the land of Israel [i.e., Ephraim] and Syria, called one land, because of the confederacy between the kings of them, Rezin and Remaliah’s son, which Ahaz and his nobles abhorred, because of their joining together against them; and so it was, that in a very little time both these kings were cut off; Pekah the son of Remaliah was slain by Hoshea the son of Elah, who reigned in his stead (2 Kings 15:30), and Rezin was slain by the king of Assyria (2 Kings 16:9). So also Barnes: “The land concerning which thou art so much ‘alarmed or distressed,’ that is, the united land of Syria and Ephraim. It is mentioned here as ‘the land,’ or as one land, because they were united then in a firm alliance, so as to constitute, in fact, or for the purposes of invasion and conquest, one people or nation. The phrase, ‘which thou abhorrest,’ means properly, which thou loathest, the primary idea of the word - קוֹץ – being to feel a nausea, or to vomit. It then means to fear, or to feel alarm; and this, probably, is the meaning here. Abaz, however, evidently looked upon the nations of Syria and Samaria with disgust, as well as with alarm.”

vv. 17–25. Judah would not be left unscathed but would suffer greatly. Such punishment would come from Assyria and from Egypt. The desolation would be as total as a person being shaved of all his body hair. The

²⁷ 1 Nephi 11:1, 14–20, 26–33.

few people who would be left in the land would take upon them a nomadic rather than agricultural life.

17 ¶ The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; [even] the king of Assyria.

The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house. The punishment that would now come upon Ahaz, the people of Judah, and the monarchy, would be devastating. ¶ *Days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah.* The Lord would bring such punishment upon Judah as she had not seen since the civil war had divided the nation in two. ¶ *The king of Assyria.* While Judah would eventually fall to Babylon, she was about to be scourged by Assyria. Delitzsch well says: “The very king to whom Ahaz had appealed in terror, would bring Judah to the brink of destruction.” Jerusalem would survive by a thread through a miraculous intervention.

18 And it shall come to pass in that day [that] the LORD shall hiss for the fly that [is] in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that [is] in the land of Assyria.

And it shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall hiss. Just as we saw in ISAIAH 5:26, the word *hiss* (יִשְׁרַק) means to *summon*. ¶ *For the fly that is in the uttermost part of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.* The fly and the bee seem to be nicknames for Egypt and Assyria, respectively.²⁸ These two nations are specified because Judah was predisposed to lean upon them—rather than on the Lord—for help. Yet each of these powers would bring much mischief upon Judah. During Isaiah’s lifetime it would be the Assyrian attacks that would be the more salient than those of Egypt. Isaiah was looking at future times, even to the time of Jeremiah, when Pharaoh

²⁸ Delitzsch explains: “The Egyptian nation, with its vast and unparalleled numbers, is compared to the swarming fly; and the Assyrian nation, with its love for war and conquest, to the stinging bee which is so hard to keep off (Deuteronomy 1:44, Psalms 118:12). The emblems also correspond to the nature of the two countries ... Egypt abounds in gnats, etc., more especially in flies (*muscaria*), including a species of small fly (*nemâth*), which is a great plague to men throughout all the country of the Nile (see Hartmann, *Natur-geschichtlichmedizinische Skizze der Nilländer*, 1865, pp. 204–5) ... and the bee to the more mountainous and woody Assyria, where the keeping of bees is still one of the principal branches of trade.”

Nechoh would put the king of Judah in bands and place upon the throne a king of his liking (2 Kings 23:29–37).

19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes. ✓

✓ or, commendable trees

And they shall come, and shall rest all of them. They, that is, the enemies of Judah, shall settle (נִתְּנָה) themselves in her land. ¶ *In the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.* They shall be a complete nuisance, leaving no spot where they shall not conquer. The allusion of the fly and the bee is continued in the form of pestilence. Thorns were abundant in the Holy Land. Kay explains: “*the thorns* (or ‘prickly lotus;’ only here and in ISAIAH 55:13), which were so abundant; and upon *the bushes*, or, ‘spiny thickets’ (here only). It is noticed that ‘there are at least eighteen Hebrew words used to express different kinds of prickly shrubs or weeds’ in the Bible; and that Palestine, from ‘the combined heat and dryness of its climate’ and the rockiness of its surface, has a peculiar ‘tendency to form thorns even in groups where we would least expect them’ (Dr. Tristram, ‘N.H.B.’ p. 423.) ISAIAH 55:13,²⁹ The only other place where the ‘prickly lotus’ is mentioned, helps suggest the right view of the figurative language here made use of: 32:13.”³⁰ These happenings are a *type* of the Second Coming when the wicked: “shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (ISAIAH 2:19b).

20 In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, [~~namely~~], by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard.

In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired. Or, in that day יוֹם יָבוֹא will the Lord (ASV). The Lord does not need to personally castigate His people, but rather, does it through a “hired razor.” That is, a foreign force that would humble Judah. Kay (following Duguet) and Nägelsbach suggest that *it was Ahaz who*

²⁹ “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” (ISAIAH 55:13)

³⁰ “Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city.” (ISAIAH 32:13)

hired the razor himself. The word *razor* is very descriptive of the attacking armies, who would shave their captives, as a sign of dominion over them. Being shaved was a sign of defeat and ignominy, and often a sign of slavery over the conquered people: “Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away” (2 Samuel 10:4). Or of coming humiliation, to be acted out by Ezekiel before the fact: “And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard” (Ezekiel 5:1a). Ludlow offers additional reasons for the shaving of slaves: hygiene and insurance against escape. An escaped slave would not blend with the people and could thus easily be recaptured. The figure of the razor is also one that points to the ceremonial purification of the leper (Kay, Henry, Nägelsbach), for Judah was now full of disease from the top of the head down to the feet: “And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days. But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean” (Leviticus 14:8–9). It could well be said that the process of scattering and gathering of Israel is one of cleansing, also. ¶ *By them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria.* The *river* (נַחַל) is thought to be the Euphrates. It is much like in modern day when we say, *the city*. If you live close to New York City, or San Francisco, the expression *the city* stands for those places. The Lord would bring upon Judah the king of Assyria, from the other side of the Euphrates. ¶ *The head, and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard.* This hired razor or foreign army would shave the hair of the head as well as the beard. The hair of the *feet* may be a euphemistic expression for *pubic hair* (e.g., see Gill, and Tanakh footnote). Lowth rather suggests: “To shave with the hired razor the head, the feet, and the beard, is an expression highly parabolical; to denote the utter devastation of the country from one end to the other, and the plundering of the people, from the highest to the lowest. *** The hairs of the head are those of the highest order in the state; those of the feet, or the lower parts, are the common people; the beard is the king, the high priest, the very supreme in dignity and majesty.”

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep;

Commentators seems to be agreed that this is an allusion to the poverty to which those who would be left behind in the Holy Land would be subjected to. To nourish, or “keep alive” (Green) a *young cow* or *heifer* עֵזְבָה, is probably to keep her for milking purposes.

22 And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk [that] they shall give he shall eat butter; for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the ✓ land.

✓ the midst of

And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk they shall give he shall eat butter. The general view among commentators is that there will be such a reduced number of animals, that there will be plenty of feed for them to produce sufficient milk; and furthermore, that there will be so few people left in the land, that those who are left will have plenty of milk or milk products to drink and eat. ¶ *For butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.* This seems to be an allusion to the type of food that would be consumed, the food of shepherds and caravans, not that of stationary and cultivated agriculture. The foodstuff of kings was also the foodstuff of those surviving of the wilderness. Furthermore, if the swarms of bees were also literal, beside the invading nation of Assyria, then there would be plenty of honey, also.

23 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it which shall [even] be for briers and thorns.

Where grapevines used to grow, they shall be replaced by briers and thorns. Barnes suggests: “The word rendered ‘silverlings’ here—כֶּסֶף—denotes, properly, *silver*, of any amount. But it was also used to denote the *silver coin* which was in use among the Jews, the *shekel*. Perhaps this was the only silver coin which, in early times, they possessed, and hence the word *shekel* is omitted, and so many pieces of *silver* are mentioned.” As in the Song of Solomon, what seems to be meant in this verse, is that the proceeds from a single harvest would yield this sum, rather than the sale of the whole vineyard: “Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver” (Song of Solomon 8:11). The contrast is between a very productive vineyard of great worth being compared to a

worthless one that has now been overcome by briers and thorns.

24 With arrows and with bows shall [men] come thither, because all the land shall become briers and thorns.

The land would become a wild place, suitable for hunting wild animals. Nägelsbach, leaning on Gesenius, feels that people went in with bows not only to hunt animals but for self-protection. Such devastation, when contrasted with the former days of grapevines, olive and fig trees is painful. Like her sister Ephraim to the north, Judah’s fruitful treasures would be removed from her: “And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them” (Hosea 2:12).

25 And [øŋ] all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns; but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

And all hills that shall be digged with the mattock. Many moderns use the word *hoe* instead of *mattock*. A mattock is an implement that has a pick on one side and an ax or adz (sharp cutting tool set at 90 degree angle to the handle) on the other (Webster). The adz side is a heavy duty hoe. I have seen the mattock used as a weeding instrument in a horse pasture at our farm in Chile. This heavy instrument can get at the roots of difficult weeds, where the work of a hoe would be more cosmetic, and only remove the tops of weeds while leaving the roots intact. In ancient Israel, such a tool would be particularly valuable in hilly terrain, where it would be difficult to cultivate with oxen or horses. ¶ *There shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns.* Or perhaps rather, as the AB, “you will not go there for fear of briers and thorns.” ¶ *But it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and the treading of lesser cattle.* This land, which at one time was highly cultivated and contained precious grapevines would now serve for pasturage for cattle, sheep and goats. The term used in the KJV translation is *oxen*, from the Hebrew שֹׂרֵר. The oxen, a castrated male, is primarily used as a beast of agricultural husbandry. The Hebrew is less specific, and may include “single head of cattle, without emphasis on sex” (BDB); or “without distinction of age or sex” (Gesenius). A more generic translation that includes bullocks, oxen, and cows makes sense, given that they would have plentiful milk

from cows. Perhaps it compares to the use of the word horse today. Depending on the context, it could mean any equine from a stallion to a mare, colt or filly, or even a gelding (a castrated male). The term translated as *lesser cattle* in the KJV is **שׂוֹרִים**. It is based on the root **שׂוֹר**, and can refer to *sheep* or *goats* (Gesenius). See

also Jastrow's *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*.

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