
Isaiah 8

After leaving the subject of the birth of the Savior for a moment—Isaiah now speaks of the punishment that would befall Ephraim and Syria. In ISAIAH 9 the prophet returns to the Messianic prediction with great force.

VV. 1–4. The Lord commands Isaiah to write upon a large tablet the words, **מַהֵר שָׁלַל חֵשׁ בַּז**, *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, representing the impending attack of Assyria upon the Northern Kingdom and her partner in crime, Syria. Through the law of witnesses, Isaiah is commanded to make this event perfectly clear in the minds of the people. The prophet’s wife gives Isaiah a new son, who is to be named: **מַהֵר שָׁלַל חֵשׁ בַּז**.

Before Isaiah’s son could cry **אָבִי** (*my daddy*) or **אִמִּי** (*mi mommy*) Assyria would be upon Ephraim and Syria.

1 ¶ **MOREOVER** the **word of the LORD** said unto me: Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man’s pen, concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. ✓

✓ In making speed to the spoil he hasteneth they prey, or, Make speed &c.

MOREOVER the word of the LORD said unto me. The Prophet Joseph Smith clarified the passage to include the “word of the Lord,” **דְּבַר־יְהוָה**. This is similar to what we find in Jeremiah 1:4 and 1:13. There are many ways individuals can receive the word of the Lord, including seeing an apparition, hearing an audible voice, or being moved by the still small voice of the Spirit. ¶ *Take thee a great roll.* Gesenius explains that a **גְּלִיזוֹן**, or tablet, was normally “made of wood, stone, or metal, on which anything is inscribed.” HALOT adds leather or papyrus to this list. Metal tablets or plates are of special interest to us as LDS, as the Book of Mormon was inscribed on thin metal plates.¹ The etymology of the word tablet (**גְּלִיזוֹן**) is interesting, as it is associated by Hebrew scholars to Amos 3:7, the process of *revealing hidden things* to the Lord’s servants, the prophets (TWOT), or to uncover, make clear or clarify (HALOT). This is to be no ordinary roll, but rather, a **large tablet**, **גְּלִיזוֹן גְּדוֹל**. ¶ *And write in it.* Either write

or *engrave* upon it, as in Jeremiah 31:33b, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and *will be their God*, and they *shall be my people*” (emphasis added). Barnes explains: “On these tablets, or smooth plates, writing was performed by cutting the letters with an iron *stylus*, or small chisel. The process was slow, but the writing was permanent.” ¶ *With a man’s pen*, **בְּחֶרֶט אָנוּשׁ**. Rather than pen, with an *engraving* tool. A similar expression, “*after a cubit of a man*” **בְּאַמַּת־אִישׁ**, is found in Deuteronomy 3:11b.

Except that in Deuteronomy for ‘man’ we have **אִישׁ** instead of **אָנוּשׁ**. A number of commentators suggest that there is an intended connection here, especially since the Syriac (S) in Deuteronomy has “... according to the measure of the cubit of giants.” The idea is that the engraving would be quite large, as if written by a giant. ¶ *Concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz.* It is quite possible that Isaiah was simply commanded to fill the large tablet only with the words: **מַהֵר שָׁלַל חֵשׁ בַּז**, (or, *To speed to the spoil, he hasteneth the prey*, LDS HEB). That is, the Lord would fall upon the enemies of Judah. These characters would have had to be quite large to fill the large tablet. A sort of banner, if you will. Perhaps it was placed in such a way that passersby may have been able to gaze upon it (Calvin). Much like the *Title of Liberty* in the Book of Mormon. ¶ Isaiah had been commended to *write down* this prophecy. Keeping a journal of our spiritual experiences is a way to show gratitude to the Lord for the manifestation of His holy hand in our lives.

2 And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.

And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record.

Knowing of the incredulity of man, the Lord takes pains to command Isaiah that he seek for witnesses who can later testify of the truth of this prophecy regarding the Assyrian invasion of Damascus and Samaria. This is a frequent theme in Isaiah, that the Lord shows His mighty hand: “Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I

¹ On the topic of ancient metal plates or tablets, used to inscribe writings, see Chapter 10, “Ancient Records on Metal Plates” in Franklin S. Harris, Jr., *The Book of Mormon: Message and Evidences*, 2nd. ed, Chapter 10, pp.98–108.

told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye are even my witnesses” (ISAIAH 44:8a). The key point here is the *lest thou shouldst say* principle (that is, the giving of credit to anyone or anything instead of God): “I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee: lest thou shouldst say...” (ISAIAH 48:5a). The Lord knew that *evil and designing men* would, both in that day and in the latter days, teach that prophets were wise men who could discern the signs of their own times—but could not predict the future through divine revelation. To them, “prophecy is nothing more than an expression of men’s fears and longings,” and furthermore, “The fundamental principle of the rationalistic school is that *there cannot be distinct foresight of the distant future.*”² In order to counteract the wresting of the scriptures, the Lord has given us the law of witnesses, such that “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1b). ¶ *Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah*. While it is possible that Uriah was the same individual in 2 Kings 16, I go along with Nägelsbach in suggesting the evidence is simply too flimsy to make such an assertion—contrary to the many exegetes who so have.

3 And I went^v unto the prophetess; and she conceived and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me: Call his name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

✓ approached

And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived and bare a son. The prophetess³ (תִּנְבִיאָה) here stands for the wife of the prophet (תְּנַבִּיאִי) Isaiah. She conceived a baby boy. ¶ Then said the LORD to me: Call his name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. This is the name inscribed in

² Elliott, Charles. *Old Testament Prophecy: Its nature, organic connection with Old Testament history, messianic prophecy, and New Testament fulfilment*. New York, A. C. Armstrong and Son. 1889, p.58.

³ Joseph Smith, when confronted as to whether he was a prophet quoted from Revelation 19:10b. In the TPJS (emphasis added) we have: “If any person should ask me if I were a prophet, I should not deny it, as that would give me the lie; for, according to John, *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*; therefore, if I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a *true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy, and that constitutes a prophet*; and any man who says he is a *teacher or a preacher of righteousness*, and denies *the spirit of prophecy*, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and by this key false teachers and impostors may be detected” (30 December 1842). Any woman who is a *preacher of righteousness*, then, and is filled by the Holy Ghost with the testimony of Christ, may likewise be called a *prophetess* (also see *prophet*, LDS Bible Dictionary).

the scroll mentioned in ISAIAH8:1, מַהֵר שְׁלַל הָשָׁבׁוּ, i.e., *To speed to the spoil, he hasteneth the prey* (LDS HEB). Once again, the Lord would permit great damage to come upon the enemy of His people.

4 For before behold, the child shall not have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, before the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.^v

✓ or, he that is before the king of Assyria shall take away the riches, &c.

For behold, the child shall not have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother. The child mentioned here is Isaiah’s newly born son. Among the first words that infants speak are those equivalent to father and mother in their native languages. Or, as Rawlinson points out, the Hebrew equivalent is closer to *papi* or *mami*. The Hebrew for *my father* is אָבִי (*avi*), and for *my mother* אִמִּי (*im-mi*).⁴ Before מַהֵר שְׁלַל הָשָׁבׁוּ could say either אָבִי or אִמִּי, the prophecies mentioned next would come to pass. Depending on how precocious children are, the time may vary for such verbalization. The indication, at any rate, is that the time was imminent. Lowth puts a time period as follows: “The prophecy was accordingly accomplished within three years; when Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Retsin [KJV renders it Rezin but it is as Lowth has it, רִצִּין—GB]; and also took the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and carried them captive to Assyria, 2 Kings 15:29; 16:9; 1 Chronicles 5:26.” Delitzsch feels the time between the child’s birth and the coming invasion was closer to a year.⁵ Delitzsch also informs us that there

⁴ Interestingly, my first granddaughter, Eliza Marie Billikopf, calls my wife אִמָּה (im-mah).

⁵ “It is true that Tiglath-pileser only conquered Damascus, and not Samaria; but he took from Pekah, the king of Samaria, the land beyond the Jordan, and a portion of the land on this side. The trophies, which he took thence to Assyria, were no less the spoil of Samaria than if he had conquered Samaria itself (which Shalmanassar did twenty years afterwards). The birth of Maher-shalal took place about three-quarters of a year later than the preparation of the table ...; and the time appointed, from the birth of the boy till the chastisement of the allied kingdoms, was about a year. Now, the Syro-Ephraimitish war did not commence later than the first year of the reign of Ahaz, i.e. the year 743, and the chastisement by Tiglath-pileser occurred in the lifetime of the allies, whereas Pekah was assassinated in the year 739, the interval between the commencement of the war and the chastisement of the allies cannot have been more than three years; so that the preparation of the table must not be assigned to a much later period than the interview with Ahaz” (Delitzsch).

was nothing consolatory in the nature of the prophecy, as Assyria would also come upon Judah. ¶ *Before the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away.* Damascus was the capital of Syria, and Samaria, the capital of Ephraim. The capitals were the center of the riches of many nations, and also the capitals often stand for the nations themselves. ¶ *Before the king of Assyria.* The word *before* לְפָנַי, literally means *before the face*. They were brought into the presence of the King of Asshur (מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר). Calvin says: “alluding perhaps to an ancient custom of carrying the spoils of the enemy *before* the chariot of those who received a public triumph. In like manner shall the spoils of Samaria and Damascus be carried *before* the king of Assyria.”⁶

v. 5–8. The people of Israel and Judah had rejected the gentle waters of Shiloah, which represented the Temple and the Savior. Now the torrential waters of the Euphrates, or Assyria, would come upon them. In time, Assyria would not only attack the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, but also Judah, and come to surround Jerusalem. Although the *daughter of Zion* would be spared, the surrounding cities that formed Judah would not. In these verses the Lord directs His comments to both houses of Israel.

5 The LORD spake also unto me again, saying:

The Lord continues speaking to the Prophet. This may mean a brief interruption, or a longer one. Or a completely new revelation. In my own life I have noticed a pattern wherein the Spirit may reveal something to me and while I am still pondering the wonder of it all, a second wave descends upon me with additional information.

6 Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son;

Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly. The Targum (ܬ) clearly directs itself to those of Ephraim who had broken away from Judah: “Forasmuch as this people refuseth the kingdom of the house of David, which guides them in quietness, like the waters of Shiloah, which flow softly (literally, *in quietness*), and delight themselves in Rezin and

Remaliah’s son. Rather than the kind or gentle rule of the Davidic kings, the gentle waters instead represent the House of the Lord and the Lord Himself. Faussett notes the displeasure in “*this people*” (הָעָם הַזֶּה) rather than “*my people*” (עַמִּי). From John 9:7 we come to understand the meaning of Shiloah: “And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent⁷). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.” In the New Testament, the Lord invites us again to partake of the living water, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water ... But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:10b, 14). Slow moving water will penetrate deeply into the soil; fast currents cause soil erosion and much damage. There is much irony in all this: a tree that is overwatered actually dies of *thirst*. The roots rot and are not capable of taking in water. Such were the waters represented by the Assyrian invasion. The soft running waters of Shiloah stand as a type of Messiah. Cheyne has, “The brook of Shiloah, therefore, which flowed past Zion and Moriah, became a type of the Temple and its almighty but gracious Lord.” Skinner, similarly observes, “The point of the metaphor is that the waters ... are a type ... of the silent unobtrusive presence and majesty of Jehovah, who ‘dwells in mount Zion’ (v. 18; cf. Psalm 46:4).” Certainly, the people of Ephraim had rejected the dedicated House of the Lord found in Jerusalem. King Jeroboam, of Ephraim, greatly feared the righteous influence that the Temple could have on his Northern Tribes: “If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem,” Jeroboam reasoned, “then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord” (1 Kings 12:27a). So King Jeroboam made idols: “Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold” (1 Kings 12:28a), an altar, and called false priests. This he did in Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12). All of this is another way of saying that Israel (as well as Judah) had refused *her stay and her staff*, even the Lord, in exchange for the vanity of the strength of man. ¶ *And rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son.* This clause is an accusation against Ephraim and her two golden calves which stand in contrast to the House of the Lord. At the time of Isaiah, Ephraim was rejoicing or leaning on the confederacy between King Pekah of Ephraim (referring to Pekah as “Remaliah’s son” was the height of insult, see ISAIAH 7:4) and Rezin of Syria.

⁶ The mutilated arms of those who tried to scatter the flocks of King Lamoni were likewise brought before him after being defeated by Ammon (Alma 17:26–39).

⁷ שְׁלָחַנִי. Gesenius has “to send” for שְׁלַח

7 Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, [even] the king of Assyria and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks.

Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many. Not simply a river, but *the river* נַחֲלֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן, meaning the Euphrates, here symbolic of the Assyrian power. Henderson explains: “This noble river, so frequently referred to in Scripture, has its source in the mountains of Armenia, and running in a south and south-easterly direction, and uniting with the Tigris below Babylon, flows into the Persian Gulf. As far as Bir it is impetuous in its course; after this it flows more or less gently through the plains of Mesopotamia; but like the Nile, has its annual inundations, in consequence of the melting of the snow in Armenia, during which it often covers great part of the adjacent country. To prevent, as much as possible, the injury committed by these inundations, and to divert the water so as profitably to irrigate the fields, numerous canals were dug, and embankments were raised, some of which were of considerable strength. These canals the prophet calls אַפְקִים,⁸ which is used both of pipes or tubes, Job 40:18, and of the beds or channels of streams, Ezekiel 32:6, and by metonymy of brooks, and the valleys through which they flow, Psalms 42:2; Job 6:15.—גִּבְרֵי,⁹ a bank or embankment; Chaldee חֲגִירָא, a wall... Nothing could more fitly represent the incursion of a large and powerful army, than the inundation of a river, which breaks through every barrier that is thrown in its way, and sweeps all before it.” And when the Lord is behind such a ‘river,’ well then: “As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream” (D&C 121:33b). In the ancient writings of Cyrus (557–529 BC, pp. 206–208, in Pritchard),¹⁰ we see the same analogy of armies to that of a river, “His widespread troops—their number, like that of the water of a river, could not be established—strolled along, their weapons packed away.” ¶ *Even the king of Assyria and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks.* The

⁸ In the Masoretic text (א), his channels אַפְקִים.

⁹ In the Masoretic text (א), his banks גִּבְרֵי.

¹⁰ Pritchard, James B. (editor), *The Ancient Near East, Volume 1: Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Princeton University Press, 6th Paperback printing, 1973, pp. 188–210.

influence of the king of Assyria is represented as overflowing beyond the territory his own nation. Barnes points out, “Eastern kings marched in the midst of vast splendour. They moved with all the magnificence of the court, and were attended usually with their princes and nobles; with a splendid retinue; and with all the insignia of royalty.” The expression to *come up over all his channels* means the Euphrates would—like the Nile and so many rivers in ancient times before flood control measures were taken—go over its banks and spread great distances to each side.

8 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.

✓ fulness of the breadth of thy land shall be the stretchings out of his wings

And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over. The invading river of the Assyrian army would reach all the way to Judah. “And he shall pass through the land of the house of Judah as an overflowing torrent” (Targum, ט). ¶ *He shall reach even to the neck.* The ט continues, “unto Jerusalem shall he come.” Indeed, “The prophet compares Jerusalem here to the head of the human body. As when the waters reach to the neck of a man, he is very near drowning, so here, the prophet intimates that the whole land would be deluged, and that it would be nearly utterly destroyed” (Rabbi D. Kimhi in Barnes). ¶ *And the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land.* Such “stretching out” of the “wings” seems to be an allusion to the great breadth and width of the attack by Assyria upon Judah—as the great width that waters spread to the sides of overflowing rivers. Kay observes that the gods of the Assyrians are represented as beasts with a “mystical head with outstretched wings.” Henderson has, “The prophet here drops the figure of an overflowing river, and employs that of the extended wings of a bird, which, in various languages, are applied to the flanks or side-bodies of an army, because of their stretching out from the centre, and covering the ground which they occupy.” ¶ *O Immanuel.* During the time of King Hezekiah, the armies of Assyria would surround Jerusalem with a tight hold upon her. If it were not for the Lord, *Immanuel* or *God with us*, even Jerusalem would have been taken (ISAIAH 37:36). Giving utterance to the holy name אֱלֹהֵינוּ was a prayer of thanksgiving. If it were not for the Lord who suffered for us in Gethsemane and was lifted up on the cross with outstretched arms for our sake, we too would perish without any hope of redemption.

vv. 9–15. The words “far countries” helps us understand how the fury of the Lord would now fall upon the nations that presently are attacking Judah. No unhallowed hand can come upon Zion. Christ shall be a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence* unto those who reject Him, but a *sanctuary* to those who love Him.

9 ¶ Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

✓ or, yet

Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces. To associate means to come together to build, to trade, to defend, or to attack. The Hebrew here is the plural, *ye peoples* עַמִּים. These distant nations could associate and make mutual pacts, but such would be of no avail unless the hand of the Lord would allow it. At the moment it was Syria and Ephraim who had associated themselves against Judah, but one could also include Assyria and Babylon to the list of such nations. At the end, it matters little who it is that fights against Zion, for they shall not prosper. ¶ *And give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.* The LXX (6) has, “Know, ye Gentiles, and be conquered; hearken ye, even to the extremity of the earth: be conquered, after ye strengthened yourselves; for even if ye should again strengthen yourselves, ye shall again be conquered.” The idea seems to be that no amount of strengthening for war on the part of Syria and Ephraim would yield their desired results, but rather, they themselves would be conquered. *Girding yourselves* in the Biblia Hebraica gives the same idea as *strengthening yourselves* in the LXX (6). The ancient peoples would wear long robes that would get in the way of fast or quick movement, unless they brought it up to the loin area and there tied or secured in a fashion that would leave the legs free to move. This is where the expression, “gird up your loins” comes from.

10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God [is] with us.

Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought. In the words of the Berkeley edition, “Devise a plan and it shall be frustrated.” These words are directed to Syria

and Ephraim, although they could be directed to anyone who tries to frustrate the plans of the Lord. “What power shall stay the heavens?” (D&C 121:33b). ¶ *Speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us.* Henry paints the picture of a people who seem to be *pumping themselves* to go out to war (see the principle of *group think* in psychology): “You prepare for action; you address yourselves to it with resolution; you gird on your swords; you gird up your loins. You animate and encourage yourselves and one another with all the considerations you can think of ...” But all of this is to no account, for with us is God, *Immanuel*. ¶ Those who act in righteousness need not be concerned when others take counsel against them, for the Lord is on their side. We find similar sentiments elsewhere in the scriptures: “Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not” (Numbers 14:9); “And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper” (2 Chronicles 13:12); “The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah” (Psalm 46:7 and 46:11). And, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31b). “Elder Henry D. Taylor once referred to the missionary slogan which the late Elder B. H. Roberts adopted when he served as mission president. The slogan was “Immanuel,” which of course means “God be with us.” President Roberts also used this slogan in his discourses, in his correspondence, in autographing books and photos, and on numerous other occasions, according to Elder Taylor’s report (see CR, Oct. 1975, p. 93)” (Nyman).

11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:

✓ in strength of hand

For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand. The Spirit of the Lord most often comes to us in a still small voice. But there are times when the Spirit is so strong, that it can be overpowering. It seems that this occasion was one of those times. ¶ Clarke suggests that ‘*with a strong hand*’ the “influence of the prophetic Spirit” is felt. Ezekiel wrote, “And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee” (Ezekiel 3:22). There are times when the Spirit of the Lord, as we mentioned, is strongly felt. ¶ *And instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:* The Lord warned Isaiah not to also fall victim to the panic

and fear of those around him. I am saddened when those who have believed in the testimony of the Elders have not joined the Church out of fear—whether in relation to family pressure, tithing, or keeping the Sabbath day holy. We make more money on Sunday, they explain, than in the rest of the week.¹¹ “For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God. Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words—Yet you should have been faithful; and he would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in time of trouble” (D&C 3:7–8). ¶ Regarding the idea of *not walking the way of this people*, I feel that I was likewise warned. During one of my trips to Chile, during my career with the University of California, I had a dream that for a long time I hesitated to write down.¹² This dream took place at a time when there was relatively speaking no dissention against the Brethren and teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints among its members. I dreamt that some members of the Church were running towards false doctrine with much energy and there were many who fell in the pits thereof. They sank to their spiritual death. I remember moving along in the same direction as these people were moving and trying to engage their attention and asking, “What have the Brethren said about this? What has the Prophet said about this?” It turned out that the Prophet and the Brethren had *not* spoken in favor of this thing. At that time I wrote, “Whatever this dream may have meant or mean, it has come to my attention

¹¹ In 1990, Linda & I started looking at new homes, although we loved our own, it was too small for our growing family. There was a recession and homes were not selling. When we met with our realtor we told him we did not want the house to be shown on the Sabbath Day. He countered explained that Sunday and Saturday were the big days to sell homes and that if we did not show the house on Sunday, that we may be greatly reducing our chances. But we left it in the hands of the Lord. Some months later we received a call from our agent who was trying to sell the house for us. He told us that someone who had already seen the house but lived out of town wanted to come and look at it one more time. On Sunday. While I stood firm on not showing the house on Sunday, I feel that not all in my household had gained a testimony of Sabbath day observance. There was some murmuring, although I was at the end sustained. We found out a few days later that the potential buyer bought a different home and paid full price. As a result, we lost the opportunity to buy the home Linda had so much wanted. My faith in God’s hand in the matter did not waver. The story may have ended there, but the postscript is interesting. We should not plan to see the consequences of all of our actions rewarded in this lifetime, but sometimes they simply are. Although other homes were not selling, eventually our home did, and although it was not as large as the first house it was beautiful and we got a substantial price break. As it turned out, had we bought the larger home, we would have lost it or become strapped economically. For over fifteen years, the economic situation faced by the University of California was such that we got few raises. That year we actually got a temporary reduction in pay, instead. We simply must not be moved to walk in the fear of the people, but rather, we need to always walk in the light of the Lord.

¹² I eventually did write it down in my journal on 10 January 2003.

that this thing should be carved in our hearts, in our bones, in our every muscle and nerve, ‘Follow the living Prophet!’” Elder M. Russell Ballard wrote: “I have discovered in my ministry that those who have become lost [and] confused are typically those who have most often . . . forgotten that when the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve speak with a united voice, it is the voice of the Lord for that time . . . As I have known people who have not stayed in the boat and have not held on with both hands during times of trials and troubles or who have not stayed in the boat during times of relative calm, I have observed that many of them have lost their focus on the central truths of the gospel—the reasons why they joined the Church in the first place; the reasons they remained fully committed and active in living gospel standards and blessing others through dedicated, consecrated service; and the ways in which the Church has been in their lives ‘a place of spiritual nourishment and growth.’ . . . Sometimes faithful Latter-day Saints and sincere investigators begin to focus on the ‘appendages’ instead of on the fundamental principles. That is, Satan tempts us to become distracted from the simple and clear message of the restored gospel. Those so distracted often give up partaking of the sacrament because they have become focused, even preoccupied, with less important practices or teachings. Others may focus on the questions and doubts they experience. Of course, having questions and experiencing doubts are not incongruent with dedicated discipleship. Recently, the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: ‘We understand that from time to time Church members will have questions about Church doctrine, history, or practice. Members are always free to ask such questions and earnestly seek greater understanding.’ . . . And if any one of you have fallen out of the boat, we will seek you, find you, minister to you, and pull you safely back onto the Old Ship Zion, where God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are at the helm and will guide us right.”

12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all [them to] whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

Say ye not, A confederacy, to all to whom this people shall say, A confederacy. The ASV uses the word *conspiracy* and the Targum (ܛ), *rebellion* (מְרִירָה). The prophet warns the people against running out in a panic, listening to those who feared the Syro-Ephraimite forces. Nor, should Judah join a confederacy with Assyria. Our confederacy ought to be with the Lord. ¶ *Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.* This is an

invitation to leave the fear of this world to those of this world. Instead, we are to walk with our confidence squarely on the Lord, on the Holy One of Israel. We do this by staying close to the Spirit, by following the Prophet, Apostles, and other General and local authorities.

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself, and [let] him [be] your fear, and [let] him [be] your dread.

Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself. The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “The Lord of hosts Him shall ye call holy.” ¶ *And let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* These are among the most beautiful words in Holy Writ. The fear of the Lord is like no other fear. Any time the word fear is used in relation to the Lord, the word takes on an exquisite meaning: *trust and hope in the Lord*, or in other words, *let the Lord be your hope*.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And he shall be for a sanctuary. Lowth prefers the Vulgate (Ⓥ), “And He shall be unto you a sanctuary,”¹³ and thus clearly distinguishes between the consequences for the righteous in contrast to those who prefer the works of evil. Calvin insightfully suggests that when we fear man more than God, we value God as a dead idol. The Hebrew word for *a sanctuary* is שֶׁבֶט based on the root שָׁבַט, *to be holy*. It can include the notion of a consecrated holy tent (Gesenius) or the temple, Holiness to the Lord. Delitzsch explains, “All who sanctified the Lord of lords He surrounded like temple walls; hid them in Himself, whilst death and tribulation reigned without, and comforted, fed, and blessed them in His own gracious fellowship.” We are frequently reminded today to stand in holy places: “But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved” (D&C 45:32a); and “Behold, it is my will, that all they who call on my name, and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel, should gather together, and stand in holy places; And prepare for the

revelation which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together” (D&C 101:22–23). ¶ *But for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence.* When the Christ child was taken to the Temple, he was blessed by Simeon who explained that Jesus was the *consolation of Israel* and furthermore stated, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel” (Luke 2:25–35). The JST reads: “Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious; but unto them who are disobedient, who stumble at the word, through disobedience, whereunto they were appointed, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. For the stone which the builders disallowed, is become the head of the corner. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (JST 1 Peter:7–9). While many Gentile commentators are quick to despise the Jews for stumbling against the Rock of Christ, Calvin suggests that the Christians of his own day, also stumbled against the same rock, “when we see the state of religion throughout the whole Christian world brought nearly to ruin. Many boast that they are Christians who are strongly alienated from God, and to whom Christ is a *stone of stumbling*.” Certainly it is true even today, when the Church of Jesus Christ is upon the earth, that much of Christendom has stumbled upon *The Rock*, and have been offended by the Living Christ. Although it may sound as a harsh saying, some who claim to be followers of Christ today have persecuted the restored Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and have found thus offense in Christ. Yet from the beginning the Lord has made His intentions clear, that He would restore his ancient covenant people. In the *Title Page* of the Book of Mormon we see that the restored Gospel and Book of Mormon would reach out “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST.” ¶ *To both the houses of Israel.* That is, to the divided kingdom of Ephraim and Judah. Neither would hold fast unto the Lord, but turned after idols instead. ¶ *For a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* *Gin* is a more archaic word for *trap*. פֶּחַל is usually used in connection to a bird trap. מִזְקֵשׁ is a snare, a synonym for trap. From the general (the divided houses of Israel and Judah) we go to the specific (Jerusalem), as to those who would suffer the consequences for not leaning upon the Lord. Many in Judah felt that Jerusalem—with the Holy Temple on Mount Zion—was somehow exempt from punishment. Through Isaiah, the Lord is letting Judah know that even Jerusalem would not escape.

¹³ The Vulgate (Ⓥ) reads: “*et erit vobis in sanctificationem in lapidem autem offensionis et in petram scandali duabus domibus Israel in laqueum et in ruinam habitantibus Hierusalem.*” The Douay translation has, “And he shall be a sanctification to you: but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to the two houses of Israel, for a snare and a ruin to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

15 And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

And many among them shall stumble and fall. In this line is encompassed much of the results of the teachings of Christ in the New Testament, for there were few who believed in Him. Not only did the people of Judah and Israel fall into this trap before Christ was born, so too during His mortal ministry, and even now. The Lord, He who created the heavens and the earth under the direction of the Father would yet be recognized and honored by few. In each dispensation the nature of this misunderstanding has changed, but nevertheless the misunderstandings about the Lord are just as pronounced today as at any time in the history of man. Image, the one and only true Church upon the phase of the whole planet, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is attacked by some as ‘not a Christian church.’ Yet this is the Church that the Lord established Himself, as the promised restoration that has been written about from the beginning of time. Also see Matthew 23:37. ¶ *And be broken, and be snared, and be taken.* Ludlow has, “Using five verbs that develop a ‘downward’ pattern, Isaiah describes the results befalling those who reject the Lord (v. 15)—they stumble—they falter in their faith; they fall—they commit sins; they are snared—they are enticed by Satan’s temptations; they are captured—they are turned over to Satan’s buffetings.”

vv. 16–22. Those who would be Christ’s disciples give place to His words; hold on to the iron rod. Christ would, for a time, *hide his face from the house of Jacob*. Isaiah testifies that he will look to the Lord. Isaiah, as well as his children, are symbolic of the teachings he was supposed to share with men. Wicked men will seek to the forces of evil and the dark side, when instead they should seek God. Those who heed such wicked practices will only find darkness and lack of hope. They will starve for things spiritual and blame both their rulers and their God. The darkness will be so thick that it can be felt.

16 ¶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

The Targum (Ⓢ)¹⁴ here is helpful: “O prophet, keep the testimony, testify not the testimony among them,

¹⁴ Several commentators direct us to Daniel: “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end:

because they do not obey; seal and hide the law, they are not willing to learn it.” To bind up צָוַר, means to secure, bundle, or tie up something. Barnes suggests, “The meaning here is, to secure, to close up—perhaps by passing a cord or string around the volume, and making it secure, denoting that it was finished.” Henderson (leaning on Hitzig), explains: “The verb צָוַר can only properly apply to the wrapping up of a סֵפֶר, or volume... The words apply to the prophetic testimonies which had just been borne to the Messiah, and other prophetic matter then in existence, together with the law, in its more extended signification, as comprising the rest of the Jewish Scriptures. These might be unheeded, or misconstrued, as indeed they were, by the great body of the nation; but they would minister needful instruction and comfort to the disciples of Christ. For their benefit, they were carefully to be preserved.” ¶ The *law*, or rather, instruction, or doctrine, *Torah*, תּוֹרָה. While the term is often used to mean the Pentateuch or five books of Moses, it can mean all of the Hebrew Holy Scriptures, or Tanakh.¹⁵ “In rabbinical Judaism, the scope of Torah is sometimes expanded to include all of the Scriptures or even the entirety of God’s revelation” (Holman). In Deuteronomy the Lord commanded that the scriptures should be bound to our hearts and hands and become part of us: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes” (Deuteronomy 6:6–8). These words were taken literally by those who bound the phylacteries as a form of worship. The destroying angel passed through the homes marked over with the blood of the Pascal lamb and did no harm to the inhabitants thereof. Through the acceptance of the Word we can likewise be spiritually protected—but by rejecting the same we are instead bundled for destruction and burning. ¶ A *disciple* of the Lord has the same meaning as that of a saint, that is, a follower of Christ. ¶ The expression *bind up the testimony, seal the law* has a very specific meaning in scripture, as alluded to in the Targum (Ⓢ). It is that of inviting others to turn and come unto Christ with urgency, for after such are done away with, God would provide His own ‘sermons’ through war and nature and other disasters, but not through the warning voice of

many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4, cf. 12:9, 8:26; Revelations 22:10).

¹⁵ The three main divisions of the Holy Scriptures are the *Law* תּוֹרָה, *Prophets* סְפֵרֵי נְבִיאִים, and *Writings* סְפֵרֵי כְתוּבִים.

man.¹⁶ The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “When you are endowed and prepared to preach the gospel to all nations, kindred, and tongues, in your own languages, you must faithfully warn all, and bind up the testimony, and seal up the law, and the destroying angel will follow close at your heels, and exercise his tremendous mission upon the children of disobedience; and destroy the workers of iniquity, while the Saints will be gathered out from among them, and stand in holy places ready to meet the Bridegroom when He comes”¹⁷ The Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith therefore taught, “Whenever I go in the mission field I try to impress this truth upon the missionaries. They are sent into the world for two definite purposes; to gather out the scattered people of the House of Israel who are willing to repent and receive the Gospel, and to leave all others without excuse . . . ‘Therefore, tarry ye, and labor diligently, that you may be perfected in your ministry to go forth among the Gentiles for the last time, as many as the mouth of the Lord shall name, to bind up the law and seal up the testimony, and to prepare the saints for the hour of judgment which is to come’ (D&C 88:84).”¹⁸ ¶ We could call this process the *Ezekiel principle*, that if a person is warned and repents, then both the individual who provided the warning voice and the person who repents are blessed. However, if a person is not warned, he who should have warned his brother is also condemned (Ezekiel 3:16–21). Elder McConkie suggests an essential task of a disciple: “As set forth in latter-day revelation, the ‘disciples,’ those who are the Lord’s servants, ‘go forth’ with power given them ‘to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious; Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure’ (D&C 1:8–9). Of these wicked and unbelieving ones the revealed word says: ‘Behold, and lo, there are none to deliver you; for ye obeyed not my voice when I called to you out of the heavens; ye believed not my servants, and when they were sent unto you ye received them not. Wherefore, they sealed up the testimony and bound up the law, and ye were delivered over unto darkness. These shall go away into outer darkness where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth’ (D&C 133:71–73).”¹⁹ Brigham Young explained: “All we have yet heard and

we have experienced is scarcely a preface to the sermon that is going to be preached. When the testimony of the Elders ceases to be given, and the Lord says to them, ‘Come home; I will now preach my own sermons to the nations of the earth,’ all you now know can scarcely be called a preface to the sermon that will be preached with fire and sword, tempests, earthquakes, hail, rain, thunders and lightnings, and fearful destruction. What matters the destruction of a few railway cars? You will hear of magnificent cities, now idolized by the people, sinking in the earth, entombing the inhabitants. The sea will heave itself beyond its bounds, engulfing mighty cities. Famine will spread over the nations and nation will rise up against nation, kingdom against kingdom and states against states, in our own country and in foreign lands; and they will destroy each other, caring not for the blood and lives of their neighbors, of their families, or for their own lives.²⁰ Elder Orson Pratt spoke of these things as related to the fulfillment of the time of the Gentiles: “Who is able to declare when the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled? . . . before the times of the Gentiles can possibly be fulfilled, a proclamation must come from heaven and be sounded in their ears—namely, that an angel must come from heaven and bring the everlasting Gospel, not for the Jews, the descendants of Israel, alone, but for every nation, kindred, tongue and people. Gentiles and Jews, all must hear it, for the prediction is that when the angel comes forth with that message from heaven, it is to be preached to all nations, kindreds, tongues and people. This, of course, includes Gentiles as well as Jews. We cannot, therefore, suppose that the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled until after that event takes place. When the angel comes, when the servants of God are sent forth by Divine authority with a proclamation, and have fulfilled that prediction by declaring the everlasting Gospel to all the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles, then their times will be fulfilled, and not before. What would be the use of sending the Gospel to the Gentiles if their times were fulfilled and there was no hope or chance for them to receive salvation? The very declaration—that an angel shall come forth with the Gospel in the latter days before the destruction of the wicked, and that that Gospel is to be preached to Gentiles as well as Jews, is proof and evidence to every reflecting mind that believes the Bible that the Gentiles will have an opportunity, until that message is delivered and the prediction concerning it fulfilled. When that is done the law is bound, the testimony is sealed, so far as they are concerned . . . The Jews will then come in remembrance before the Lord. That is, the set time for their deliverance and restoration will have come, the period predicted by the mouth of the ancient prophet in which the Gospel shall be proclaimed to them . . . Will

¹⁶ “And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house.” (Ezekiel 3:26).

¹⁷ Smith, Joseph Jr. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Edited by B. H. Roberts. 2d ed., rev. Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51, 2:309. Also, see TPJS, p. 92.

¹⁸ Smith, Joseph Fielding. *The Signs of the Times*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1952. pp. 79–80. See also D&C 88:80–91.

¹⁹ McConkie, Bruce R. *The Messiah Series*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1978–82. *The Promised Messiah*, p. 174.

²⁰ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 8:123, 15 July 15, 1860.

the Gentiles be entirely cut off? Oh no, there will be a great many, even when Israel are gathering, who will come along and say, ‘Let us be numbered with Israel, and be made partakers of the same blessings with them; let us enter into the same covenant and be gathered with them and with the people of God.’ Though the testimony is bound, and though the law is sealed up, yet there will be an opening for you to come in. But you will have to come of your own accord, there will be no message sent to you, no ministration of the servants of God expressly directed to you.”²¹

17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

And I will wait upon the LORD. Isaiah testifies that while he lives his eyes will look to the Lord and wait upon Him. What does this beautiful expression, to *wait upon the Lord* mean? The idiom appears in Psalms and Isaiah: “...but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth” (Psalm 37:9b, cf. 123:2); “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (ISAIAH 40:31). To me, to wait upon the Lord means to act when moved upon by the Holy Ghost. To wait upon the Lord means to put our trust in Him who is mighty to save. While חָכַה means to wait for

something, חָכַה לַיהוָה is a beautiful expression about waiting for the Lord. There is nothing passive about the word *wait*, as it means to serve the Lord with all of our might, mind and strength. It was after the October 2011 General Conference, during Elder Robert D. Hales talk on Sunday morning, that I began to better understand the meaning of this phrase (see notes under ISAIAH 40:31). ¶ *That hideth his face from the house of Jacob.* In Deuteronomy the Lord repeatedly warned the children of Israel about the consequences of disobedience: “And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith” (Deuteronomy 32:20). But there is a glorious point here, a hope for the *restoration of Israel*, for the day would come when: “Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 39:29). ¶ *And I will look for him.* This has the same meaning as that of waiting upon

²¹ Orson Pratt, March 26, 1871. *Journal of Discourses*. 26 vols. London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–1886. Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, March 26, 1871. The restoration of the Jews and the rebuilding of Jerusalem—the latter-day Kingdom of god—gathering of Israel, pp. 59–70.

the Lord. Micah’s exclamation is almost identical to that of Isaiah: “Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me” (Micah 7:7).

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me [are] for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel. Isaiah explains that his own name as well as those of his children have been given as words of prophecy of the signs and wonders that would come to pass. Yet, one may also see these comments as representing the Savior, who “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against” (Luke 2:34b). Rather than say that it is the Lord who is speaking here—as a number of commentators do—I would rather think that Isaiah was a type and a shadow of the Savior. So similarly, in this place, Cheyne, “The conception is, that God selects certain men to be shadows or types of still greater men or things to come.” Elder McConkie wrote that this verse shows “that when God gives children to men on earth, he is simply sending to them his own spirit offspring.”²² Isaiah, or *Yeshayahu* (יְשַׁעְיָהוּ), means *Salvation of Yahweh*. The work of Isaiah was to proclaim that salvation would come through Jehovah. It would not come through the arm of flesh nor through idols or false gods, but only through the Lord. Isaiah’s first son was named Shearjashub, *The remnant shall return*, in reference to the latter-day gathering of Israel. While few gentile commentators get this point, Kay insightfully says, “... the terms ‘remnant of Jacob,’ ‘remnant of Israel’ (10:21, 22), and remnant of His people’ (11:11), taken in combination with the words of Moses, Deuteronomy 30:2 [*Rain in Due Season*—GB], seemed to point to some greater restoration; including, it might well seem, ‘broken’ Ephraim (7:8; cp. 11:12). But further; the name said unqualifiedly ‘*the rest*:’—might not that include what Amos had spoken of ‘the rest of *Edom*,’ and, indeed, ‘all the nations’ (Amos 9:12²³; Psalm 22:27²⁴), even Assyria and Egypt (19:23–25), and ‘the uttermost part of the earth’ (24:16)? Nay;

²² McConkie, Bruce R. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Volume III, Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1973, p. 145.

²³ “That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.” (Amos 9:12)

²⁴ “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” (Psalm 22:27)

must it not go deeper yet? must it not include a redemption of those who had sunk into the grave (26:19; cp. Hosea 13:14²⁵; 14:7), and the ‘prisoners gathered in the pit’ (24:22)?” As LDS we know that the work of the Temples is a critical part of such redemption, and that through Israel all the nations of the world would be blessed. Isaiah’s second son was named **מְהֵר־שָׁלַל־חֵשׁ־בַּז**, *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz*, or *To speed to the spoil, he hasteneth the prey*, in reference to the punishment that would come upon Syria and Ephraim, who sought to destroy Judah. Today these words may well stand for the punishment that would come upon those who lift up their hand against Israel. Isaiah and the prophets were often commanded to not only give their children special names, but also dress or act out with prophetic implications.²⁶ ¶ *From the LORD of hosts which dwelleth in mount Zion*. Mount Zion seems to be a reference to the House of the Lord, or His Holy Temple, wherein the Lord made His presence from time to time. In the last days so would also the Lord make His presence manifest unto many in His Holy Temples, and among *the pure in heart*. “And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it; Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God” (D&C 97:15–16). Some scriptures seem to have a reference to a Millennial day presence of the Lord: “In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever” (Micah 4:6–7).

19 And when they shall say unto you: Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter--should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to hear from the dead?

And when they shall say unto you: Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter. Some will not turn to the Lord and accept the message of the scriptures and the prophets, but will prefer to lean upon divination and the arts of the occult.

²⁵ “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” (Hosea 13:14)

²⁶ Some notable examples include ISAIAH 20:3–4; Ezekiel 4:3, 10–11, 16; Hosea 1:2–4.

From the beginning the Lord has been explicit in this matter: “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31); “And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people” (Leviticus 20:6, also see 1 Samuel 28:6). In modern day, people also ought to avoid giving the philosophies of men more importance than the words of Christ’s servants and the Scriptures. ¶ *Should not a people seek unto their God for the living to hear from the dead?* This is a beautiful question, *should not a people seek unto their God* an none else?

20 To the law and to the testimony; and if they speak not according to this word, [it is] because [there is] no light^v in them.

✓ no morning

To the law and to the testimony. This is a call to hold fast to the law and to the testimony, to the sure word of prophecy and to leave evil things behind. It is a call for zeal towards God. Barnes well suggests that: “This is a solemn call of the prophet to try everything by the revealed will of God.” We all have to make constant decisions as to whether we will live our lives with the constant companionship of the Spirit of the Lord, or yield to some other spirit. “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:11–13). Elder McConkie taught: “Two spirits are abroad in the earth—one is of God, the other of the devil. The spirit which is of God is one that leads to light, truth, freedom, progress, and every good thing; on the other hand, the spirit which is of Lucifer leads to darkness, error, bondage, retrogression, and every evil thing. One spirit is from above, the other from beneath; and that which is from beneath never allows more light or truth or freedom to exist than it can help.”²⁷ ¶ *And if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*. Anything short of this word, of the word of the Lord, is because it is spoken without the Spirit of the Lord. The light of the Gospel truth is absent in such a person’s life. Helaman asks: “Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness

²⁷ McConkie, Bruce R. *Mormon Doctrine*. 2d ed. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966, p. 270.

rather than light?" (Helaman 13:29b). There is another allusion here made clear by the ASV translation of the word *light*, "If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning (אֶרְבֶּבֶת, or *dawn*, see margin ||, Gesenius, HALOT, BDB, and others) for them" (ASV). Such would not partake of the morning of the first resurrection. According to Clarke, "R. D. Kimhi says this was the form of an oath: 'By the law and by the testimony such and such things are so.' Now if they had sworn this falsely, it is because there is not *light*, no *illumination*, אֶרְבֶּבֶת, no scruple of conscience, in them." Those who reject the light of Christ will have to pass through darkness, through the black of the night (contrast with D&C 50:22–25).

21 And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.

And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry. Or, "And they shall pass through it, sore distressed and hungry" (ASV). The word hungry may well mean more than physical hunger, but a hunger for the companionship and words of the Spirit. ¶ *And it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God,*²⁸ *and look upward.* Men will blame God and king for their misfortunes. Job's wife suggested a way for Job to escape his misery: "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die" (Job 2:9).

22 And they shall look unto the earth and behold trouble, and darkness, dimness of anguish, and [they shall be] driven to darkness.

And they shall look unto the earth and behold trouble, and darkness, dimness of anguish. *Dimness* is sometimes translated as *gloom*. Everywhere they shall look, they will see the horrors of darkness and anguish. Kay says, "This darkness was owing to the 'hiding away of God's face' from the sinful people." ¶ *And shall be driven to darkness.* Or, "and into thick darkness they shall be driven away" (ASV, cf. Kay). Lowth says, "palpable Egyptian darkness" as in "And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt" (Exodus 10:21). This is the type of darkness seen before Christ came to the American continent, and ministered to some of His *other sheep* (3 Nephi 8:20–23).

23 ¶ NEVERTHELESS, the dimness [shall] not [be] such as [was] in her vexation, when at the* first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict [her by] the way of the Red Sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. ✓

✓ or, populous

* KJV and JST retain "the," Book of Mormon does not.

NOTE: Verse 23 in the Hebrew Scriptures (אִי) constitutes verse 9:1 in the KJV.

FIRST POSTED: 11 July 2001

²⁸ See ISAIAH 9:4, for a note on "their king and their God" vs. "his king and his God."

