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## Isaiah 10

The Lord is unhappy with Israel's behavior, more specifically, with the way she has treated the poor. The role that Assyria would play in humbling Judah is detailed. Because Assyria would boast of having done this of her own accord and power she would be humbled herself. This is a type of the last days, when Jerusalem shall be attacked by the gentile nations of the earth but the Lord shall be her salvation.

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vv. 1–4 constitute the fourth warning in a row to Israel, each of which ends with “but his hand is stretched out still.” These verses belong with those of ISAIAH 9, when “The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel” (ISAIAH 9:8). This woe, or complaint against Israel, comes because of the way she treated her poor.

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1 ¶ **WOE** unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness<sup>✓</sup> [which] they have prescribed;

✓ or, to the writers that write grievousness

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*WOE unto them that decree unrighteous decrees.* The Lord is not pleased with those who are unjust or unrighteous, especially with those who pass unrighteous rulings. Woe. In ISAIAH 18 we note that **הוי**—*Hoy!*—can be a salutation, while here it is more of a sigh, *Ah!* a calling attention to the wicked. The Hebrew word for judge is **שֹׁפֵט**. “In the early patriarchal times the heads of families and the elders of the tribes were the judges” (ISBE). All people who rule—whether they be the kings of Judah or Ephraim, or those who passed judgment at the gates of Jerusalem, parents and supervisors—may well be said to also be judges. Every individual may profitably ask this question: Am I involved in righteous judgment? Giving *righteous judgment* is one of the most praiseworthy traits. Through Jeremiah, the Lord Himself gives us the example we are to emulate: “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23–24). ¶ *And that write grievousness which they have prescribed.* Barnes explains, “It does not refer to the mere scribes, or recorders of the judicial opinions, but to the judges themselves, who pronounced

the sentence, and caused it to be recorded.” Calvin explains that the Lord: “attacks generally, and without distinction, princes and magistrates, who oppressed the people by unjust and tyrannical decrees, in such a manner that they approached to absolute robbery; and therefore he includes every class of magistrates and governors.”

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2 To turn aside **away** the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and [that] they may rob the fatherless!

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The scriptures frequently warn us against taking advantage of the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the foreign immigrant<sup>1</sup>—all those who have the least resources to defend themselves. “To turn away the needy from judgment” takes place when those in authority either refuse to hear the plight of the needy or favor the wealthy *without regard to the merits* of the case. The Lord's standard of *righteous* (**צְדָקָה**)

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<sup>1</sup> In *Deseret News* we read: “Amid the controversy swirling around President Trump's executive order banning refugees from seven Muslim countries, the LDS Church issued a statement late Saturday night urging solutions that relieve refugee suffering. ‘The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is concerned about the temporal and spiritual welfare of all of God's children across the earth,’ the statement said, ‘with special concern for those who are fleeing physical violence, war and religious persecution. The church urges all people and governments to cooperate fully in seeking the best solutions to meet human needs and relieve suffering.’” ... This is the second time the LDS Church has responded to a call by Trump to block immigration. Church leaders issued a strong statement in December 2015 soon after Trump, on the campaign trail, called for a ban on Muslim immigration to the United States. Like Saturday's statement, the December 2015 statement did not name Trump or refer specifically to the controversy, but it said that while the faith is neutral in regard to party politics and election campaigns, ‘it is not neutral in relation to religious freedom.’ It drew on two statements by church founder Joseph Smith to reaffirm its longstanding position of support for religious pluralism. In 1841, Smith was the mayor of the largely Mormon city of Nauvoo, Illinois, when it passed a religious freedom ordinance that protected the rights of all faiths. In 1843, Smith said he was willing to die to defend the religious freedom rights of people of any denomination” 28 January 2017.

*judgment* (מִשְׁפָּט) is expressed in Leviticus 19:15, and protects both the poor and the rich, “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor” (Leviticus 19:15). ¶ Among the various other definitions of נָטָה (root of לְהַטּוֹת), apart from *turn aside*, is *to turn away* (Gesenius), as it is translated in the Book of Mormon. ¶ *Prey ... rob, יָבֹז, ... שְׁלָלָם*. Kay astutely observes that some of the same Hebrew roots in the name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, *הָשַׁבַּז שְׁלָלָהּ מָהֵר* (ISAIAH 8:1, *To speed to the spoil, he hasteneth the prey*), are found here and in ISAIAH 10:6, and adds: “Yes;—that was why Asshur was let loose upon them to plunder and to spoil. Asshur was but the rod in the hand of Retributive Justice; meting out the law.”

**3** And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation [which] shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?

*And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help?* The inherent question seems to be, “Since you have not turned to the Lord when you leaned upon man, to whom do you plan to turn to in your day of trouble?” Regarding the *day of visitation*, Alexander notes: “Cocceius understands by the phrase, here and elsewhere, even in Psalm 8:5, the time when God should be incarnate, and literally visit his people as a man. According to the usage of the Old Testament, the *day of visitation* is a time when God manifests his presence specially, whether in mercy or in wrath, but most frequently the latter.” For Israel, that day of affliction and visitation would come from afar, from Assyria<sup>2</sup> itself. ¶ *And where will ye leave your glory?* In Exodus the word *glory* כְּבוֹד was frequently used in reference to theophany, or the visitation of the Lord’s presence, as in אֶת־כְּבוֹד יְהוָה, the *glory of the Lord*

<sup>2</sup> “Assyria, a Greek name formed from Asshur (אַשּׁוּר; Ἀσσοῦρ, Assoúr): The primitive capital of the country ... which was built on the western bank of the Tigris” (ISBE). Furthermore, Asshur was “originally a colony from Babylonia, and was ruled by viceroys from that kingdom. It was a mountainous region laying to the north of Babylonia, extending along the Tigris as far as to the high mountain range of Armenia, the Gordiaean or Carduchian mountains. It was founded in B.C. 1700 under Bel-kap-kapu, and became an independent and a conquering power, and shook off the yoke of its Babylonian masters” (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*).

(Exodus 16:7). Yet here we see the contrast between the Lord’s glory and the honor of man. The latter is fleeting. Israel was about to be humiliated and dishonored.

**4** Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand [is] stretched out still.

*Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain.* Certainly, without the Lord, Israel would be humbled. The Syriac (ܣ) has, “Without me you shall bow down under the prisoners, and you shall fall under the slain.” The idea, in either case, is that some would be taken prisoners; others would taste death. ¶ *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.* This is the fourth and final reminder, in these verses, that the Lord has given a stern warning that better be heeded—each one an allusion to *Rain in Due Season*.

vv. 5–19. With ISAIAH 10:5 a new prophecy begins. The Lord turns Isaiah’s attention from that of Israel to that of Asshur. In these verses the Lord makes it clear that if Assyria punishes Israel, it is because the Lord has permitted her to do so. Therefore, Assyria should not boast nor overstep her boundaries. She could have accomplished nothing on her own. About Assyria, the Lord would say, “Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest” (ISAIAH 37:29).

**5** ¶ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine their indignation.

✓ or, Woe to the Assyrian      ✓ ✓ Asshur  
 ✓ ✓ ✓ though

Once again Isaiah begins with הוֹי, here intended to be a sigh, *Ah!* or a *woe*. Delitzsch says, “The הוֹי (woe) pronounced upon Israel becomes a הוֹי upon Asshur.” The Lord calls Assyria “the rod of mine anger,” and in the Book of Mormon “the staff in their hand is their indignation,” speaking of the staff in Assyrian hands. The LXX (Ϯ) preserves a reading that is closer to that of the Book of Mormon: “Woe to the Assyrians; the rod of my wrath, and anger are in their hands.” The Inspired Version preserves the Masoretic (מ) rendering. Monte S. Nyman observes: “In Mormon 4:5 we read, ‘But,

behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished.”

6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down <sup>v</sup> like the mire of the streets.

<sup>v</sup> lay them a treading

*I will send him against an hypocritical nation.* Who is meant by “him”? It seems to be Assyria, as represented by Sennacherib, the King of Asshur: “... the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory” (ISAIAH 8:7). Israel of that day is the hypocritical nation who had rejected the Lord and had rather be governed by earthly kings rather than their King and their God (1 Samuel 10:19). ¶ *And against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.* Or, as most translators render it, with capitalized letters to represent the Lord who is doing the sending, “And against the people of My wrath &c.” Once again we see the words spoil (שָׁלַל) and prey (בָּזָז) as a reminder of מְהָרָה שָׁלַל חֵשֶׁב בָּזָז. Such repetition<sup>3</sup> gives emphasis to each, and could be translated as to *utterly plunder and plunder* or, as Green has it, “to plunder plunder and spoil spoil.” Seeing the Hebrew (אנ) gives us an idea of the forcefulness of the original. Assyria and King Sennacherib were sent to spoil (plunder) Israel; and to prey upon her (perhaps includes the idea of taking Israel captive); and to tread them down like the mire of the streets (to trample the people down like dirt or mud in the streets). In those days there were probably few streets paved with stones, and most dirt roadways were easily turned to mud with a little rain.

7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but [it-is] in his heart it is to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

*Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.* This transitional verse seems to be saying that Sennacherib is not content with doing what he was permitted to accomplish, but rather, he wanted to do much more. “But he does not so intend, nor does he so plan in his heart” (Berkeley). Frances Siewert uses a

<sup>3</sup> In Hebrew, *repetition* of the same word is used to give it emphasis, as we saw in ISAIAH 6:3, with the word *holy* or קְדוֹשׁ.

translation approach where she attempts to give the meaning of a word in its various colors: “However, this is not his intention [nor is the Assyrian aware that he is doing this at My bidding], neither does his mind so think *and* plan” (AMP). ¶ *But in his heart it is to destroy and cut off nations not a few.* It was the intention of Sennacherib, the king of Asshur, to not only castigate Israel, but other nations such as Egypt, Babylonia, Media and others. Although these things were in his wicked heart, the Lord “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12b).

8 For he saith: [Are] not my princes altogether kings?

Sennacherib, the king of Assyria is quoted here through ISAIAH 10:11, and then again in ISAIAH 10:13–14. The Targum (ܬ) reads: “For he saith, Are not all my rulers altogether as kings considered before me?” The LXX (Ϛ) has, “And if they should say to him, Thou alone art ruler.” King Asshur boasts that his provincial rulers are as kings, and that he is thus a *king of kings*.<sup>4</sup> Gladly, we have a number of just such boastful inscriptions preserved<sup>5</sup> from various monarchs of the time.

9 [Is] not Calno as Carchemish? [is] not Hamath as Arpad? [is] not Samaria as Damascus?

Henderson explains: “The boast of the Assyrian monarch is, that none of these cities, however strongly

<sup>4</sup> Similar titles of supremacy can be found in various societies, such as Shahinshah, ‘the Shah of Shahs’ in Persia (Henderson).

<sup>5</sup> “I scattered, I stormed and conquered their town ... I carried away as booty ..., his horses, broken to the yoke. I slew with the sword .... During this battle I personally captured ... I conquered the great cities ... I overthrew the ... (so that they became) like ruin-hills (left by) the flood. I received tribute from the kings of ... I marched straightaway, unopposed ... through the wide seashore. I fashioned a stela with an image of myself as overlord in order to make my name/fame lasting forever ... I ascended the mountains of the Amanus, I cut there cedar and pine timber ... I killed 2,900 of [their] battle-experienced soldiers; 14,600 I brought away as prisoners of war ... I crossed the Tigris and approached the towns of ... They became afraid of the terror emanating from my position of overlord, as well as the splendor of my fierce weapons, and killed [their own—GB] master with their own weapons. I entered the towns ... and brought my gods/images into his palaces ... I opened (his) treasury, inspected what he had hidden; I carried away as booty his possessions, bringing (them) to my town Asshur ... I departed from the banks of the Euphrates and approached Aleppo (*Hal-man*). They (i.e., the inhabitants of Aleppo) were afraid to fight and seized my feet (in submission). I received silver and gold as their tribute and offered sacrifices before the Adad of Aleppo ... [And so many were killed in a battle that—GB] with their corpses I spanned the Orontes before there was a bridge.” (Shalmaneser III, 858-824 BC, pp. 189-190, in Pritchard). *The Ancient Near East, Volume 1: Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Princeton University Press, 6<sup>th</sup> Paperback printing, 1973, pp. see also pp. 188-210.

fortified, had been able to resist his arms; they had all equally fallen before him.” Rawlinson, speaking of the punishment to come upon Asshur, says, “The menace is not levelled against any one particular king, as Sargon, or Sennacherib; but against the monarchy itself, which from first to last was actuated by the same spirit, and breathed the same tone, of pride, selfishness, and cruelty.” ¶ According to Alexander, Carchemish “was a fortified town on an island on the Euphrates ..., *Calno* was the *Ctesiphon* of the Greeks, on the east bank of the Tigris opposite Selucia ..., *Hamath* was a city of Syria, on the [river] Orontes ..., *Arpad*, another town of Syria, near Hamath.” Commentators offer varying opinions on which peoples were meant and the geographical locations of these places but we get the idea that the Assyrians felt that no city or nation could stand up to them but would rather fall without resistance.

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10 As my hand hath founded the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria;

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*As my hand hath founded the kingdoms of the idols.* For the expression מְנַצֵּחַ in the Biblia Hebraica, the Book of Mormon and the Inspired Version have, ‘hath founded’ rather than the usual translation, ‘hath found.’ Gesenius gives several possible definitions for the root, מְנַצֵּחַ. Interestingly, Gesenius explains that especially when מְנַצֵּחַ is used with יָד, *hand*, the meaning often is that of *acquiring* something, which fits well with the Book of Mormon definition, *hath founded* (established): Gesenius has, “‘My hand has acquired (something),’ i.q. I have obtained, got for myself, Leviticus 25:28; Job 31:25.” Of these, Job 31:25b is of special interest to us, “because mine hand had gotten.” Other words include *gain, discover, secure* (BDB), all of which represent the idea of *founding*. The King of Asshur was such a narcissist, that he probably considered the previous inhabitants of these places hardly civilized peoples, and thus he now considered himself, much like some of the conquerors of old, the founder of these civilizations. Sennacherib thinks that he has defeated other nations much greater, in his mind, than either Jerusalem (capital of Judah), or Samaria (capital of Ephraim); nations where *the idols* אֱלֹהֵי יָדָם, or as Cheyne would say, the *no gods* (see ISAIAH 2:8) were impotent beside those of Asshur. But the Lord is about to show Asshur the worthlessness of all idols. ¶ *And whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria.* A *graven image* is often defined as one that is carved out of wood or hewn out of rock. Several Hebraists suggest that the idea that the idols from the already conquered lands

*excelled* those of Jerusalem and Samaria is contained in one of the meanings of מִן, where the ך *nun* is dropped and the מ *mem* is incorporated into the word. Gesenius explains how מִן is sometimes used as a comparison of both *number* and *power*. So it is that the letter ׀ appears before the name of each of these cities in: מִירוּשָׁלַם וּמִשָּׁמָרֹן. A more literal translation would yield, “excel them of Jerusalem and excel them of Samaria.” Alexander says, “... the great majority of writers, not excepting the most learned of the Rabbins, David Kimhi, ... takes מִן as a particle of comparison.”

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11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and to her idols?

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Rabbi David Kimhi suggests that this verse was pronounced at a later time than ISAIAH 10:10 (in Gill). ISAIAH 10:10 seems to have Sennacherib looking ahead to the conquering of both Jerusalem and Samaria. In ISAIAH 10:11 the conquest of Samaria and removal of the 10 tribes of Israel seems to already have taken place. It is also possible that Isaiah is shown the future bragging of Sennacherib (see ISAIAH 36). Yet another possibility is that Sennacherib is building up his arguments slowly, first separating the children of Israel from the rest of the subjugated nations, and then adding Samaria to the list of the conquered. While it is true that Judah was greatly guilty of idolatry (Jeremiah 2:28, see also 11:10–13; 19:4, 13), these blasphemous words imply that the Holy One of Israel is *just one more idol* standing in the way of the King of Asshur.

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12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, [that], when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

- ✓ visit upon
- ✓ greatness of the heart

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*Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and upon Jerusalem.* The boasting of the Assyrian king is interrupted by a chastening word from the Lord. While Asshur would be permitted to greatly punish Judah and siege Jerusalem, Sennacherib would not accomplish his plans but would be punished herself. It would be Babylon who would subjugate Judah and Jerusalem. Rome and other powers would subsequently trample

Jerusalem anew. Another meaning for *performed* for the Hebrew **כִּבְּצָה** is *finished* (HALOT). A similar use for **כִּבְּצָה** is made in Zechariah: “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you” (Zechariah 4:9). The word often means to *cut off*, or *sever*, or bring to an end, “a metaphor taken from a weaver who cuts off the finished web from the thrum” (Gesenius). This clause in Isaiah, then, seems to say that as soon as the Lord will have accomplished what he wanted in terms of punishing His people, the chastisement would then fall upon Asshur. ¶ *I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.* Likewise in Jeremiah 6:19a we have, “Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts.” The Lord had permitted Assyria this moment of glory, but now would punish her for her prideful arrogance.<sup>6</sup> Pride and ingratitude seem to go together.<sup>7</sup> Here pride has been manifested in both the heart and in the lofty looks of the monarch.

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13 For he saith: By the strength of my hand, ~~I have done [it]~~, and by my wisdom I have done these things; for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds borders of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant [man]; ✓

✓ or, many people

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*For he saith: By the strength of my hand, and by my wisdom I have done these things.* The Assyrian king sings his own praises, and gives merit to his own wisdom and strength. In the history of Israel many nations have been put in a position to bring the children of Jacob in line, but when they have done so cruelly and overstepped their bounds, they have been punished in turn. ¶ *For I am prudent; and I have moved the borders of the people, and have robbed their treasures.* Moffatt has it, “I shifted the boundaries of nations ....” The King of Asshur brags of being a prudent or wise man, who was able to enlarge the borders of Asshur and in the process steal and plunder the treasures of the conquered peoples. Some suggest that this may have reference to the Assyrian practice of moving conquered people from their own territories to other lands (Henry, based on White), in an effort to further prevent the uprising of conquered nations. Alexander explains it, rather, as that of “destroying the distinctions between nations by

<sup>6</sup> For another example, in New Testament times, see Acts 12:20-23.

<sup>7</sup> D&C 59:21.

incorporation in a single empire.” An interesting citation, regarding the moving of borders by Vul-Nirari I, King of Asshur, about 1320 B.C., which is mentioned by a number of exegetes who follow Dr. Weir includes the fact that the king was a “noble prince appointed by heaven [and] established by the gods ... [and thus was a] remover of boundaries and landmarks.”<sup>8</sup> Alexander follows Lowth in emphasizing the plurality of *peoples* as found in the Biblia Hebraica, **עַמִּים**. ¶ *And I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.* The Biblia Hebraica has, rather, *like a valiant*, **כַּאֲבִיר**, permitting one to fill in the ellipsis with the word *man*. **אֲבִיר** means brave, mighty, valiant, powerful. Some (Delitzsch, Moffatt) would fill the ellipsis with the word *bull*, and while indeed the scriptures do have instances where bulls or equines are meant, Gesenius points out that the word *bull*, such as *bulls of Bashan*, is sometimes used as a euphemism for royalty. The allusion to a mixture between a mighty *bull* (hook in the nose) and a *stallion* (bridle in the lips) is used by the Lord as he humiliates Asshur: “Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.”

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14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs [that are] left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

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*And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth.* The Assyrian king bragged that the plundering was as easy as gathering eggs that are left in a nest. The Targum (**Ⲯ**) reads, “And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs *that are* left, I have gathered all the inhabitants of the earth.” ¶ *And there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.* The Targum (**Ⲯ**) continues, “And there was none that moved from thence and flew thither, that opened his mouth and spoke a word.” There were not even the birds or chickens to defend these nests, the analogy continues, because they had flown away by the fear of his approach. This is the end of the discourse of the Assyrian king. The next verse begins a stinging rebuke by the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, George. *Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh during 1873 and 1874*, Scribner, Armstrong & Co.: New York, 1875, pp. 243-244.

15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? [or] shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake [itself] against them that lift it up, ✓ [or] as if the staff should lift up [itself as if it were] no wood! ✓ ✓

- ✓ or, a rod should shake them that lift it up
- ✓ ✓ or, that which is not wood

Using four examples to make his point, the Lord shows that the Assyrian king is no more able to boast of his deeds as the axe, the saw, the rod, and the staff, all of which are tools handled and applied by another person. Without an external force acting upon these, they are useless. The Assyrian king, who so much boasts of his conquering activities, is likewise no more than a tool in the hands of God. The expression *no wood* לֹא עֵץ here signifies that these inanimate objects, most of which had a wooden handle through which a person would move them, were pretending to be beings that acted for themselves rather than simply wood. Lowth explains: “The Hebrews have a peculiar way of joining the negative particle לֹא to a noun, to signify in a strong manner a total negation of the thing expressed by the noun,” Lowth gives several examples: “How hast thou given help, לֹא כֹחַ, to the no-strength? And saved the arm, לֹא עֵז, of the no-power? How hast thou given counsel, לֹא חֲכָמָה, to the no-wisdom?” that is, the man totally deprived of strength, power, and wisdom: Job 26:2,3.” Other examples given by Lowth include Amos 6:13, *in no-thing* לֹא דָבָר; Hosea 11:9, *and no-man* לֹא אִישׁ. Some have well suggested that the allusion goes past the idea of man, אִישׁ, to that of אֱלֹהִים, God: “If Isaiah, as the context shows, by not-wood means men, it is on the supposition that the reader of himself will recognize the true contrast (not-wood but much greater) and the (even phonetic) allusion to לֹא-אֱלֹהִים” (Nägelsbach); “... and so in the present instance by him who is *not wood*, is meant God, who is of a nature altogether different” (Henderson). ¶ In all of this, let there be no confusion that the false doctrine of *predestination* is at play. Barnes correctly explains: “In all these passages, however, there is not the slightest intimation that the Assyrian was *not free*. There is no fate; no compulsion. He regarded himself as a free moral agent; he did what he pleased; he never supposed that he was urged on by any power that violated his own liberty. If he did what he pleased he was free.” In other words, the principle of *moral agency* was always in

effect. It should also be understood we are not tempted by the Lord to act in negative ways, but that rather, the Lord knows us so well that He perceives the very intent and desires of our hearts (Alma 41). And of course, while Satan cannot read our mind, he has a fair idea about our desires. Gladly, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power”<sup>9</sup>

16 Therefore shall the Lord, the LORD of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

*Therefore shall the Lord, the LORD of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness.* The expression *therefore*, לָכֵן, is used to tie together what has been said, to the punishment that would fall on the Assyrians. Here the fat ones represent the Assyrians who have boasted of great strength. Sometime after the Assyrian triumph over Ephraim, her power began to dwindle, while Babylonia gained strength. Some have suggested that this is the same *consumption* (*Rain in Due Season*) mentioned in Leviticus 26:16 and Deuteronomy 28:22, but there the word used is שִׁחָפֶת, while here it is רִזּוֹן. ¶ *And under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.* Some translators take the burning and associate it with the wasting disease, and thus render the second half of this verse: “And beneath his glory kindle a fever burning like a fire” (NJB). While the term *glory* in this verse seems to refer to the king of Asshur or his people, a related term in ISAIAH 10:17, “the light of Israel” speaks of the glory of God, which does the burning. The transition is particularly poetical in the Spanish version: “Por tanto el Señor Jehova de los ejércitos enviará flaqueza sobre sus gordos; y debajo de su gloria encenderá encendimiento, como encendimiento de fuego. Y la luz de Israel será por fuego, y su Santo por llama que abrase y consuma en un día sus cardos y sus espinas” (SB1906). The expression יִקַּד יְקַדּוּ בִּיקוּד אֵשׁ is translated as *kindle a burning like the burning of a fire* (KJV). Note the paronomasia, or play on words, in the Hebrew text (אֵשׁ). Delitzsch writes: “In accordance with Isaiah’s masterly art of painting in tones, the whole passage is so expressed, that we can hear the crackling, and spluttering, and hissing of the fire, as it seizes upon everything within its reach.” We read in the LDS introduction to this verse: “Destruction of Assyria is a type of destruction of the wicked at the second coming.”

<sup>9</sup> Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 181.

17 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and shall devour his thorns and his briers in one day;

*And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame.* This is a parallel statement with the same meaning. The *Light of Israel* and the *Holy One* represent Christ. Henderson writes: “אֹרֶךְ-יְשׁוּעָה, Jehovah is called the *Light of Israel*, because he was the author of their prosperity and happiness; so that the phrase contains a double metaphor.” Alexander adds: “There seems to be an antithesis between light and fire. He who was a light to Israel was a fire to Assyria.” This light will either purify<sup>10</sup> or burn. ¶ *And shall burn and shall devour his thorns and his briers in one day.* The idea of *in one day*, בְּיוֹם אֶחָד, does not mean it took place literally within a 24 hour period, but rather, at one time, all of a sudden, quickly. The thorns and briers represent, here, the Assyrians and very likely the Babylonians who persecute the Lord’s people. In a broader sense, they represent all who do wickedly, and who shall burn at His coming.

18 And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body; ✓ and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.

✓ from the soul, and even to the flesh

*And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul<sup>11</sup> and body.* The allusion in ISAIAH 10:18–19 is to the Assyrian armies. The wicked will lose what they value—the forest,<sup>12</sup> the fruitful field, and man himself—destroyed by fire. Regarding the destruction of the forest, the thought is continued in the most striking manner in ISAIAH 10:19. The Targum (Ⓢ) reads, “And it shall consume the glory of the multitude of his army, and their souls with their bodies, and he shall be broken, and be a fugitive.” The fulfillment may well be both the literal one spelled out in the Hebrew text (אִי), as well as to the allusion of the

armies mentioned in the Targum (Ⓢ). In Isaiah we often read how the mighty men are compared to those in the plant kingdom. It is unclear as whether the thorns and briers stand for the soldiers in the field; and the fruitful field and forest the mighty royalty. Or perhaps it is a general figure for all the inhabitants, humble and proud. Barnes writes, “Perhaps in all this, there may be allusion to the proud boast of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:23), that he would ‘go up the sides of Lebanon, and cut down the cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof, and enter into the forest of Carmel.’”

בְּנֶפֶשׁ וְעַד-בְּשָׂרָה, *soul and body*. Regarding the Hebrew word for *soul*, נֶפֶשׁ, it is a hard one to translate into English as it has so many meanings. One of them has to do with breathing (HALOT) or giving life. This signification is in some ways similar to that of רוּחַ, often translated as *breathe, spirit, and wind*. So we might translate this expression here, perhaps, as *spirit and body*, both of which together compose the soul. At any rate, the expression is meant to convey the *totality* of the matter. ¶ *And they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.* A *standard*, in this case, can be representative of a flag or *ensign*. Such symbols give courage, and act as a reminder, to those who fight for a cause. So it was with Moroni’s *Title of Liberty*. Now, if someone is holding up a flag or an ensign, a standard-bearer, and that person begins to faint, then people will not have the courage, for it is as if they are left without a leader, without a cause.<sup>13</sup> In this verse of Isaiah, the Lord is talking about a standard bearer who is fainting. The representatives of the Assyrian power would buckle visibly. In contrast, our Standard is the Savior, יְהוָה נֹסֵי, “And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it *Jehovahnissi*” (Exodus 17:15). *Jehovahnissi* means, “The LORD is our Ensign.” Indeed, Christ is our *Standard of Truth*. “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 independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be

<sup>10</sup> “Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, *that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost*, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:20, emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> In this place C. Edward Nægelsbach says, “Have not the beast and the plant a soul too?”

<sup>12</sup> “Isaiah (10:19, 33, 34) likens the Assyrian host under Sennacherib (q.v.) to the trees of some huge forest, to be suddenly cut down by an unseen stroke” (Easton’s Bible Dictionary).

<sup>13</sup> A few more thoughts here, about the recent event that shook the world about three weeks ago, September 11, 2001. Terrorists high jacked planes and flew them into the Twin Towers, and the Pentagon, and would have flown one into the Capitol Building or the White House, had it not been for some very brave men and women in that plane who brought the plane down rather than allow the terrorists to carry out their perfidious act. I have felt that had the terrorists brought down either of those two *ensigns* that represent *liberty* and *constitutional government*, they would had brought down the standard bearer [of freedom] in an even more compelling way, because of the symbolism involved.

accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”<sup>14</sup>

19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, <sup>✓</sup> that a child may write them.

✓ number

So few shall be the trees in the forest, that a child will be able to number them. Certainly, Isaiah, is a master in painting mental pictures. We know that little children are seldom able to count to a very high number. Some suggest that the trees represent the armies (Henry) or the nobles that will be left. Barnes writes, “And compared to the whole army, the remnant might bear a striking resemblance to the few decaying trees of a once magnificent forest of cedars.” I can picture in my mind a portion of Yosemite National Park after one of the big fires leaving the sides of the mountains bare except for an occasional scorched tree still standing here and there. In ISAIAH 10:33–34 we return to the subject of the decimation of the Assyrians through the figure of a forest.

vv. 20–23. We are permitted to glimpse into the latter-day glory, when the children of Jacob will no longer lean upon man, but only upon God.

20 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob.* The writings now turn away from the punishment to be inflicted upon Assyria, to the glorious gathering of the remnant of Israel. After the Assyrians and Babylonians would be finished scattering Israel, only a remnant would remain. Exegetes often distinguish between a *historical* remnant (those who are left after a devastation) and an *eschatological* remnant (portions of the historical remnant who at the last day come unto the Lord).<sup>15</sup> The words, *in that day* also clue us to the multiple fulfillment of this prophecy, and allude to the eschatological remnant of Israel as well. *Those who are escaped of the house of Jacob* is a

<sup>14</sup> *History of the Church*, 4:540.

<sup>15</sup> G Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, Heinz-Josef Fabry. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Volume XI, 2000, pp. 562-564.

parallel meaning for *the remnant of Israel*. ¶ *Shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.* Wildberger notes (in ISAIAH 30:12): “It is interesting to see which verbs Isaiah uses when describing the dangerous self-deception: בַּטַּח [see discussion in ISAIAH 30:15] (trust) and נִשְׁעַן עַל (rely upon).

Concerning נִשְׁעַן (see ISAIAH 1–12, p. 437); here it might be used as a parallel term for הַאֲמִין (‘trust’). But Isaiah uses it only when he wants to speak about false trust (see ISAIAH 31:1).” The time would come that men would truly turn to the Lord (eschatological remnant) and lean upon Him. This prophecy was not fulfilled in the time of Isaiah. During the times of Jeremiah the leaning on supposedly strong nations became an even greater problem and was among the uppermost complaints on the part of Jeremiah. The periods where the people leaned on the Lord in Old Testament times as well as New Testament ones were very temporary. Rather, this is a prophecy about the remnant of Israel in the last days. Then the time would come when Israel would finally understand the importance of leaning upon the Lord in truth. We need to lean upon the Lord in confidence.<sup>16</sup> To lean upon the Lord *in truth* (בְּאֵמֶת)

<sup>16</sup> During the first week of March 2001, the weather forecasters began to predict the “most terrible winter storm that the eastern part of the US had felt for half a century.” The storm was predicted for *exactly* the two days that I would be traveling to and returning from Pennsylvania, as I was to fly there on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, give my short talk on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and fly back after my talk on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The day before the storm was to hit, numerous airlines announced the cancellation of flights to the affected area. This was an important trip for me, as we had paid for the airplane ticket out of our own pocket, and would be reimbursed later. Furthermore, with two of our children at BYU, and a third who would soon be accepted, our economic situation was tight. As Linda and I heard the weather reports, talk about closing down airports (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania was specifically mentioned as a trouble spot), we were quite concerned. Certainly I was scared of getting stranded in some airport along the way. I was about to write the organizer an E-mail and strongly urge her to postpone the seminar. Instead, the Spirit constrained me and reminded me that I had not inquired of the Lord. All I wrote the organizer instead was something to the effect that I would see her in a few days. The Spirit reassured me that all would be well with my trip and that I need not worry. While I had a couple of hours of delay, it was my last leg on the first day, and it was due to a mechanical malfunction that had to be cleared up, not bad weather. In fact, the weather problems were hardly seen. While there was some strong turbulence in one of the flights towards PA, there was no added snow there, as the day was truly beautiful. I crossed the Susquehanna river on the way to the hotel. During this particular trip the Lord greatly blessed me. My wife and children prayed diligently for me during this trip. My talk went particularly well and I was able to give out pass along cards where people could call a toll free phone number and have either a Church video or the Book of Mormon sent or delivered to four individuals, including the driver of the airport shuttle from the Hotel, with whom I had a wonderful gospel conversation. In no way do I want to suggest that we ought to ignore the warnings of forecasters, but rather, that above all things we need to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit and lean upon the Lord.

means to do so in a sincere manner, where man's works are consistent with his belief in God. So we see the opposite in "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (ISAIAH 29:13).

## 21 The remnant shall return, **yea**, [even] the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

This is one of the most beautiful promises found in the Old Testament, **שְׂאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל**. That is, a **remnant** shall **return**, or re-turn to God. This remnant of Israel spoken of in ISAIAH 1:9; 7:3 (*Shearjashub*, or more correctly, *Shear-Yashuv*, was the name given to Isaiah's oldest son, **שְׂאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל**); and here in 10:21–22. The children of Jacob would turn or return (**יָשׁוּב**) towards the Lord. The Targum (Ⓒ) has: "... and have turned away from sin, the remnant of the house of Jacob, shall return to worship before the mighty God." While many commentators are specific about such a return to God, Alexander properly states, "The return here spoken of is one that was to take place at various times and in various circumstances" and more particularly to include "... the general conversion of Israel to God [Christ], which is yet to be expected." Alexander does well in so stating, because so many who call themselves Christian feel that the house of Israel has already played whatever role they are to play, and that the gentiles have inherited the kingdom of God. Such have forgotten the glorious promises to Israel (Hosea 1:10b). This process of gathering and return has already commenced with Ephraim, the tribe, and shall not stop until all of the tribes are gathered back in, including Judah, at the time of the Second Coming. We also read this glorious promise to be fulfilled in the latter-days, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days." (Hosea 3:5). The words **mighty God** remind us of the name of that Child that would be born unto Israel and the world in Bethlehem, **אֵל נְבוֹר** (ISAIAH 9:6). In The Book of Mormon we read: "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake much unto them concerning these things; yea, I spake unto them concerning the restoration of the Jews in the latter days. And I did rehearse unto them the words of Isaiah, who spake concerning the restoration of the Jews, or of the house of Israel; and after they were restored they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again" (1 Nephi 15:19–20a).

## 22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, [yet] a remnant of them shall return; the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

✓ in, or, among

✓ ✓ or, in

*For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return.* The word **remnant**, **שְׂאֵר**, or *residue*, means "a few," especially in contrast to the "sand of the sea." Though a small group, they would **turn again** or **return**, **יָשׁוּב**, unto the Lord. ¶ *The consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.* Barnes explains, "*Shall overflow*, **שִׁטַּף**. This word is usually applied to an inundation, when a stream rises above its banks and overflows the adjacent land; ISAIAH 30:28; 66:12; Psalm 78:20. Here it means evidently, that the threatened judgment would spread like an overflowing river through the land, and would accomplish the devastation which God had determined." The words *justice* and *righteousness* are used often to translate the Hebrew **צְדִיקָה** (HALOT, Gesenius). Indeed, the Lord's judgment is righteous, and as such both words fit in well together. It is certainly easier to understand this verse when we include the notion of *destruction* as a consequence of *justice*.<sup>17</sup> NJB well has: "A destruction has been decreed which will make justice overflow." Bagot (in Lowth), translates **כְּלִיּוֹן** as *accomplishment* besides the typical use of the word as *destruction, annihilation* (Gesenius, HALOT). Lowth quotes Bagot, "The accomplishment determined overflows with justice; for it is accomplished, and that which is determined the Lord God of Hosts doeth in the midst of the land." Lowth suggests that this has reference to "the predictions of Moses; the blessing and the curse which he laid before the people" (allusion to *Rain in Due Season*). Lowth himself translates it as: "The consummation decided, overfloweth with strict justice; For a full and decisive decree Shall JEHOVAH the Lord of Hosts accomplish in the midst of the land." Speaking of **כְּלִיּוֹן** and its root **כלה** (see v. 23) Calvin suggests, "**כלה** means to *finish*, and it means also *to consume*." The latter is more appropriate. He calls this diminution

<sup>17</sup> The Syriac (Ⓔ) has, "Their number decreased, cut off, but flooded with righteousness." The Targum (Ⓒ) paraphrase is no less intriguing: "The remnant that have not sinned, and they that have turned away from sin, for them shall be done mighty acts, which shall be mightily displayed and carried out in righteousness." Both of these, however, speak of man's righteousness, rather than the Lord's.

of the people a *consumption*, and one that is *completed*; for he employs exaggerated language, the import of which is, that they were not far from utter extermination, there being very few that were saved.” Alexander and Kay feel that this consumption points back to *Rain in Due Season*, Deuteronomy 28:65, “And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind” (see also Leviticus 26:16 and Deuteronomy 28:22, and notes on ISAIAH 10:16 above). So the question is, who would be punished? In ISAIAH 10:12 it is made clear that Judah and mount Zion would be punished first, before her Assyrian foes would be punished. It seems that ISAIAH 10:22–23 refer to the punishment that would befall Judah.

### 23 For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

The ASV reads: “For a full end, and that determined, will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, make in the midst of all the earth.” Kay suggests, “The dependence of this verse on the preceding is more obvious in the Hebrew; since the words rendered ‘the consumption decreed,’ in ISAIAH 10:22, have a close verbal relation to those represented by ‘a final work and a decisive.’ This expression occurs again in ISAIAH 28:22; ‘For a final (sentence) and a decisive have I heard (proceeding) from the Lord, the Lord of Hosts.’ It is found once more in Daniel 9:27 (compare Daniel 9:26; 11:36); where it seem to apply to the doom of excision, which lighted first on the ten tribes, to persistently impenitent Judah.” ¶ The Targum (Ⓣ), LXX (Ⓞ), and Syriac (Ⓢ), like the JST (or Inspired Version) and Book of Mormon all drop the expression “the midst of” בְּקֶרֶב.<sup>18</sup> Henderson explains that the expression בְּקֶרֶב כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל “in the midst of all Israel” is found in Deuteronomy 11:6, while “in the midst of all the land,” בְּקֶרֶב כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, does not appear anywhere else in the Hebrew Holy Scriptures (Ⓜ). The more common form, Henderson explains,<sup>19</sup> is בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ, “in all the land,” as is found in the Book of Mormon. ¶ The Lord, then, would

<sup>18</sup> “For a completion, and an end, the Lord, the God of hosts is making with all the wicked in the midst of the earth” (Targum, Ⓣ); “He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because the Lord will make a short work in all the world” (LXX, Ⓞ); “Because the Lord God of hosts shall bring destruction and make decrees throughout all the earth” (Syriac, Ⓢ).

<sup>19</sup> Another possibility, Henderson points out, is “in the midst of the land,” בְּקֶרֶב כָּל־הָאָרֶץ which appears in 7 verses, only in the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

bring judgment upon the land. Most interpretations focus on the decisive force of the judgment. We read, “For thus saith the Lord, I will cut my work short in righteousness, for the days come that I will send forth judgment unto victory” (D&C 52:11). Note that both the words *judgment* and *righteousness* are used here. There is an allusion to the fact that the Lord, in mercy, would shorten the days of chaos for the sake of His friends. “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

vv. 24–33. The Lord will now punish Assyria for her boastful pride. She would come all the way to Jerusalem and think she would conquer, but instead only a remnant of the Assyrian warriors would be left. The Holy One of Israel is still Judah’s protector. Man ought not to fear Asshur, Egypt, or any forces that threaten to disturb his peace. A detailed move by the Assyrian forces as they move from city to city, toward Jerusalem, is given.

### 24 ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian; he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.

✓ or, but he shall lift up his staff for

### 25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction.

*Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian.* We have another *therefore*, לָכֵן, to indicate a change in topic, back to the punishment that would fall upon Assyria. Beginning with Isaiah 10:12 the Lord had made it clear that there would be a punishment that would befall Assyria *after* Judah had been punished. This לָכֵן, *therefore*, seems to indicate that now that this has been accomplished, the Lord’s mighty arm would turn towards Asshur. The children of Israel had been invited to put their faith in the Lord and not worry about nor fear the Assyrian boasting. It is an expression of tenderness, when the Lord calls Israel, *my people*. These are words of comfort for those who dwell in Zion. Alexander recognized these extended meanings of the word Zion, close to our own views as LDS, “According to Ibn Ezra and Kimhi, Zion is here put simply for Jerusalem, and the address is here to the population of that city, whether permanent or temporary, during

Sennacherib's invasion. But as Zion was the seat of the true religion, and the people of God are often said to inhabit Zion, not in a local but a spiritual sense, most interpreters understand the object of address to be Israel in general, while some restrict it to the pious and believing Jews, the remnant of Israel, who were now to be consoled and reassured amidst the judgments which were coming on the nation." ¶ *He shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.* The sense here is that as Egypt had been permitted, for a season, to punish Israel, the Lord had placed a limit to this punishment. ¶ *For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction.* Soon, after Judah had been sufficiently punished by Assyria, the wrath of the Lord would turn toward her punisher. There seems to be an ellipsis here such that "and mine anger in their destruction," might be understood to mean, "and mine anger *would now be made manifest* in their [i.e., the Assyrian] destruction." Lowth explains: "Senacherib, soon after his return from his Egyptian expedition, which, I imagine, took him up three years, invested<sup>20</sup> Jerusalem. He is represented by the Prophet as lifting up his rod in his march from Egypt, and threatening the people of God, as Pharaoh and the Egyptians had done when they pursued them to the Red Sea. But God in his turn will lift up his rod over the sea, as he did at that time, in the way, or after the manner, of Egypt: and as Senacherib has imitated the Egyptians in his threats, and came full of rage against them from the same quarter; so God will act over again the same part that he had taken formerly in Egypt, and overthrow their enemies in as signal a manner." This scripture could also have an eschatological fulfillment, in which the "little while" could represent the scattering and subsequent gathering of Israel before the second coming of our Lord and Savior. At any rate, during this mortal period we must endure the vicissitudes of this live "for a little while" but then, if we have been faithful; joy unspeakable.

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26 And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and [as] his rod [was] upon the sea so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

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*And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb.* We read about Midian and the rock of Oreb as the story of Gilead unfolds (Judges 7:1–25, see also Judges 8:3). Just like the people of Midian and their princes or those in high power had suffered, so would

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<sup>20</sup> Enveloped, surrounded, sieged (see *Webster, Oxford*).

the Assyrians and their leaders likewise suffer for their persecution of Israel. Henry has, "And as, *at the rock of Oreb*, one of the princes of Midian, after the battle, was slain, so shall Sennacherib be in the temple of his god Nisroch, after the defeat of his forces, when he thinks the bitterness of death is past." Henderson explains, "As Oreb, one of the two kings of Midian, after escaping the slaughter of his troops, was taken and slain at a rock of the same name, so Sennacherib should escape from the calamity which destroyed his army, but he also should afterwards be killed." Nägelsbach points out the paronomasia between the expression *shall stir up* (עֹרֵר) and *Oreb* (עֹרֵב). ¶ *And as his rod was upon the sea so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.* This reverses the order in a sort of historical chiasmus. In former times the rod was first lifted up by the King of Egypt (or Pharaoh) "after the manner of Egypt" against the children of Israel, and then the rod was lifted "upon the sea" by Moses—through the gift of the Lord—to part the Red Sea and make way for the escape of Israel (Exodus 14:21–31). When Israel was at the border of the Red Sea, it seemed as if she was doomed. It was the Egyptians who ended up drowning, however. The Lord had saved Israel with openly visible miraculous events. This and many other signs and wonders were given to the children of Israel *to the intent they might believe*. When Assyria would go over her banks she would come up to the neck of Judah, at the time of Sennacherib's invasion. Now, "his rod was upon the sea" in that the Lord spared Jerusalem—and saved her from the siege imposed by Sennacherib—in a likewise miraculous manner (ISAIAH 37:36). After that, the rod "was lifted up after the manner of Egypt" upon the King of Asshur. In Egypt, Pharaoh's first born son died from the plague because of his arrogance; here Sennacherib's sons Adrammelech and Sharezer are said to have killed their own father.

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27 And it shall come to pass in that day [that] his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

✓ remove

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As in ISAIAH 9:4, the Targum (ܛ) once again makes mention of the *Messiah*, מְשִׁיחָא.<sup>21</sup> This verse is essentially repeated from before, and speaks of the miraculous salvation brought about by our Lord and

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<sup>21</sup> "And it shall come to pass at that time, that his dominion shall be removed from thee, and his yoke from upon thy neck, and the nations shall be destroyed from before the Anointed One (or, *Messiah*)."

Savior through His atoning sacrifice (for a fuller exposition, see notes on ISAIAH 9:4).

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28 He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages.

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*He is come to Aiath.* By counting the seconds between lightning and the thunder, one can determine if the storm is moving closer or farther away. Here, beginning with Aiath, we see the progression of the invading Assyrian armies coming, for the most part, closer to Jerusalem with each subsequent attack. Kay explains, “The prophet, in vision, beholds the invader moving towards Jerusalem. He sees him not following the ordinary route, the great north road; but striking across country in a line that is traversed by more than one deep ravine; hoping by a forced march to surprise Jerusalem” Aiath (Khirbet<sup>22</sup> Haiyan), is located about 18 kilometers north of Jerusalem, and a little south of Bethel (OBA, also compare some of these cities with Moody, for slightly different measurements—although Moody is much less complete and most of these cities are missing). There are different views of where these locations were found. Consult Delitzsch, Henderson, Alexander, or Nägelsbach (who in turn recommends the well know work by Robinson and Smith, *Bible Researches in Palestine*, Volume II). ¶ *He is passed to Migron.* Migron (Tell<sup>23</sup> Miriam) is a little south east from Aiath, about 12 kilometers north of Jerusalem (OBA). ¶ *At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages.* Michmash (Mukhmas) was found about a kilometer north east of Migron, or about 13 kilometers north of Jerusalem (OBA). Calvin makes an interesting observation about *laying up his baggage*: “It is the custom of warriors not to lead forward any army without providing the means of support, which they *lay up* in a safe and convenient place, that the army may be supplied out of it with all that is needful. Under the word *baggage* or *arms*, he includes not only *darts* and *swords*, but all the supplies and provisions of war. The meaning of the word כָּלִי<sup>24</sup> is extensive, and includes every kind of implements, and thus resembles the word (*vasa*) which denotes *vessels* in the Latin language.” Henry looks at this verse from quite a different perspective, and suggests that “*At Michmash he has laid up his carriages*, as if he had no further occasion for his heavy artillery, so easy was every place he came to reduced; or the store-cities of Judah, which were fortified for that purpose, had now

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<sup>22</sup> *Khirbet* means *ruin* (OBA).

<sup>23</sup> Tell means a mound covering an ancient site (OBA).

<sup>24</sup> כָּלִי

become his magazines<sup>25</sup>.” Nägelsbach also suspects that the baggage was left here in order to move at a faster pace. This might have been a necessary step in order to cross the defiant ravine at Michmash.

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29 They are gone over the passage; they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled.

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*They are gone over the passage.* The Targum (Ⓒ) reads, “They waded, they passed through the Jordan.” There are only a few places where the Jordan can be crossed, however, and thus Calvin says, “I do not know if it could be *crossed* by a *ford* in that quarter.” Lowth proposes: “The strait here mentioned is that of Michmas, a very narrow passage between two sharp hills or rocks (see 1 Samuel 14:4, 5), where a great army might have been opposed with advantage by a very inferior force. The author of the book of Judith might perhaps mean this pass, at least among others: ‘Charging them to keep the passages of the hill country; for by them there was an entrance into Judea, and it was easy to stop them that would come up; because the passage was strait, for two men at the most’ (Judith 4:7). The enemies having passed the straight without opposition, shews that all thoughts of making a stand in the open country were given up, and that their only resource was in the strength of the city.” Nägelsbach describes the passage as “A deep, rough ravine, forty-eight minutes wide, immediately below Michmash. As it runs from East to West, they must cross it obliquely to approach Jerusalem. The ravine is difficult to traverse.” ¶ *They have taken up their lodging at Geba.* Geba (Jeba<sup>26</sup>) is a little over a kilometer south of Migron, or about 10 kilometers north of Jerusalem (OBA). They must have stopped there for the night. ¶ *Ramah is afraid.* Ramah (er-Ram, not to be confused with cities of the same name: *Rentis* also known as Ramathaim-zophim nor *Ramieh* in Galilee) is about 4 miles East of Geba (OBA). “When such dread has seized their hearts,” notes Calvin, “they will freely surrender at the first attack of the enemy, so that the conquerors will be allowed to ravage at their pleasure.” And so it is, that in times of war, when panic sets in, often defenders of cities flee with all their might.<sup>26</sup> Alexander has, “It may imply either that Ramah was not in the direct line of the march, but within sight and

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<sup>25</sup> *Magazine*, магазин, was the word used in Russia for store when I visited in the early 1990s. Webster defines as “a place where goods or supplies are stored: warehouse; a room in which powder and other explosives are kept in a fort or ship.”

<sup>26</sup> In the recent weeks in the current war in Afghanistan against the Taliban, the Northern Alliance reported that cities formerly occupied by their enemies were falling like dominoes, with the Taliban fleeing and abandoning their strongholds (20 November 2001).

hearing of it, or on the contrary, that it was the next place to be reached, and was trembling in apprehension of it.” ¶ *Gibeah of Saul is fled*. Gibeah (Tell el-Ful) is a little over 5 kilometers north of Jerusalem (OBA). Alexander continues, “A still stronger metaphor is used [with Gibeah than what was used with Ramah]. There is here a rapid but marked climax. While Ramah trembles, Gibeah flees.”

**30 Lift up<sup>✓</sup> thy voice, O daughter of Gallim; cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth.**

✓ Cry shrill with

*Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim*. Gallim (Khirbet Ka’kul) is about a kilometer southeast of Gibeah, and about 7 kilometers north of Jerusalem (OBA). Jerusalem was called *daughter of Zion* (ISAIAH 1:8) and so other cities or nations at times called *daughter*, such as *O daughter of Tarshish* (ISAIAH 23:10); *daughter of Zidon* (ISAIAH 23:12); *O virgin daughter of Babylon* and *O daughter of the Chaldeans* (ISAIAH 47:1); and *daughter of Egypt* (Jeremiah 46:11) to name a few. Barnes suggests that *daughter* in such cases is “a term often applied to a beautiful city or town.” ¶ *Cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth*. Anathoth (Ras el-Kharrubeh) is about the same distance to Jerusalem than Gallim, but situated about 2 kilometers south east of Gallim (OBA).

**31 Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee.**

*Madmenah is removed*. Here the pattern seems to change, if OBA is correct about placing its location about 55 kilometers of Jerusalem, in a southeastern direction (OBA, ). I think it likely that *removed* is another word for *flee* as so many of the inhabitants of the other cities and towns had done. Calvin suggests that *remove* is hyperbole for “that city to have been shaken to such a degree, as if it had been *removed* to another place.” Nägelsbach says that Madmenah means dung-heaps (see also Gesenius and HALOT). ¶ *The inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee*. It is unknown where this town was located (OBA).

**32 As yet shall he remain at Nob that day; he shall shake his hand [against] the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.**

Now we are getting very close to Jerusalem indeed. Nob (“city of priests, successor to Shiloh”) was about 2

kilometers northeast of Jerusalem (OBA). Kay explains that Nob was located at the “northern extremity of the Olivet line of hills.” According to the Talmud and Jerome, Nob and Jerusalem were within sight of each other (Alexander). It seems that the invading armies stopped at Nob for part of the day before proceeding toward Jerusalem. Henderson and others explain that the gesture of shaking the hand, in this verse, has reference to doing so in a threatening way. *Daughter of Zion*, בַּת־צִיּוֹן (see ISAIAH 1:8). Kay explains that the Kethiv (כְּתִיב, *that which is written*<sup>27</sup>) is: “The mountain of the house in Zion, the hill-fort of Jerusalem” while the Qeri (קֵרִי, *that which is read*) is “mountain of the daughter of Zion.” Furthermore, Kay suggests that the Kethiv “is supported by the occurrence of *the mountain of the house* in Micah 3:12 (Jeremiah 26:18); and by the Targum, ‘*the mountain of the house of the sanctuary which is in Zion*.’ (Cp. ISAIAH 2:2, 3, ‘*The mountain of the house of the Lord*.’).”

**33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror; and the high ones of stature [shall be] hewn down; and the haughty shall be humbled.**

*Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror*. Kay points out that in Ezekiel 31:5–14 we have the word bough, or branch, in essentially the same manner, as to represent Asshur. So it is that there we read: “exalted above all the trees,” “his boughs were multiplied,” “All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs,” “under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young,” “under his shadow dwelt all great nations,” and so on, even to the point that all other trees were insignificant in comparison and *envied him*. ¶ *And the high ones of stature shall be hewn down; and the haughty shall be humbled*. Inasmuch as Asshur had greatly lifted himself up in pride, the Lord would bring him down.

**34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one. ✓**

✓ or, mightily

And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron. Or, an axe would be taken to the bottoms of the trunks. These verses return to those in Isaiah 10:18–19, the defeat of Asshur. ¶ *And Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one*. לְבָנוֹן, Laban, means *to be white* (AHCL),

<sup>27</sup> For more on the Masorah Parva, see ISAIAH 9:3.

and Lebanon, **לְבָנוֹן**, is the name of the mountain. Henderson explains, “This celebrated mountain, in Hebrew **לְבָנוֹן** *the White Mountain*, Arab ... *the Snow Mountain*, from the perpetual snows which cover its summits, consists of two parallel ridges, stretching in a northerly direction between Phoenicia and Damascus, and intersected by ... the Bekaa, or valley, otherwise known by the name of Coelosyria. The most easterly goes by the name of Anti-Libanus, and is upwards of 9,000 feet high. The Arabs say of it, that it carries winter on its head, spring on its shoulders, harvest in its bosom, while summer sleeps at its feet. Its terraces are covered with gardens and cultivated fields, and present the most enchanting prospects to the eye of the traveller.” The great forests of Lebanon were highly esteemed, and it seems from this verse, would perish; unless the allusion was only to the mighty of Asshur. Perhaps both are intended. ¶ In Ezekiel we read this beautiful verse: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it” (Ezekiel 17:22–24, note the Messianic implications). Just as in the times of Isaiah

Jerusalem almost fell to her enemies, so will it be in the last days. Jerusalem will be surrounded and will have even begun to fall, when the Holy One of Israel will again defend her. “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light” (Zechariah 14:2–7). It is then that Judah will recognize her Savior, “And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (Zechariah 13:6).

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