
Isaiah 18

Some students of the Scriptures are honest enough to say they are lost when it comes to ISAIAH 18. Perhaps no one states it better than Lowth: “This is one of the most obscure prophecies in the whole book of Isaiah. The subject of it, the end and design of it, the people to whom it is addressed, the history to which it belongs, the person who sends the messengers, and the nation to whom the messengers are sent; are all obscure and doubtful.” Delitzsch quotes Böttcher as saying that ISAIAH 18 is “perhaps the most difficult chapter in the whole of the Old Testament” Calvin, being lost says, “We must resort to probable conjectures.” In other words, the world is lost on the subject of this chapter. ¶ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides the much needed clarity. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith stated: “No one understands this chapter, but the Latter-day Saints.” Gratefully, the Brethren have had much to say about it. ¶ One man who wrote shortly before the restoration of the Gospel and who was undoubtedly inspired in regards to ISAIAH 18, was Samuel Horsley, from Great Britain: “[ISAIAH 58] Is a description of some people, or another, destined to be principal instruments in the hand of Providence, in the great work of the re-settlement of the Jews in the Holy Land; a description of that people, by characters by which they will be evidently known, when the time arrives ... the time of the completion of the prophecy was very remote, when it was delivered, and is yet future [these words were written in 1799], being indeed the season of the Second Advent of our Lord.” ¶ This chapter is about the assistance that would come from a faraway nation who would help restore the Jews to the Holy Land. ISAIAH 18 forms a chiasmus, with news about the rescue of Israel at the ends of the chapter, and its scattering in the middle. Some Jewish Rabbis also correctly understand this chapter as being a restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. These words are intimately related to ISAIAH 27, where some of the very same allusions about the restoration are utilized.

vv. 1–7. Samuel Horsley understood this prophecy was about a faraway nation that would help restore the Jews¹ (and obviously the rest of Israel should be included). Modern-day prophets have spoken of ISAIAH 18 with much power, especially Apostle Hyrum Smith and his grandson, President Joseph Fielding Smith. The latter asserted: “This chapter is clearly a reference to the sending forth of the missionaries to the nations of the earth to gather again this people who are scattered and peeled. The ensign has been lifted upon the mountains, and the work of gathering has been going on for over one hundred years.”² Elder Bruce R. McConkie had this to say: “And who shall carry the message to the world? Those to whom it is first revealed and those who first believe its doctrines and obey its ordinances. To them Isaiah’s word is: ‘Go, ye swift messengers,’ go ye elders of Israel, go ye messengers of the kingdom, ‘to a

nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!’ Let the word go forth! And what counsel hath Isaiah for those who hear the word? ‘All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he [Israel’s God] lifteth an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.’ (ISAIAH 18:2–3.) That ensign, the fulness of the everlasting gospel, has now been raised; and that trumpet, the gospel trumpet, is now sounding its clarion call.”³

1 ¶ WOE to the land shadowing with wings, which [is] beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:

WOE to the land shadowing with wings. Not *woe*, but rather, hail, greetings, take heed, or pay attention, from the Hebrew **הוי**. The other chapters to the distant nations begin with the word **בשן**, or *burden*. A complete misunderstanding of this chapter has led not a few to assume that **הוי** is also a burden, prophecy of doom, lament, or warning as it is in ISAIAH 1:4; 5:8 and many others. In this verse **הוי** is rather a *greeting*, or a

¹ Horsley, Samuel (1733–1806). *Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah*. In a Letter to Edward King, Esq. F.R.S. A.S. by Samuel Lord Bishop of Rochester, F.R.S. A.S. Published by London: Printed by J. Nichols for J. Robson, 1799, 108 pages. I now own an electronic copy of this book, based on the 1800 copy made in Philadelphia. In the first 22 pages, Horsley politely sets out the purpose for his treatise, and begins his exposition on p. 22.

² Smith, Joseph Fielding. *The Signs of the Times*. “Restoration of Israel and Judah.” Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1952. Talk delivered October 28, 1942, Barratt Hall, pp. 50–57. The first part of the talk is included here and the second in the notes on ISAIAH 49.

³ McConkie, Bruce R. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1985. p. 536.

call to pay careful heed or attention. President Joseph Fielding Smith⁴ explained: “The chapter shows clearly that no woe was intended, but rather a greeting ... A correct translation would be, ‘Hail to the land in the shape of wings.’” Henderson says: “One of the grand sources of the misinterpretation of this chapter has been the false idea which many have attached to the interjection **הוֹי**. Instead of rendering it *ho!* as a call, summoning attention, which the context requires, most translators have improperly [translated it as a threatening term]. Gesenius gives this verse along with two others (Zechariah 2:10; ISAIAH 55:1) as an example of an *admonition* rather than a lamentation or a woe. Barnes suggests that **הוֹי** “may be a mere interjection or *salutation*, and would be appropriately rendered by ‘Ho!’” (emphasis added). Skinner, likewise says, “The word rendered *Ah*⁵ is here neither a ‘cry of pity’ nor (as usually in Isaiah) of indignation. It is simply a *particle of salutation*.” Horsley has, “**הוֹי אֲרֵץ** (Ho [to the Land]), Sometimes it is an exclamation of surprise; and very often it is simply compellative⁶ of persons at a distance.” Young also has, regarding **הוֹי**, “... it may simply be designed to point out the *great distance* of the people of whom he is about to speak. At any rate, the language is arresting, and prepares the hearer for a description of the nation to be addressed” (emphasis added). And indeed, this is what we are speaking of: a people at a great distance, even in the American continent, that are being prepared to assist the nation referred to in this prophecy. Ironside has: “The word here translated ‘woe’ is the same as that rendered ‘Ho’ in ISAIAH 55:1. It is a call to attention. Jehovah is summoning this great power lying beyond the rivers of Ethiopia to come to the aid of His people [Israel]. Elder Hyrum Smith, the Prophet’s brother, explained that North and South America where the symbols of the wings (HC, 6:322–323). Continuing with Joseph Fielding Smith’s explanation we have: “Now, do you know of any land in the shape of wings? Think of your map. About twenty-five years ago one of the current magazines printed on the cover the American continents in the shape of wings, with the body of the bird between. I have always regretted that I did not preserve this magazine. Does not this hemisphere take the shape of wings; the spread out wings of a bird?” ¶ *In the*

⁴ Smith, Joseph Fielding. *The Signs of the Times*. “Restoration of Israel and Judah.” Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1952. Talk delivered October 28, 1942, Barratt Hall, pp. 50–57. The first part of the talk is included here and the second in the notes on ISAIAH 49.

⁵ Quoting from the Revised Version.

⁶ *Compellative* perhaps means, “to draw attention of,” from the word *compel*.

shape of wings has also been variously translated.⁷ For instance, the Targum (**ܛ**)⁸ has, “... to the land wither they come in ships from a far country.” Or, to quote the translation used by Gill and many others, “... to the land to which they come in ships from a far country, whose sails are stretched out, as an eagle that flies with its wings.” ¶ *Which [is] beyond the rivers of Ethiopia*. The key word here is *beyond* (**עֵבֶר**). Henderson explains that such Hebrew expression “always signifies what lies *beyond* some sea, river &c. which is supposed to be between it and the person speaking ... Hence **עֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן**,⁹ and **עֵבֶר הַנְּהַר**,¹⁰ uniformly signify the *opposite*, i.e., the *east side* of the *Jordan* and the *Euphrates*,¹¹ when used by a writer or speaker living to the west of these rivers. The instances in which it marks the countries to the west of them, either contain some qualifying term, or place the speaker on the east side.” As we shall see, the body of water spoken off here is the Atlantic Ocean, and the land is the American Continent on the other side of it. Calvin says, “These voyages, there is reason to believe, were not made to any place near at hand, but to a distant country.” The Hebrew (**מִן**) uses *beyond Cush*, **כוּשׁ**, that is, beyond the rivers or waters of Cush. Gill says, “It is very difficult to determine what land is here meant.” Henry says: “Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush.” Henry further explains that one idea is that of a nation that attempts to protect the Jews ‘under the shadow of his wings.’” Horsley provides for several possibilities of a land or lands that are beyond Cush, but does not settle upon one of them: “Not more to any part of Europe, or Africa, than to the whole eastern coast of North and South America ... Yet the people of the country are marked, as will appear, by characters, by which they will be distinguished from all other people of the earth, when the time comes.” ¶ In Conference, President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “[America] is the land ‘shadowing

⁷ “Horsley suggests that **צִלְצִל** may well stand for shelter rather than shadows, and that would certainly fit well, also. The land that provides *shelter* or *refuge*. Horsley feels that by the repetition of the root **צִל** that the word takes upon itself a stronger meaning. And certainly it can be said that the American continent has been a *land of shelter* to the oppressed as “the shadow of wings is a very usual image in the prophetic language, for protection afforded by the stronger to the weak. God’s protection to his servants is described by their being safe under the shadow of his wings. And in this passage, the broad shadowing wings may be intended to characterize some great people, who should be famous for the protection they should give to those whom they received into their alliance; and I cannot but think this the most simple and natural exposition of the expression” (Horsley).

⁸ Stenning.

⁹ Beyond the Jordan.

¹⁰ Beyond the river.

¹¹ Once again, for Euphrates **נְהַר**, here, *the river* **הַנְּהַר**.

with wings' spoken of by Isaiah that today is sending ambassadors by the sea to a nation scattered and peeled, which at one time was terrible in the beginning (ISAIAH 18:1–2). Now that nation is being gathered, and once again they shall be in favor with the Lord.”¹² A very interesting comment comes from Ironside, especially in reference to *the land shadowing with wings*: “Many have taken it for granted that the land shadowing with wings is Egypt, because of the winged solar disk which appears upon so many of its monuments and was really a symbol of its power and greatness. But it could be hardly be of Egypt that it lay beyond the rivers of Ethiopia when the Nile descended from Ethiopia, passed through the midst of Egypt, and emptied itself into the Mediterranean Sea in the north. Since the revival of interest in prophetic study during the last century and a half,¹³ some have thought that the symbol refers to the United States, because of the fact that on our Great Seal an eagle is represented with outstretched wings. Other nations have used the eagle upon their ensigns and coats-of-arms, but not with overshadowing wings, as it is officially used in America. Many others have assumed that, inasmuch as the reference is undoubtedly to some great maritime power, it was a prophecy of Great Britain who of old gloried in ruling the waves ... Perhaps, indeed, it might include both, and with them other nations linked together in the last great confederacy.”

2 That sendeth ambassadors by the sea,
 even in vessels of bulrushes upon the
 waters, [saying], Go, ye swift messengers,
 to a nation scattered and peeled, ✓ to a
 people terrible from their beginning
 hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden
 down, ✓ ✓ whose land the rivers have
 spoiled! ✓ ✓ ✓

- ✓ or, outspread and polished
- ✓ ✓ or, that meteth out, and treadeth down
- ✓ ✓ ✓ or, despise

That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters [saying]. Instead of bulrushes, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “The meaning is vessels of *speed*.” In Hebrew the word is **גַּמְאָ**, and we must remember that the word can be pointed more than one way. The Masoretic text (**גַּמְאָ**), pointed centuries after the Holy Scriptures were written,

points the word **גַּמְאָ**, and is translated as *papyrus* (used to make paper and floating objects) because it absorbs water (Gesenius). But there is another word, upon which this is based, and it is **גַּמְאָ**. Gesenius explains that it means “*to absorb, to drink up, to swallow*” as it is “*poetically applied to a horse as it were swallowing the ground in his rapid course.* Job 39:24, **יִנְמָא-אָרָץ** ‘he swallows the ground,’ i.e., he runs away with it.” BDB say, “Figurative of a horse in swift gallop.” May I suggest, then, that the Hebrew text (**גַּמְאָ**) fully supports Joseph Fielding Smith’s translation, *a vessel of speed*—either seagoing or airplane. So fast that it seems to swallowing the *ocean* **יָם** with its magnificent *speed*.

¶ These fast vessels, then, would come from North and South America with ambassadors of truth. Faussett suggests these ambassadors would be sent to Jerusalem.

¶ *Upon the waters*, literally, *upon the face of the waters* **עַל-פְּנֵי-מַיִם**, that is, on the waters’ surface.

¶ *Go, ye swift* [**קָלִיִּם**] *messengers*. The word *saying* is not in the Hebrew text (**גַּמְאָ**), but rather, it is an exhortation or command. The Vulgate (**G**) calls the messengers *swift angels*: “*Ite, angeli veloces ... &c.*” Horsley has, “First, the prophet calls upon these people [referred to in the first verse]; he summons them to attend to him; then he declares, for what immediate purpose they are summoned; viz. to be the carriers of a message.” Horsley goes on to explain that these are very particular people, not just any people, *for God has commissioned them with this mighty message*. One might well add that they were sent with “authority and commission” (Acts 26:12). Henderson correctly says, “The prophet calls upon these to go with all celerity ... to announce the wonderful interposition of Jehovah for the deliverance of the Jews.” Who can these be save those ordained and commissioned and entrusted to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world? All of these thoughts remind us of the words of John: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:6–7). ¶ *To a nation scattered and peeled*. Kay has, “‘To a nation scattered’ Literally, dragged; dragged away in the net of many conqueror (Psalm 28:3).” Calvin has, “By ‘a plundered nation’ he means the Jews who were to be grievously harassed and scattered, so that no part of them escaped injury.” Ibn Ezra has, “The Israelites are meant, that have been dragged from their homes like sheep, until they were flayed from the dragging.” Rosenberg, also leaning on the Rabbis,

¹² President Joseph Fielding Smith. General Conference Reports. 1 April 1966, p. 14.

¹³ H. A. Ironside published his book on Isaiah in 1952, based on a series of lectures he gave just before his death.

explains: “They are instructed to go to Israel, which is heretofore a nation pulled by the gentile nations from all sides, and torn.” Horsley likewise explains that this refers “to a people forcibly torn from their country, and carried into captivity . . . a people plundered of their wealth, and stripped of their power . . . Thus both of these participles may more naturally be applied to the Jews, in their present condition, than to any other nation of any other time.” ¶ Brigham Young uses these Isaianic words “scattered and peeled” as a warning to Latter-day Saints: “You inquire if we shall stay in these [Rocky] mountains. I answer yes, as long as we please to do the will of God our Father in Heaven. If we are pleased to turn away from the holy commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, as ancient Israel did, every man turning to his own way, we shall be scattered and peeled, driven before our enemies and persecuted, until we learn to remember the Lord our God and are willing to walk in his ways (JD 11:274).”¹⁴ ¶ *To a people terrible from their beginning hitherto.* The word *terrible* in the Hebrew (א) is: אַרְאָה, from the root אָרָא.

According to Gesenius, אַרְאָה rather means *to be feared*. Other related words include *terrible*, *dreadful*, *venerable*, and *admirable*, to name a few. It implies, then, that the people of Israel in the beginning were admired and feared. Or, as in the Targum (ܘܘܠܘܘܬܘܢܘܢ), “Unto a people *that was* mighty in times past, *and shall be so* in time to come.” The scriptures speak of Israel, as a chosen people, becoming a *terror*, *fear* and a *dread* upon the surrounding nations: Exodus 15:16; 23:27; Deuteronomy 2:25; 11:25; Moses 7:17; Joshua 2:9; ISAIAH 19:17; Jeremiah 32:21; and Zechariah 12:2–3. All of these promises were—and will continue to be contingent—on obedience and understanding of the very source of this power: “Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (ISAIAH 8:13). For a better understanding, see *Rain in Due Season*. Regarding *terror*, Horsley clarifies, “The word, if I mistake not, is applicable to *whatever* excites admiration, or awe, with or without any mixture of terror. There is no word in the English language which will render it universally. It must be rendered differently in different places, according to its connection. Majestic, sublime, grand, awful, and sometimes terrible . . . And the sense it gives, applies more aptly to the Jews, than to any other people. They have been a people awfully remarkable, not only in the part of the world where they were settled, but, since their dispersion particularly, to the uttermost corners of the earth.” So also Ironside, who has: “They have been ‘terrible,’ or ‘dreadful,’ from their very beginning, for when they went forth as directed by the Lord, the fear

of them fell upon all nations that confronted them and their power seemed unlimited, but when they became disobedient, then disaster followed.” ¶ *A nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!* The Targum (ܘܘܠܘܘܬܘܢܘܢ) renders it, “A people oppressed and robbed, whose land the nations have spoiled.” The Rabbis, explain, regarding this mighty or awesome nation, that אַרְאָה can mean, among other significations, “a line for a line” or progressively punished, rather than castigated all at once (Rosenberg, leaning on Kimhi). Many translators think it should read, “whose land the rivers divide.” Certainly Israel is divided by the Jordan. Horsley has, for *meted out*, the idea of waiting expectantly for the Messiah: “It is probable, that the true reading of the Vulgate may be *ad gentem expectantem, expectactem, et conculcatem*.¹⁵ For we find the word *expectante* thus doubled, in strict conformity to the original, in the repetition of this description of the people intended, in the 7th verse.” Regarding *rivers*, however, most exegetes are of the agreement that some invading force is meant (see ISAIAH 8:7–8). So it is that Horsley has, “‘Rivers,’ i.e., the armies of conquerors, which long since have spoiled the land of the Jews . . . The inundation of rivers is a frequent image in the prophetic stile, for the ravages of armies of foreign invaders.” President Joseph Fielding Smith spoke at length of the deforestation that affected the Holy Land, “Do you know of any land like that? Terrible in the beginning and later meted out and scattered, peeled and a curse upon the land? That land is Palestine . . . Palestine became denuded of its forests. . . We read in the Scriptures of the great cedars of Lebanon, and the trees upon the mountains. These were swept off when the curse came upon the land, and the rains have washed down the soil into the valleys where the rivers have spoiled the land as Isaiah predicted.”¹⁶

3 All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.

The Targum (ܘܘܠܘܘܬܘܢܘܢ) has, “All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers on the earth, when the standard is lifted up on the mountains, ye shall see the standard, and the trumpet (שׁוֹפָרָא)¹⁷ shall sound, ye shall hear of

¹⁴ Young, Brigham. *Discourses of Brigham Young*. Compiled by John A. Widtsoe. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978, p. 483.

¹⁵ Douay translation of Vulgate (V): “To a nation expecting and trodden underfoot.”

¹⁶ Smith, Joseph Fielding. *The Signs of the Times*. “Restoration of Israel and Judah.” Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1952. Talk given October 28, 1942.

¹⁷ Targum (ܘܘܠܘܘܬܘܢܘܢ) in Mikraoth Gedoloth.

redemption.”¹⁸ Alexander also feels the verse has a future tense: “All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, shall see as it were the raising of a standard on the mountains, and shall hear as it were the blowing of a trumpet.” The horn that shall sound is the *shofar*, שׁוֹפָר. Kimhi explains: “So will the Israelites be gathered from all countries at the time of the salvation, and the nations will bring them and gather them as though the standard was raised and the *shofar* sounded.” Barnes has, “These are to be regarded as the words of the prophet summoning all nations to attend to that which was about to occur.” Gill writes in part, “All the men of the world are here called upon, either by the Lord, or rather by the prophet, to be eye and ear witnesses ... the news of it should ring through the earth, and be as plainly heard as when a trumpet is blown.” Horsley correctly has, “We have now heard messengers summoned. We have heard a command given to them, to go swiftly with the message. We have heard the people described to whom the message was to be carried. It might be expected, we should next hear the message given to the messengers in precise terms ... An ensign, or standard, is lifted up on the mountains—a trumpet is blown on the hills—... the trumpet of the Gospel. ... the effect of the summons, in the end, will be universal.” Elder Orson Pratt said, “The Lord, then, was to lift the ensign on a land that was far off from where the Prophet lived; and that ensign, we are told, should be set up on the mountains, and that, too, on a land shadowing with wings.”¹⁹ And also these beautiful words from Elder Orson Pratt: “... we have cause to rejoice that the Lord has lifted up His hand, and set up His standard, and raised His ensign, and called upon us to bear this ensign—this standard, to the nations of the earth, and to proclaim it in the ears of the Gentiles first; what for? That the times of the Gentiles may be fulfilled, that the fulness may come in, and then all Israel are to be saved, as it is written, ‘There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.’ Therefore, we are the people identified with the Gentiles, to whom this standard has been raised; and it has been raised too on the mountains, for the Prophet Isaiah has told us that it should be

¹⁸ Stenning, *salvation*. See also, CAL Targum Lexicon.

¹⁹ Journal of Discourses. April 7, 1872, Elder Orson Pratt. Delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City. (Reported by David W. Evans.) The Latter-Day Kingdom—The Present Fulfillment of Ancient Prophecy, pp. 49–51. Also see, Journal of Discourses. Orson Pratt, June 15, 1873, Delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday afternoon. The rise of Zion in the last days, p. 85. Elder Orson Pratt, on another occasion, added: “Before Judah and the ten tribes of Israel could ever be gathered an ensign has to be lifted up for the nations. Not for Judah and Israel alone, but for the nations afar off, for the Gospel has been restored for the benefit of the Gentiles—every nation, kindred, tongue and people—as well as for the benefit of the dispersed tribes of Israel.” Journal of Discourses. Elder Orson Pratt, February 28, 1875, p. 322.

accomplished on the mountains. We refer you to the 18th chapter of his prophecy. In it is a proclamation to all the world. They are commanded in that day to both see and hear—‘All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.’”²⁰ Horsley adds, “The prophecy announces the display of God’s power and providence, which should be notorious to the whole world; and particularly, I think, alludes to a renewed preaching of the Gospel, with great power and effect in the latter ages.” That is, the good news or gospel of Jesus Christ, and the restoration of His Church upon the earth.

4 For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place ✓ like a clear heat upon herbs, ✓ ✓ [and] like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

✓ or, regard my set dwelling

✓ ✓ or, after rain

For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs. The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “For thus hath the Lord said unto me: I will give rest to my people²¹, yea, I will make them to rest, and I will delight in my holy habitation to do them good.” It is nice that the Targum Jonathan (Ⓢ) is so specific about the fact that these verses are about Israel. It is an allusion to the fact that Israel and Judah were about to be harvested and her branches scattered to every corner of the globe and her fruit destroyed. The Lord was about to begin the pruning process: “And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies” (2 Kings 21:14). All of this has reference to the suffering that the house of Israel would be subjected to before her glorious redemption. At this place Horsley well observes, “This verse seems to describe a long suspension of the visible interpositions of Providence in the affairs of this world, and in favour of this people, under the image of that stillness and stagnation of the atmosphere, which takes place in the extreme heats of the latter end of summer ... The sentiment is that, notwithstanding the long cessation of extraordinary manifestations of God’s power, his providence is not asleep—he is all the while regarding the conduct, and the fortunes of his people; he is not

²⁰ Journal of Discourses, Orson Pratt, The Ancient Prophecies. A Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, January 7, 1855. Volume 2, p. 296.

²¹ לְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל, *to my people Israel* (CAL and Stenning).

forgetful of his promises to his chosen people, but, though often by a silent and secret operation, is at all times directing everything to their ultimate prosperity, and to the universal establishment of the true religion.”

¶ *[And] like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.*

Cowles has, “Seems tacitly to imply that the Lord was even willing that his permissive agencies should for the time favor the progress of the Assyrian’s plans, even as the warm sun and the dew-clouds push forward the ripening of the grapes.” To the Assyrians we may well add the Babylonians and all those who would come after, through the centuries of the dispersion of the house of Israel.

5 For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away [and] cut down the branches.

For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Before the time of harvest cometh the tree is ready to bud, and the unripe grape (i.e., *the very first appearance of the grape, before it blossoms*) bursts forth into a flower.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Before the reaping time, when the flower has been completely formed, and the unripe grape has put forth its flower and blossomed.” The Douay, from the Vulgate (Ⓛ), has, “For before the harvest it was all flourishing, and it shall bud without perfect ripeness.” Once again, the idea here is that all the signs of an impending harvest are beginning to show. The unripe grape (and that is why it may be called sour, with the low sugar or degrees Brix in the unripe grape) is beginning to ripen in the branches of the vine. Judah and Israel are almost ready to be harvested and scattered. Calvin has the people ripening in iniquity such that God “permits them to grow to a vast height, to swell and blossom, that they may afterwards fall by their own weight.” Kay writes, “The recurrence in ISAIAH 18:5 of the words ‘bud’ and ‘harvest,’ which have just been used in ISAIAH 17:11, where Israel was spoken of, is very noticeable.” ¶ *He shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away [and] cut down the branches.* The Syriac (Ⓢ) has, “He shall both cut off the lean shoots with pruning hooks and take away and shake off the branches.” Horsley explains, “These words express, not simply sprigs and branches, but ‘useless shoots,’ ‘luxuriant branches,’ which bear no fruit, and weaken the plant; and properly such shoots and branches of a vine.” Judah and Israel are now ripened in iniquity and the pruning has begun in earnest, and the branches have been scattered throughout the world, as threatened in *Rain in*

Due Season. Note especially the language about *cutting* and *casting* in the Lord’s acceptance of the temple built by Solomon. “*But* if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments *and* my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight” (1 Kings 9:6–7a). So we have the reason for the impending scattering of Israel, and the scattering to the four corners of the world, and a long, long time being represented in the scattered condition, even all of summer and all of winter (representing the millennia involved since the scattering began, ISAIAH 18:6) to the day when the restoration of the gospel and subsequent gathering would begin.

6 They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth. The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And he shall leave them together to the birds of the sky, and to the wild beasts of the earth.” Here we have an allusion to the horrible sufferings that the house of Israel would be subjected to, trampled by the “beasts of the earth” or the wicked who pretend to love Christ yet hate His people Israel. ¶ *And the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “All the fowls of the heavens shall dwell upon them in the summer, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.” The LXX (Ⓞ) has, “And the fowls of the sky shall be gathered upon them, and all the beasts of the land shall come upon him.” The Syriac (Ⓢ), “And the birds shall gather upon them, and all the wild beasts of the earth, shall devour them.” The suffering of the house of Israel would last a long time, with the summer and winter being an expression of time that would seem to never end. Yet after, the gathering would begin through missionaries—or *ambassadors of truth.*

7 In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the

place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.

✓ or, outspread and polished

In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled. Gill explains: “This explains what the present is, that shall be brought to the Lord; it is a people.” Ibn Ezra writes: “Israel, who has been dragged and flayed during the period of his captivity, will now be brought, to the honour of God, to His abode on Mount Zion.” Rabbi Rosenberg correctly explains: “The nations of the world will bring the Jewish people to God as a gift,” and then quotes ISAIAH 66:20: “And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.” Kimhi believes that this chapter has reference to eschatological times, or the times of the Messiah (in Rosenberg). Ironside has, “God’s heart is ever toward Israel and while He has permitted them to pass through such terrible sufferings throughout the long centuries of their dispersion ... [yet] the day will surely come when, their transgressions forgiven and their hearts renewed, they will be restored to Himself and planted again in their own land—that land which so often the rivers have spoiled! This refers to a well-known symbol of the prophetic Scriptures [i.e., that of the invading armies].” Calvin suggests that the people who would be *brought* would make a sacrifice of themselves by becoming “wholly dedicated to God.” Horsley explains: “They [the Jews] shall be converted to the acknowledgment of the truth, and they shall be brought to the place of the name of Jehovah, to mount Zion: they shall be settled, in peace and prosperity, in the land of their original inheritance. This then is the sum of this prophecy, and the substance of the message, sent to the people dragged about and plucked ... The Jews, converted to the faith of Christ, will be unexpectedly restored to their ancient possessions. The swift messengers will certainly have a considerable share, as instruments in the hand of God, in the restoration of the chosen people. Otherwise, to what purpose are they called upon to receive their commission from the prophet? ... This character seems to describe some Christian country, where the prophecies relating to the latter ages will meet with particular attention; where the literal sense of those, which promise the restoration of the Jewish people, will be strenuously upheld; and where there will be so successfully expounded, as to be the principal means, by God’s blessing, of removing the veil from the hearts of the Israelites ... The full importance of this circumstance will not appear, till the completion of the

prophecy shall discover it.” These last words remind us of the words of Nephi concerning Isaiah: “Nevertheless, in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass” (2 Nephi 25:7b). Horsley brings our attention to an interesting scripture, “From beyond the rivers of Cush my suppliants, *even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering*” (Zephaniah 3:10, emphasis added). And who is the daughter of my dispersed? Or, who, among the dispersed, would help gather the dispersed? Ephraim and Manasseh, the horns of the bullock (Deuteronomy 33:17), would have the principal responsibility in this gathering. These are the peoples dispersed to the American continent who are themselves descendants of Israel. ¶ *And from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto.* The Targum (Ⓣ), “To a people that was mighty in times past, and shall be so in time to come.” ¶ *A nation meted out and trodden under foot.* The Vulgate (Ⓟ), as already mentioned by Horsley in ISAIAH 18:2, has: “*A gente expectante, expectante et conculcata,*” or in the Douay, “From a nation expecting, expecting, and trodden under foot.” Gill writes, “These descriptive characters, with those in the preceding clauses, are retained, to show that the same people are here meant as in ISAIAH 18:2.” At one time Israel was set up as the light of the world. Today, members of the Lord’s Church must be bold in declaring in great love the restoration of the gospel: “For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men; And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men” (D&C 103: 9–10). ¶ *Whose land the rivers have spoiled.* The Targum (Ⓣ), “Whose land the nations spoiled.” Isaiah speaks as Israel as the land that is spoiled. “But this is a people robbed and spoiled” (ISAIAH 42:22). And why did this happen? “Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law” (ISAIAH 42:24). ¶ *To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.* The Targum (Ⓣ) clarifies this passage with, “Unto the place which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts, whose Shekinah (שְׁכִינָה) is in the mountain of Zion.” And so it is, these missionaries and ambassadors of truth will bring back Israel unto the Lord of Hosts—to the House of the Lord. The Mount Zion, הַר־צִיּוֹן, or in other words, the Holy Temple (ISAIAH 66:20).

25 March 2004

