
Isaiah 44

The subject from Isaiah 43 is greatly carried over to Isaiah 44, with a number of the verses having companion verses there. The Lord's tender mercies and love for Israel are manifested as He reiterates the glorious promises made in *Rain in Due Season*, wherein the children of Israel will be gathered into His fold and have the Spirit poured upon them: "That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee . . . And the LORD thy God will circumscribe thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul . . . And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day" (Deuteronomy 30:3, 6a, 8, *Rain in Due Season*). The Prophet Jeremiah prayed that Israel would someday be converted: "Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned" (Lamentations 5:21a). In this glorious chapter the Lord announces that day when Israel would be converted and forgiven of her sins. The atonement is pronounced as well as an invitation to come unto Christ and take full advantage of His expiatory sacrifice. William W. Phelps (adapted from Joseph Swain), penned our Hymn No. 6, Redeemer of Israel. "1. Redeemer of Israel, / Our only delight, / On whom for a blessing we call, / Our shadow by day / And our pillar by night, / Our King, our / Deliv'rer, our all! / 2. We know he is coming / To gather his sheep / And lead them to Zion in love, / For why in the valley / Of death should they weep / Or in the lone wilderness rove? / 3. How long we have wandered / As strangers in sin / And cried in the desert for thee! / Our foes have rejoiced / When our sorrows they've seen, / But Israel will shortly be free. / 4. As children of Zion, / Good tidings for us. / The tokens already appear. / Fear not, and be just, / For the kingdom is ours. / The hour of redemption is near." The theme of this chapter includes so many of the thoughts above, including redemption, Israel, desert, King, deliverer, tokens, our only delight, clouds, gathering sheep, Zion, strangers in sin, crying in prayer. The absurdity of leaning on idols is powerfully examined. Anything that retards our efforts to keep the commandments is a form of idolatry. Because we are putting that thing before the Lord; we are giving it more importance. President Brigham Young challenged: ". . . you dare not quite give up all your hearts to God, and become sanctified throughout, and be led by the Holy Ghost from morning until evening, and from one year's end to another . . . If I were to ask you individually, if you wished to be sanctified throughout, and become as pure and holy as you possibly could live, every person would say yes; yet if the Lord Almighty should give a revelation instructing you to be given wholly up to Him, and to His cause, you would shrink, saying, 'I am afraid he will take away some of my darlings.' (*Journal of Discourses*, 2:134)." (*LDS Old Testament Student Manual*, Enrichment Section F: Idolatry: Ancient and Modern). In the *Miracle of Forgiveness*, President Spencer W. Kimball speaks of modern-day idolatry and gives many examples from the area of possessions and riches; acquisition of knowledge at the expense of Church service; and other examples (see pp. 40–42). The antidote to idolatry is given in Jeremiah (9:22-23). Delitzsch says: "All that belongs to idolatry is שִׁקְרָה a fabrication and a lie." This is true where images are involved as well as when our heart is not quite right with God. Cyrus is named by name over a hundred and fifty years before, to the joy of believers and the consternation of those who do not—and who have made every effort to suggest that this portion of Isaiah was written by a different hand, at a much later date, because such suggest that there is no such thing as revelation; that prophets may not be shown the future. It all boils down to a question of faith and of putting limits on the Lord and what He will reveal to man: "The question is whether under the influence of the Spirit of Prophecy, a prophet might not be naturally transported into the future to describe coming events to a future generation. Critics who rule out the supernatural and admit at most a premonition or 'brilliant intuition' (cf. Robert Pfeiffer, *Introduction*, p. 423) are compelled to deny the possibility of such an occurrence as supernatural projection into the future and, accordingly, must refuse Isaiah's authorship of the second part of the book" (Unger Bible Dictionary).

vv. 1-8. Keith says of the first five verses: "The first verses are fully explained only by referring them to the *final conversion of Israel*" (emphasis added). There is a witness-redemption motif in these verses and chapters. Baltzer has: "The prophet Jeremiah 'redeems' a field during the siege of Jerusalem. His uncle's son sums up the nature of the legal act in a single sentence: 'Buy my

field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession by inheritance and the "redemption" (הַיְחָלְוֹתָי) is yours.' But in what detail the act is described, with the drawing up of the double document, the weighing up of the price—all of it in the presence of witnesses!" Baltzer then goes on to point out a similar situation in the case of Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 4:1-22). "As far as the text is concerned," Baltzer continues,

“this means that Yahweh took advantage of the opportunity to buy back, or redeem.” Israel, then, has been chosen by the Lord. The spirit, symbolized by water, is poured upon the converts. They, in turn, manifest their love for the Lord. The Lord is the Redeemer of Israel. Only those who receive revelation from God have the prophetic gift. There is no need to fear, if we trust in the Lord.

1 ¶ YET now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “or, I delight in” as another translation of *chosen*. The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “But now, hear, Jacob my servant, and thou Israel, whom I have chosen.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) adds *to me* after *hear*. The Lord uses the command, “Hear, O Israel” (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל), or “Hear, O Jacob” (שְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב), to announce that He is about to say something very important. Surely, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “It is a great thing to inquire at the hands of God, or to come into His presence.” For that is precisely what happens, we come into His presence, as we pray and as we receive answers to our prayers. The Lord here is speaking. The prophet Isaiah speaks (or writes) on His behalf through the sacred principle of Divine Investiture. Who has the Lord chosen? Who is He speaking to? ¶ *My servant Israel*. Calvin suggests: “Having a little before [censured the children of Israel], because both the princes and the people had polluted everything by their crimes, he now mitigates that severity of punishment, and comforts the people. In this passage I consider the particle (וְ)¹ to mean *But* or *Yet*, as in many other passages. As if he had said, ‘Though grievous afflictions are about to overtake thee, yet now hear what I will do for thy sake.’ The verse must be viewed in connection with the former argument, because the Lord declares that he will never permit his people to perish altogether, though they be grievously afflicted.” Most of the Gentile exegetes tell us that these verses of consolation *cannot* be addressed to Israel, but rather, to those who will take Israel’s place. Yet we know that the words of consolation spoken by the Lord are precisely spoken to the people of Israel. It is the literal descendants of Israel who will seek the Lord in the last days, along with some few who will be grafted in. Latter-day prophets have told us that the great majority of those who enter the waters of baptism are literal descendants of Israel, beginning with Ephraim. Little by little we are seeing how the rest of the tribes are having their hearts touched. God has never turned His back on Israel nor will He. ¶ *Whom I have chosen*.

¹ Often וְ is translated as *and*, but can also mean *but*, *yet*, and so on.

A number of exegetes tend to look at *election* not as *foreordination* but rather as *predestination*. Because the word *predestination* has so many shades of meaning, I will describe the satanic imitation of the concept of foreordination: First, that men were chosen before the foundation of the earth *to either be damned or to be saved*; and as a result, second, that it *does not matter what man does* during mortality because, after all, God has already decided to either damn or save that individual. This pernicious doctrine basically suggests that people are *not* free to choose between right and wrong. That it is all futile. It proposes that there is no moral agency with the attendant consequences. It negates the very purpose of mankind’s coming upon the earth: to gain a body *and* to be tested. The Prophet Joseph Smith, touching on the very subject of Israel that is before us said: “The election of the promised seed still continues, and in the last day, they shall have the Priesthood restored unto them, and they shall be the ‘saviors on Mount Zion,’ the ministers of our God . . . The whole of [the 9th chapter of Romans] had reference to the Priesthood and the house of Israel; and *unconditional election of individuals to eternal life was not taught by the Apostles*. God did elect or predestinate, that all those who would be saved, should be saved in Christ Jesus, and through obedience to the Gospel; but *He passes over no man’s sins*, but visits them with correction, and if His children will not repent of their sins He will discard them” (DHC 4:358-360, emphasis added).² As members of the Church today, we normally speak of *foreordination* to distinguish the correct concept from the incorrect one. Sadly, the word *grace* is so often associated, among some of our fellow Christians, with this false concept of predestination. One preacher even chastised his congregation because they spoke of *degrees of sin*—making one sin more nefarious than another. This preacher went on to explain that through grace none of our sins mattered; and that all sins were equal. No wonder as Latter-day Saints we are sometimes afraid to even use the word *grace*. Sister Sheri Dew gave a powerful talk on grace. She quotes a friend as saying: “I almost feel disloyal to the restored gospel even talking about grace. I mean, do we believe in grace?” Sister Dew discloses several like comments and then shares this powerful testimony: “The disturbing irony in all of these comments is that THE CENTRAL, most compelling, most life-changing message of all time is that Jesus Christ already triumphed over sin, death, hell, and every kind of misery. Surely there is *nothing* our Father is more eager for us to understand than the breathtaking scope of the Atonement of His Son and the power the Atonement

² Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

makes available to us.”³ We shall speak more about grace as we discuss ISAIAH 44:22. To conclude, I quote Simeon: “It is of great importance to notice the tender and affectionate manner in which God addresses his people; because it is from thence that we collect the most just conceptions of his condescension and grace, and derive the richest encouragement to wait upon him.” Do we feel called and chosen by the Lord?

2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, [which] will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, [which] will help thee. The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Thus saith the Lord, the God who made thee, and who formed thee from the womb, still thou shalt be helped.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓛ) has, “Thus saith the Lord that made and formed thee, thy helper from the womb.” ¶ *Formed from the womb.* As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we believe that we are the literal spirit children of loving heavenly parents. We are known of God, the Eternal Father, “that made thee from before the womb,” which is what the expression (יִצְרָךְ מִבֶּטֶן) means, with the ellipses. The idea is more explicitly communicated in Jeremiah 1:5a: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee,” בֶּטֶן אֲצֻרְךָ בִּבְטֶן יְרֵמְיָהּ. We here find out, that each one of us was known of the Father from the pre-existence. In the Book of Abraham we learn that like Jeremiah, there were others who were chosen before birth: “Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abraham 3:21-22). We further learn from the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was . . . I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.”⁴ With this information before us it becomes clear that Israel was also so called

and chosen in the most beautiful sense of the word. Once we return to the presence of God, after we die, we will know who we were before we were born. Will we be filled with joy or regret? I am so grateful for latter-day prophets who make these matters perfectly clear to us. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “Every soul coming into this world came here with the promise that through obedience he would receive the blessings of salvation. No person was foreordained or appointed to sin or to perform a mission of evil.”⁵ ¶ *Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has in some instances יְשׁוּרוּן, “Jesurun,” (or, *Ishurun*) and others יִשְׂרָאֵל, “Israel” while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has יִשְׂרָוּן, Jesurun (or, *Ishurun*). The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Fear not, thou my servant Jacob, and thou, beloved Israel, whom I have chosen.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓛ) has, “Fear not, O my servant Jacob, and thou most righteous whom I have chosen.” Regarding יְשׁוּרוּן, Cowles explains: “‘Jesurun,’ another name for Jacob, occurs elsewhere only in Deuteronomy 32:15, and 33:5, 26. Etymologically it means the *upright one*; but whether it be a diminutive expressing the additional idea of endearment (my dear little one), is yet in dispute⁶ among learned critics.” Jenour also explains that *Jesurun* means, “the upright, or holy one . . . Thus the Jewish church is called *Jeshurun*: Deuteronomy 32:15. And St. Paul addresses the whole church at Corinth as ‘Sanctified in Christ Jesus.’” Wordsworth suggests: “The use of this name carries the thoughts back to the patriarchal times of Israel’s zeal for God.” So also Lowth, who has: “. . . the Jewish commentators agree; namely, that it is derived from יֵשֶׁר, and signifies *upright*.” This is probably a good time to say a little more about יַעֲקֹב. Many exegetes suggest that *Jacob* was not a good person in his youth. It has been proposed that his name is associated with עֵקֶב, *heel*, or *taking hold of the heel*. To this I have no qualms with. But I have always resented the insinuations that Jacob’s true name was also linked with *deceit*, such as the word *supplanter* and others associated with this great prophet

⁵ Smith, Joseph Fielding, *Doctrines of Salvation*.

⁶ Nägelsbach in his “Textual and Grammatical” section does an excellent job in not only admitting the possibility of the diminutive in יְשׁוּרוּן, but also of exploring the possibility that the word Zion has a similar root, and also means “firmly set up, firmly founded” and even explains that “Mt. Zion [is] called Zehjun in Syriac and Arabic.” I highly recommend the whole section of Nägelsbach’s thorough and logical discussion on יְשׁוּרוּן (see pages 473-474). Plus, to his credit, Nägelsbach does not fall into the silliness of making a false contrast between יִשְׂרָאֵל and יְשׁוּרוּן, using the negative tack of so many exegetes.

³ Dew, Sheri. “Sweet Above All That Is Sweet” Address delivered on Thursday, 1 May 2014 at the BYU Women’s Conference.

⁴ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365.

who undoubtedly was among *the great and noble* in the pre-existence. Of course there have been great prophets who have repented of their immoral youthful ways as was Alma the younger. But I have always felt that Jacob is unfairly judged. In one of my lexicons I find that **קִבַּעַ** also means “‘may (God) protect’ or ‘(God) protected’” (HAL). The voice against Jacob is a voice of calumny—the same voice we so often hear against Abraham in the matter of Sarai—by those who do not see the hand of God in it. Lest I would write something opposite to what the Brethren have said, I just looked up information on this topic and feel to rejoice to find, from Elder Erastus Snow: “Now we will pass by the places in the Bible which speak of this birthright until we come to Isaac, the son of Abraham, and to Jacob, the son of Isaac, who bought the birthright of his brother Esau. From the story that is told of Rebekah helping her son Jacob to get the first blessing from his father Isaac, on purpose to secure the birthright from his brother Esau, many would be inclined to think that deceit, dishonesty and unrighteous means were employed to secure it, and they perhaps wonder why it should be so. This was really not the case; it is only made to appear so in the eyes of those who do not understand the dealings of God with man, and the workings of the Holy Spirit to bring about His purposes. There was neither unrighteousness in Rebekah nor in Jacob in this matter; but on the contrary, there was the wisdom of the Almighty, showing forth his providences in guiding them in such a manner as to bring about his purposes, in influencing Esau to transfer his birthright to Jacob, that He might ratify and confirm it upon the head of Jacob; knowing as He did that Jacob and his seed were, and would be, more deserving of the birthright, and would magnify it in its true spirit. While Esau did not sense nor appreciate his condition and birthright; he did not respect it as he should have done, neither did he hearken to the counsels of his father and mother. On the contrary, he went his own way with a stubborn will, and followed his own passions and inclinations and took to wife one of the daughters of the Canaanites whom the Lord had not blessed; and he therefore rendered himself unacceptable to God and to his father and mother. He gave himself to wild pursuits—to hunting, and to following the ways of the Canaanites, and displeased the Lord and his parents, and was not worthy of this right of seniority. The Lord therefore saw fit to take it from him, and the mother was moved upon to help the younger son to bring about the purpose of the Lord, in securing to himself the blessing through the legitimate channel of the Priesthood. And as you know, his father was induced to bless him and confirm this blessing upon him.”⁷ None of what I have said here means that

⁷ Snow, Elder Erastus. Talk found under “The Order and Duties of

God did not have an important role for Esau and his descendants to play. God is truly not a respecter of persons and loves all of His children.

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

The Targum (**Ⓣ**) has, “For as waters are discharged upon the thirsty land, and are set flowing upon the dry land, so will I give my Holy Spirit unto thy children, and my blessing unto thy children’s children.” The LXX (**Ⓛ**) reads, “For I will give water in their thirst to them who are travelling in a desert. I will put my spirit on thy seed, and my blessings on thy children.” The Douay-Rheims (**Ⓣ**) has, “For I will pour out waters upon the thirsty ground, and streams upon the dry land: I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy stock.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (**Ⓞ**) has *thus I will pour*, **כִּן אֶצְקֶה**, while the Masoretic text (**Ⓜ**) has *I will pour*, **אֶצְקֶה**. Westermann suggests: “The ‘thirsty’ and ‘dry’ are therefore Israel in her present condition.” Ibn Ezra writes: “As I pour water over the place that is thirsty, so will I pour out the spirit of my holiness, or of my salvation, etc.” Nägelsbach says: “[Israel is called to] proclaim the praise of Jehovah (ISAIAH 43:21). It is enabled to do so by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Prophet here returns to the sphere of thought of ISAIAH 43:20.” Israel is now being gathered again from every continent and every clime. The Elders of Israel and the Sister Missionaries are gathering them, with the help of every member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Most are direct descendants of Israel, *seeds* of Israel, as we have said often. It is important to note, that Israel is *not being replaced* by the Gentiles. The great majority of the converts in the early Church came from the gentile nations, but were mostly literal descendants of Israel. Our patriarchal blessings indicate our lineage to Israel, or on very rare occasion, adoption. There will yet be many gathered in from every tribe beside Ephraim and Manasseh, to include those of the tribe of Judah. The first shall be last and the last shall be first, but *Judah will come* and they are greatly beloved of the Lord. In the end, however, God is not a respecter of persons, and all who “fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish” (2 Nephi 10:16b). We also read that: “... and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake

the Priesthood, Etc.” Discourse by President John Taylor and Elder Erastus Snow, delivered at Paris, Bear Lake, Sunday Morning, August 8, 1880. Reported By: Geo. F. Gibbs. *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 21, No. 40, pp. 358–372. This section of the talk was given by Elder Erastus Snow, in the presence of President Taylor.

of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33). Elder Bruce R. McConkie rejoiced: “Speaking of the latter-day gathering of Israel, Jehovah’s promise is: ‘I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water’ (Isaiah 41:18). That this has reference to more than climatic changes which bring forth literal streams is shown by the latter-day revelation which speaks of the barren deserts bringing forth ‘pools of living water’ (D&C 133:29), meaning among other things that when the desert blossoms as a rose in the literal sense of the word, it will be but a similitude of the living waters then being poured out upon the Lord’s people. Another great Messianic utterance says: ‘I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring’ (Isaiah 44:3). Similar truths are found in Isaiah 41:10-20; 48:20-21; and 49:9-12. Isaiah 12 tells of a millennial day when men shall ‘draw water out of the wells of salvation’; and Zechariah, speaking of that same day of peace and righteousness, tells how ‘living waters shall go out from Jerusalem’ (Zechariah 14:8).”⁸

¶ Simon states: “‘I will pour (not merely sprinkle, but pour) water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;’ even such abundance, as shall be sure to reach the roots, and produce, not a transient change, like that of grass upon the house-top, but a radical and permanent change, both of heart and life.” Rawlinson says: “We may note here that the ‘water’ is only poured on him who is athirst for it.” Rabbi Rosenberg informs us that both “*Redak* and *Abarbanel* equate this prophecy with that of Joel (as do Ironside, Cowles, and others).” In Joel 2:28-29 we see: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” Cowles remarks: “The pouring forth of water, in showers or otherwise, is a frequent and pertinent figure for the bestowment of copious blessings. Thus Malachi 3:10; ‘I will pour you out a blessing till there is not enough;’ and Ezekiel 34: 26; ‘I will make the places round about my hill a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessings.’ It is an interesting fact that the Lord uses precisely this figure in prophecy to represent the copious effusions of his Spirit in the gospel age and especially in its latter days. That this passage refers to

the Spirit is shown by the parallelism: ‘I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed; my blessing upon thine offspring.’ . . . The words of Christ (as in John 7, etc.) seem to refer to this passage. The prophet says, ‘I will pour water on him that is thirsty;’ corresponding to which, Jesus cries, ‘If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.’ . . . Let it be further observed that Isaiah manifestly has the same great blessings in mind in the passage (43:18-21); ‘I will give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.’” Benson likewise has: “*I will pour water*—My Spirit, as it is expounded in the latter part of the verse, frequently compared to water in the Scriptures; *upon him that is thirsty*—That is destitute of it, and that sincerely and earnestly desires it.” ¶ Regarding Joel, in 1961, Elder Franklin D. Richards said: “When the Angel Moroni first visited the Prophet Joseph, he quoted from the second chapter of Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh’ (see Joel 2:28; JS—H 1:41). Moroni told the Prophet that this was not yet fulfilled but would be soon. I am confident, my brothers and sisters, that this prophecy is now being fulfilled.” President Gordon B. Hinckley likewise said: “I think we are living in the day of the fulfillment of the word of the Lord given through the Prophet Joel, and repeated by Moroni in his first visitation to the Prophet Joseph. ‘And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh’ (Joel 2:28). I believe, my brethren, that we are living in the day when the Spirit of the Lord is being poured out upon all flesh.” ¶ Keith, of ISAIAH 44:3-4 suggests: “The promise of the final fertility of the land and the conversion of the people is here made. There is no necessity for departing from the literality of the former of these clauses . . . and understanding the whole of spiritual blessings . . . The prosperous condition of the nation, when returned to their land and to their king, is expressed by the comparison of grass and willows growing beside water-brooks . . . Similarly it is foretold that Israel will then be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not . . .” Wade has: “This passage does not refer to the assuaging of actual thirst . . . but is meant figuratively. Israel, in its desolate condition, is compared to a parched land, and the restoration to it of God’s favour is likened to the rain which renews vegetation (cf. Psalm 68:9).” In truth, these two things tend to go together, spiritual outpourings and blessings on the land. We read in the Book of Mormon, for instance: “. . . inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence” (Alma 38:1). In Amos 8:11 we hear of spiritual “thirst of water.” Whitehouse observes that “a land that is cursed is devoid of rain (2 Samuel 1:21),” and that the pouring forth of rain [usually] “betokens

⁸ McConkie, Bruce R. *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ*, pp.205-206

. . . the removal of the ban” through “God’s forgiving mercy.” I believe this is true and that when we follow God’s commandments He will pour rain (literal) as well as rain (blessings) upon us: “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you *rain in due season*” (Leviticus 26:3-4a, emphasis added). But if not, “I will make your heaven as iron” (Leviticus 26:19b, *also see* Deuteronomy 28:23). This is as true and the often stated Book of Mormon promise and warning: “For the Lord God hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence” (2 Nephi 4:4). This brief but powerful statement subsumes everything—all of the many details—given in the *Rain in Due Season* chapters. And lest some think that these promises and warning were only intended of people of old, the Lord says: “And they [these blessings and cursing] shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed **for ever** [עַד-עוֹלָם]” (Deuteronomy 28:46). If we wish to know what it means to prosper in the land or wish to know what it means to be cut off from His presence, we can read all about it in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. I want to add my personal witness that I know these things to be true for the Spirit of God has manifested them to me.

4 And they shall spring up [as] among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “The righteous shall grow, and tender and delicate as the flowers of the grass, as a tree that sends forth its roots by the streams of water.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “; and they shall spring up like grass among water, and like a willow by the side of a flowing stream.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓛ) has, “And they shall spring up among the herbs, as willows beside the running waters.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) Logos has *and they spring up as grass*, וַצְמַחוּ כְבִין, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *and they spring up in* (or, *among*, or *in the midst of*) *grass*, וַצְמַחוּ בְבִין. About the willows, Wordsworth says: “A joyful contrast to the melancholy willows by the waters of Babylon, on which the exiles of Judah hung their harps in sorrow (Psalm 137:2). These *willows*, of which the Prophet now speaks, are like the festive *willows* of the joyful solemnity of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:40).” Lowth strongly suggests the LXX (Ⓛ) reading (see above). Regarding בְבִין, Alexander suggests: “the true explanation has been long since given by Vitranga, namely, that בְבִין has here its primitive and proper use, as a noun corresponding to the English *midst*.” This is

important, because we here have one more example as to how בְבִין can mean *in*, for that is what *in the midst* means here, rather than *between*. An increasing number of translators of Zechariah 13:6 make every attempt to remove the Messianic message from that verse. Barnes says: “A similar figure [as is found in Isaiah 44:4] to denote the prosperity and happiness of the righteous occurs in Psalm 1:3: ‘And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water . . .’”

5 One shall say, I [am] the LORD'S; and another shall call [himself] by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe [with] his hand unto the LORD, and surname [himself] by the name of Israel.

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “This one shall say, I am of them that fear the Lord, and another shall pray in the name of the God of Jacob; this one shall offer his oblation before the Lord, and draw near in the name of Israel.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “One will say, ‘I belong to God;’ and another will call himself by the name of Jacob; and another will write on his hand, ‘I belong to God;’ and will surname himself by the name of Israel.” These three different examples of showing love for the Lord—or entering into a covenant relationship with Him—are each preceded by a אֶחָד (this one): “This *one* shall say, I am Jehovah’s; and this *one* will call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and this *one* shall write with his hand, For Jehovah, and be surnamed by the name of Israel” (LITV). Almost without exception, the exegetes suggest that the Gentiles or the heathen are intended. My contention, instead, is that it is the *seed* of Israel (ISAIAH 44:3) who are revealed—granted, most of whom do not *know*⁹ they are Jacob’s seed—and who now are converted and are represented as entering into a covenant with the Lord. Some have confused *writing* or subscribing *with* the hand with *on* the hand. Delitzsch well says in rejecting the latter: “But apart from the fact that כָּתַב, with an accusative of the writing materials, would be unprecedented (the construction required

⁹ Generally, it is mostly those of Judah who know of their literal descent from Israel. Last night, I was watching a documentary on YouTube that showed how a substantial portion of Jews, especially those who lived in 19th century Russia and were not able to emigrate, tried to hide their heritage. This sort of thing has probably been happening for centuries. I have two Hispanic friends, one from Argentina, and one from Mexico, both of whom were declared of the house of Judah by their patriarch, and neither of them knew it before their blessing. In the case of my Argentinean friend, he is probably a descendant of Jews who recently (perhaps last hundred years or so) emigrated to escape persecution. Perhaps my Mexican friend inherited her blood from the natives of the American continent who are descendants of Zedekiah through Mulek.

would be על-ידו¹⁰, this view is overthrown by the fact that tattooing was prohibited by the Israelitish law (Leviticus 19:28; compare the mark of the beast in Revelation 13:16).” Regarding this verse Calvin says: “He describes something new and uncommon, for he who formerly had nothing to do with God shall boast that God hath adopted him.” My father has spoken to me about a book called *God in Search for Man*, by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, which title has a similar sentiment. I certainly feel as if I am that man who had nothing to do with God, yet have been invited by the Holy One of Israel to follow Him.¹¹ And I feel to glory in the Father and the Son and praise them forever. ¶ Jenour explains, “*Shall sign himself as Jehovah’s*. That is, shall solemnly bind himself to become the servant of Jehovah. There seems to be an allusion to the manner making contracts among the Jews, when probably, as with us, the parties signed their names to the conditions mutually agreed upon.” Westermann, leaning on Duhm, notes the notable absence of *circumcision* from this list of signs of adherence to Israel, and adds, “We can quite safely infer that [Isaiah] did not regard circumcision as a chief mark of membership of the people of God.” Well, actually, the reason circumcision is not mentioned is that these events have reference to the last days, long after the Law of Moses would have been fulfilled in the meridian of times. ¶ I wonder if this verse is not in some way related to the covenants and signs and tokens pertaining to the Holy Priesthood that we receive in the House of the Lord, the Holy Temple. “Your *endowment* is,” President Brigham Young explained, “to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation . . .”¹² Barnes suggests: “It is enrolled by the voluntary desire of him who makes the profession among his friends. It is done, after the manner of solemn compacts among men, *in the presence of witnesses*” (emphasis added). Witnesses are required in many of the saving ordinances, including those within the House of the Lord. Isaiah was seeing a future time when there would be many who would spring up throughout the world and *dedicate* themselves to be servants or disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹³ In

¹⁰ Upon the hand.

¹¹ Billikopf, Gregorio. God Found Me when I was not Looking. URL: <http://holyscriptures7.blogspot.com/2014/08/god-found-me-when-i-was-not-looking.html>

¹² Young, President Brigham. *Journal of Discourses* 2:31, 1854.

¹³ I vary the order with which I look at commentaries. As I read Ibn Ezra toward the middle-end of my exegetical writings on ISAIAH 44, I

regards to יִכְתֹּב בְּיָדוֹ (*write with his hand*) I wonder if it is symbolic of the law written deeply in the hearts of the disciples of Christ, “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). Note then, that if there is a writing to be done, it is the Lord who writes in our hearts. Part of our covenant, is it not, that we “turn away [our] foot [and also our hand] . . . not doing [our] own ways, nor finding [our] own pleasure, nor speaking [our] own words [but rather, instead] honour Him” (see Isaiah 58:13) and speak by the Spirit and live by the Spirit? Is it not also when we raise our hands to sustain the Brethren? Are not all of these things what it means to *subscribe with [our] hand* unto the Lord? Gill says, “. . . shall give his hand and seal to serve the Lord; shall esteem it his high and great privilege to be written among the living in Jerusalem and to have his name registered among the saints, and in their church book.” Better, I say, in the *Lamb’s Book of Life*.¹⁴

6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I [am] the first, and I [am] the last; and beside me [there is] no God.

The Targum (Ⓢ) has, beginning with the third clause, “I am He who was from the beginning, yea, eternities of eternities are mine; and beside me there is no God.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “THUS saith God, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the God of Hosts, I am the first and I am the last: besides me there is no God.” Instead of *redeemer*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has *savior*. Strangely, after *hosts* (i.e., צְבָאוֹת), the DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) adds *his name*, צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) simply has *hosts*, צְבָאוֹת. Once again we have an allusion to the Shema Yisrael: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God the LORD is one —Deuteronomy 6:4):

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד :

See ISAIAH 43:10 for important additional comments. Horsley well says: “. . . God here appeals as a proof of his sole Godhead, is the general redemption of mankind by a descendant of Abraham [Christ]. The deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus is mentioned afterwards only as an

was pleased, once again, to see some coincidence with my thoughts: “*And another shall subscribe* unto the Lord, that he is willing to go to the sanctuary of the Lord.”

¹⁴ In Gill’s defense, in Isaiah 44:7, he does mention the *Lamb’s book of life*.

earnest of that greater mercy.” In other words, if God could make good what He said about Cyrus, He also would make good the promises made about the promised Messiah. ¶ *I first and I last*, אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרֹן. Govett reminds us that in Revelation 1:11, the Savior takes upon Himself this same title or name (τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, *the Alpha and the Omega*, also see Revelation 1:8; 22:13 and in the latter days, throughout the D&C). Keith says: “The Lord, as if to meet the weakness of Israel’s faith in his word, reminds them who had given the promise, and what was the relation in which he stood to them. While he was the Lord he was also the King of Israel; while he was the Lord of hosts he was also the Redeemer of Israel.” Nägelsbach well explains what it means for the Lord to be the Alpha and Omega or the Beginning and the End: “To Him everything, beginning and end, is absolutely present.” Nägelsbach then adds: “Therefore, too, He can *prophecy*, and therefore prophesying by means of a decree is proof of His eternity, *i.e.*, of His divinity.” When the Lord says that beside Him there are no Gods, He is speaking, on the one hand, *of the unity of the Godhead*; and on the other hand, related to that which *pertains to us*. “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father” (1Corinthians 8:5-6a). There are a number of interesting scriptures that also give us a hint on the very same matter: “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment” (ESV). And in Genesis (*emphasis added*), of course, we have such scriptures as: “And God said, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26a) and “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become *as one of us*, to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22a). We continue this conversation in ISAIAH 44:8.

7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

The Targum (ܬ) has, “Who like me shall proclaim this, shall declare it, and set it in order before me, from the time that I appointed the ancient people? and let them declare unto us the things that are coming, and shall come.” The LXX (Ϟ) reads, “Who is like me? Let him stand up and call and announce, and make ready for me: In as much as I have made a man for this age, let them now tell you the train of events before they come to pass.” The Lamsa Peshitta (ܣ) has, “And who is like me? Let him announce it and set it in order and declare it, since I placed the people on the earth for ever. And

let them show the wonders that are coming.” The Douay-Rheims (Ϸ) has, “Who is like to me? let him call and declare: and let him set before me the order, since I appointed the ancient people: and the things to come, and that shall be hereafter, let them shew unto them.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ϡ) has *for himself* (DSSB), לוֹא, while the Masoretic text (מ) has *for me*, לִי. The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ϡ) has *which*, וְאֲצִיִּתְנֶהּ, while the Masoretic text (מ) has *behold me*, אֲצִיִּתְנֶהּ. The AV reads, *and shall come*, but literally, the Masoretic text (מ) has, *and which shall come*, וְאֲשֶׁר תָּבֹאנָהּ, as does also the DSS 4QIsa^c (Ϡ), וְאֲשֶׁר תָּבֹאנָהּ, while the DSS 1QIsa^a (Ϡ) has *which shall come*, אֲשֶׁר תְּבוֹאִינָהּ. Jenour has: “*Since I appointed the people of an eternal duration*.¹⁵ That is, since I called Abraham and his posterity to be to me a peculiar people, that should never be destroyed. Vitranga refers to Genesis 17:7, and Jeremiah 31:36, as confirming this interpretation.” Wordsworth says: “*The ancient people*. Rather, the *eternal* people; literally, the *people of eternity* (Heb. עַם-עוֹלָם cp. LXX (Ϟ) here), the visible Church of God, existing in Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, David, with whom God made an *everlasting covenant* (2 Samuel 23:5), *berith olam* [בְּרִית עוֹלָם], as He did with Noah (Genesis 9:16), and Abraham (Genesis 17:7), and to whom He promised eternal continuance, and an eternal kingdom in Christ, in Whom all who believe are admitted into an *everlasting covenant* (ISAIAH 55:3) [בְּרִית עוֹלָם], and are loved with *everlasting kindness* (ISAIAH 54:8) [חֶסֶד עוֹלָם], and have a sure title to *everlasting salvation*. Cp. ISAIAH 45:17 [תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים]. In all these passages the word *olam* [עוֹלָם] is used.” Delitzsch also believes that the *people of eternity* or עַם-עוֹלָם refers to “humanity as existing from the very earliest times” even to the Garden of Eden. Calvin believes it of Israel: “The antiquity of Israel, therefore, ought not to be estimated from the number of years, or from the outward condition of things, but from the election of God; and hence also the foundations of Jerusalem are called eternal (Psalm 78:69).” It is similar, to say that “I appoint the people of eternity,” because God is Eternal and *Endless is His name* (D&C 19:10). Because of the *eternal* nature of the expression עוֹלָם, perhaps it goes back to the pre-existence. ¶ Skinner summarizes as: “There is no God but Jehovah and Israel is His Witness.” This reminds me of the Muslim refrain, “There is no god but God,

¹⁵ עַם-עוֹלָם

Muhammad is the messenger of God,” or in Arabic, “لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله.” The previous owner of my book by Skinner had likewise thought the *same thing* and penciled in, “of Islam.” Muslims deny the divinity of Christ and believe that Muhammad was the last prophet and that there will be no more prophets. I testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; I testify in the divinity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that He is God the Son; I testify that we have a living prophet today and that there has been a line of Prophets of God called in the last days beginning with the Prophet Joseph Smith up to this day (these men have been called to preside on earth over The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and have been given the priesthood keys to do so). I testify that we will continue to have living prophets upon the earth to guide His Church on this side of the veil—as directed by the Savior who is the Head of the Church—until the Second Coming of Christ in glory. I was given a personal witness by the Spirit of the divinity of Jesus Christ when I was thirteen, before I was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I also testify that I received two very strong personal witnesses of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon before I was baptized, once when I was almost 16 and once shortly before I was baptized as a member of the Church in 1974. But let us return to Isaiah. ¶ Cowles has: “The thought is, Who of all the heathen gods can foretell the future as I have and call events into existence and arrange them in their order ever since man was placed on the earth.” Keith beautifully says: “The importance of prophecy, as at least one principal evidence of the being of God, is apparent from the use which is made of it in this case. It is an evidence which was manifested through Israel, which was deposited with them, and of which they uniformly have been the subjects; for there is scarcely an event in their history, not only since their first captivity, but before it, from the first hour of their national existence, and even before that, from the time when Abraham left his father’s house, which has not been the subject of prophecy. Hence, in every sense, they are the witnesses of God, The fulfilment of the long series of predictions, in the prophetic register, of all the remarkable events of Jewish history, has furnished, from the days of Abraham, proof of the divinity of the God of Israel. ¶ *Let them declare.* Slotki/Rosenberg give Rashi’s explanation: “Just as I am predicting the return from exile, although the Temple has not yet been destroyed, you have not yet been exiled, nor has Cyrus even been born.”¹⁶

¹⁶ See ISAIAH 44:28.

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared [it]? ye [are] even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, [there is] no God; [✓] I know not [any].

✓ rock

Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared [it]? ye [are] even my witnesses. The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Hide not yourselves nor be led astray. Have you not heard from the beginning? And have I not told you?” Instead of *that time*, the Peshitta (Ⓢ) has *former time* (Lamsa) / *beforehand* (BPE). The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Fear ye not, neither be ye troubled, from that time I have made thee to hear, and have declared: you are my witnesses.” Barnes writes: “*Fear ye not, neither be afraid.* The word here rendered ‘be afraid,’ occurs nowhere else in the Bible. There can be no doubt, however, in regard to its meaning. The LXX render it μηδε πλανασθε,¹⁷ ‘neither be deceived.’ All the other ancient versions express the sense to fear, to be afraid.” ¶ *Is there a God beside me? yea, [there is] no God; I know not [any].* An ellipsis is used to try and make sense of a Hebrew expression where some words are implied, but not stated. But sometimes the philosophy of the translators gets in the way, and we end up with the expression: “I know not any.” Instead, let us be totally certain that the Hebrew does not say anything about the word “any.” What the Hebrew Masoretic text (Ⓜ) really says is much closer to the Peshitta (Ⓢ) and the Vulgate (Ⓟ) who make it clear that whatever other Gods there maybe, that the Lord knows them. And furthermore, in the case of the Targum (Ⓣ), that whoever has acted in strength to help in this work, that such strength has been delegated to them from God. There are Gods many but in relation to this work, only God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ; and those to whom they delegated power to act. ¶ The Masoretic text (Ⓜ) upon which the KJV is based, has been better rendered in this instance by many (emphasis added): “Is there any God but me, or a Rock of whom I have no knowledge?” (BBE); “is there any God except me, or any maker, that I should not know hym?” (Bishops); “whether there be a God beside me, and that there is no God that I knowe not” (Geneva); “*there is no Strong One that I do not know*” (JUB); “yea, there is no

¹⁷ Note that this is an alternate rendering of the Greek LXX (Ⓞ) text, Codex QSyh, Syrohexaplanische Übers, also known as Syro-Hexaplaric or Syro-Hexapla and refers to the Syriac translation of the LXX (Ⓞ), or the fifth column of Origen’s Hexapla. For these alternate texts, see, for instance, Apparatus II, Ziegler, J. (Ed.). (1983). *Isaias* (Vol. XIV, p. 286). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

rock, whom I know not” (Leeser); “que no haya Dios si no yo; y que no haya fuerte, que yo no conozca” (Reina Valera 1865); “que no hay Dios sino yo; y que no hay Fuerte, que yo no conozca” (SSE). There are also plenty of translations that agree with the AV, of course. If I may suggest a translation it might be something like: “*In the formation of this earth, was there a Rock (God) beside me? Or, a helper that did not receive strength from me as I received it from the Father?*” ¶ The Targum (Ⓒ), once again, has, “That there is no God beside me, and there is none strong, except he to whom strength is given from me.” The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “You are witnesses whether there be any God besides me. And have not then the fashioners and engravers heard?” The Peshitta (Ⓗ) renders it something like, “You are my witnesses, that beside me there is no God, nor powerful one whom I do not know.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has, “Is there a God besides me, a maker, whom I have not known?” The margin has **rock**, as the literal text **רֹאשׁוֹן צוֹר**. HAL says that **צוֹר** can mean God, also, especially used for Jehovah (see ASV, ESV). To repeat, then, “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).

vv. 9-20. Baltzer, leaning on Elliger, says, “The text has been defined as a ‘taunt song.’” Jenour suggests: “These verses contain indisputably the finest exposition on the absurdity of idolatry that ever was written. They beauty and force of the passage are however considerably diminished by the manner in which it is translated into our Bibles. The prophet does not describe, first, the manufacture of idols of metal by the smith, and then of wood by the carpenter, as represented in the authorized version; but, his object being to set the folly of idolatry in the most striking light, he traces the production of idols from the very first, and shews that they are from first to last entirely the work of men’s hands. He begins therefore with the manufacture of the *instruments*, with which the idol is to be formed, and describes the labour and exhaustion accompanying the work of the smith, in hammering and shaping the axe. He then proceeds to speak of the second part of the operation, which belongs to the worker in wood, or the carpenter, and gives a lively picture of his share in the formation of the image. Lastly, he shows how the wood itself is produced which is destined, at a future period, to become a god; and to make the absurdity of the practice still more glaring, he finely opposes the different uses for which the same tree is employed; with part the deluded idolater dresses [i.e., cooks—GB] his food, and warms himself, the remainder he forms into an object of divine worship.”

This theory is backed up by multiple translations including the Bishop’s Bible (1568). Keith, representing the opposite view suggests: “But may not the description embrace the making of two images, the one of metal, the other of wood; or rather, does not the smith’s part of the work refer to the metallic covering with which wooden idols were often adorned?” Orelli says: “. . . nowhere is idol manufacture described so elaborately and idolatry reduced *ad absurdum* with such cutting irony as here.” Bishop Lowth well says: “The sacred writers are generally large and eloquent upon the subject of idolatry: they treat it with great severity, and set forth the absurdity of it in the strongest light. But this passage of Isaiah far exceeds anything that ever was written upon the subject, in force of argument, energy of expression, and elegance of composition.” Finally, while we may be prone to scoff idolaters, have we ever considered whether we fall into that same category? Ironside writes: “Idolatry seems inherent in the heart of man. Today, men do not worship idols of gold and silver, and brass and iron, but every man who turns away from God sets up some kind of an idol in his heart. He either worships himself or some folly, pleasure, or fame. An esteemed servant of Christ spoke aptly when introduced on one occasion as a ‘self-made man.’ He said he regretted he had been so termed, though he appreciated the kindly thought, ‘for,’ he said, ‘I’ve noticed that these self-made men always worship their own creation.’ He knew that if men do not know the one living and true God, they set up the great god self, and worship him.” Some have felt that these verses where not written by Isaiah as they were not poetic. Westermann notes that recently “there has been a tendency (e.g., Muilenburg and others) to take them as poetry. This is correct . . . their impassioned satire scorns the constraint of rigid rhythms. Nevertheless, one can see a deliberate parallelism, in some places more clearly than others.” Westermann well says that “The section is a masterpiece of satirical writing.” Baltzer also says: “Significantly enough, *BHS* now also sets the text as poetry, not as prose.” Not that if it was prose anyone could deny their Isaianic origin. In these verses Isaiah ridicules idol makers as they use the same tree to warm themselves, to eat, and then to make an idol with the residue. But let us permit Isaiah to tell the story.

9 ¶ They that make a graven image [are] all of them vanity; and their delectable[✓] things shall not profit; and they [are] their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

✓ desirable

They that make a graven image [are] all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit. The Targum (Ⓣ) has for the second clause, “And worship what does not profit them.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “They are all fools making things to please their fancies—things which cannot profit them.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “The makers of idols are all of them nothing, and their best beloved things shall not profit them.” Regarding *vanity*, Slotki/Rosenberg point out as we have seen before, that this, **תְּהוֹוָה** is the same expression that appears in Genesis 1:2, and is there translated as, “without form.” In Genesis the words rhyme, *tohu and bohu, without form and void, תְּהוֹוָה וְבוֹהוּ. Vanity is this, indeed, just hot air, just unorganized materials.*

Rawlinson says that **תְּהוֹוָה**: “describes the primitive chaos in Genesis 1:2.” ¶ Barnes explains: “A graven image is one that is cut, or sculptured out of wood or stone, in contradistinction from one that is molten, which is made by being cast. Here it is used to denote an image, or an idol god in general.” Cowles has: “The makers of graven images should be honest enough to witness against idols as worthless things; but alas, they have not the good sense to be ashamed of their folly. Or possibly the last clause may mean. They are morally blinded (‘see not, nor know’)—do not know enough to be ashamed—the result of which must be their utter confusion and shame.” ¶ *And they [are] their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And they shall be witnesses against themselves, that they do not see, nor know, that they may be ashamed.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “But shame shall cover these god makers, and all the engravers of these useless things.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has the craftsmen being witnesses *for they* (Lamsa) / *that they* (BPE) see not, nor hear, nor know. The meaning of these Peshitta (Ⓢ) translations are quite divergent. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “They are their witnesses, that they do not see, nor understand, that they may be ashamed.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) has *they do not know, בל ידעו*, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *and they do not know, ובל ידעו*.

10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image [that] is profitable for nothing?

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Whoever maketh a god or a molten image, *it is* for no purpose (Chaldee, ‘that it should not profit’). The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “When all by whom they were made are dried up.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has those who have graven images *confounded* (BPE) / *ashamed* (Lamsa). Alexander says: “Here as elsewhere there is pungent sarcasm in the application of the name

לְאֵלִים (*mighty God*) to idols.” Cowles similarly writes: “A specially sarcastic force is given to this question in the original by the use of the name ‘El’ for God. Who made this *mighty* God? . . . The emphatic word is ‘Who,’ Who has done the labor of forming such gods? How came they into existence?” I find that the **מִי** or *who* questions in the scriptures are particularly important ones. In this case it is a sarcastic one. Whitehouse warns, however: “. . . the Hebrew interrogative **מִי**, ‘who,’ means also ‘whoever.’ We might therefore render (with Duham and Marti) : ‘Whoever fashions a god, hath cast a profitless image.’ (Gesenius-Kautzsch, Heb. Grammar § 143 d). The LXX apparently support this interpretation.”

11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they [are] of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; [yet] they shall fear, [and] they shall be ashamed together.

Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they [are] of men: The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “worshippers” instead of *fellows*. The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Then let all the stupid among men be collected and stand together.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has “Behold, all their craftsmen are dumb men (BPE, *dumb among men*).” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Behold, all the partakers thereof shall be confounded: for the makers are men.” Nägelsbach explains: “By **חֲבֵרִים** many understand the companions, helpers of the idol-makers . . . It is better to understand that the companions or followers of the idols are intended (compare, **חֲבֵרֵי עֲצָבִים אֲפָרִים**, Hosea 4:17¹⁸.)” Rawlinson suggests: “The worshippers of a particular idol, or sometimes of a particular god, formed a sort of guild or company, bound together by common participation in certain rites, and under an obligation to defend each other.” ¶ *Let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; [yet] they shall fear, [and] they shall be ashamed together.* The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And let them be confounded and ashamed together.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has “Let them gather and stand up and they shall at once be ashamed and confounded together.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “They shall all assemble together, they shall stand and fear, and shall be confounded together.”

12 The smith with the tongs^v both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength

¹⁸ “Ephraim is joined to idols” (Hosea 14:17a).

of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

✓ or, with an axe

The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “The smith maketh an axe out of iron, and bloweth the coals in the fire.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “For the carpenter sharpened an axe, with a hatchet he modelled it.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) reads something like, “The carpenter sharpens the axe.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “The smith hath wrought with his file, with coals.” Rabbi Rosenberg tells us that “*Redak* states that sometimes [the tool mentioned here] means an axe and sometimes a saw . . . *Redak* explains the verse as referring to the manufacture of the tools preliminary to the [manufacture] of the idol. He renders: the ironsmith [makes] an axe, and he works with coal and with sledge hammers [in order that] he fashions it. I.e., he makes the axe and the sledge hammer in order to fashion the idol. He blows on the coals in order to heat the forge to make these implements.” Several other translations make it clear that the blacksmith is shaping metal tools, such as an axe or other metal tools with which to work the wood: ASV has “The smith *maketh* an axe, and worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint.” GW has: “Blacksmiths shape iron into tools. They work them over the coals and shape them with hammers, working them with their strong arms. They get hungry, and their strength fails. If they don't drink water, they will faint.” See also JPS, Leeser, and RV and as early as the Bishop's Bible (1568): “The smith maketh an axe, and tempereth it with hotte coales, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with all the strength of his armes, yea sometime he is fainte for very hunger, and so thirstie that he hath no more power.” We are not certain as to what type of tool it was. Kay suggests: “First comes the making of the *adze*, or graving tool. **The iron-smith** (maketh) an *adze* (Jeremiah 10:3); and *worketh in the coal* . . . with **his arm of strength**; —the said strength depending on his having a due supply of meat and drink.” The word used in both this verse and in Jeremiah is **מַעְצָד** (מַעְצָד / בְּמַעְצָד). Gesenius believes it to be an *axe*, while HAL thinks of it as being either a “small axe . . . bent pruning knife, agricultural implement: blacksmith's tool.” Swanson, leaning on TWOT, has, “wood-working tool, i.e., a wood-carving knife, likely with a hooked blade, for forming and fashioning artistic wood forms.” Alexander says: “Gesenius and the other modern writers draw from the Talmudical and Arabic analogy the sense of a sharp tool or graving instrument.” ¶ *And fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms:*

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And maketh it firm with the hammer, and worketh it with the power of his strength.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Then he put it into a lathe and with his strong arm fashioned it.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) reads something like, “He fashions the image with a plane and outlines the design with a chisel and works it with the strength of his arm.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “And with hammers he hath formed it, and hath wrought with the strength of his arm.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) has *and fashioneth it*, **וְגִצְרָהּ**, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *fashioneth it*, **וְיָצְרָהּ**. ¶ *Yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “But when he that worketh it is hungry, and does not eat bread, he hath no strength (Chaldee, ‘no strength in him’); and if he is thirsty, and drinketh no water, he fainteth.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Though he be hungry and faint, he must not drink water.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) reads something like, “Then he feels hunger and thirsts; he does not drink water and is faint.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “He shall hunger and faint, he shall drink no water, and shall be weary.” Barnes says: “The Rev. J. Williams states that when the South Sea Islanders made an idol, they strictly abstained from food; and although they might be, and were sometimes, three days about the work, no water, and he believes no food passed their lips all the time.” ¶ Cowles has: “You are introduced into the blacksmith's shop; you see the worker in iron getting a red heat upon it in his coals, giving shape to it with his hammer, working it with his strong right arm; but these makers of gods have their human weaknesses. This smith becomes hungry and his strength fails him; having no water to drink, he becomes faint. The poor man has worked hard to make a god; but the god ministers nothing to his help and strength in his time of need! Would not he, if he were a sensible, decent idol, and had any power to befriend his worshipers?” Baltzer cleverly notices: “The point of the commentary in Isaiah 44:12 is the ironical contrast between ‘his strong arm’ (**בְּיָדָיו כֹּחַ**) and ‘no strength’ (**וְאֵין כֹּחַ**).”

13 The carpenter stretcheth out [his] rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

The carpenter stretcheth out [his] rule. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “line” rather than “rule.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “The carpenters having chosen a piece of wood framed it by rule.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) also explains that the carpenter selects a piece of wood. Horsley believes the carpenter

uses a pencil rather than a line to mark and commends us to look up **בשררד** (**שררד**) in Parkhurst's Lexicon. Also see AMP, ASV, ESV, JPS, Rotherham, and RV, who use a pencil. Gesenius has: "**שָׁרָד** m., Isaiah 44:13; according to Kimchi, *red chalk*; but more correctly, i.q. Arab. **سراد** *an awl*, or rather *stylus*; with which the artist sketches out the figure to be sculptured." Some translations use a stylus, chalk or red mark. HAL suggests either a red pencil or "a sharp object, a stylus or the like, with which the woodworker marked out the line along which the wood was to be cut." From the Arab regarding something that pierces through (HAL). Cowles has: "Next we have the carpenter's shop where the wood-work is done. He uses his rule and line. His 'planes' are rather *chisels*, since his work consists mainly in carving. He gives it the human form, and finally makes a very pretty ornament for the parlor. You see the process step by step, and are shown some of the tools which he uses to make a wooden god." ¶ *He marketh it out with a line.* The Targum (**Ⲯ**) has, "He applieth the plummet to it." The LXX (**Ⲅ**) reads, "And glued the parts together." The Lamsa Peshitta (**Ⲫ**) has, "And stretches out his rule; he marks it out with a line," while PPE has, "he measures it." ¶ *He fitteth it with planes.* The Targum (**Ⲯ**) has, "He carveth it with a knife." The Lamsa Peshitta (**Ⲫ**) has, "He fashions it with planes," while BPE (**Ⲫ**) fits it together with glue. The Douay-Rheims (**Ⲳ**) has, "He hath formed it with a plane." ¶ *And he marketh it out with the compass.* The Targum (**Ⲯ**) has, "And he dove-tailed it together." The Douay-Rheims (**Ⲳ**) has, "He hath made it with corners, and hath fashioned it round with the compass." ¶ *And maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.* The Targum (**Ⲯ**) has, "And he maketh it after the likeness of a man, according to the beauty of a woman, that it may remain in the house." The LXX (**Ⲅ**) reads, "And made it in the form of a man and with the comeliness of a man, to set it in a house." The Douay-Rheims (**Ⲳ**) has, "And he hath made the image of a man as it were a beautiful man dwelling in a house." Rabbi Rosenberg tells us that "*Rashi* and *Kara* after *Jonathan*" explain that the *beauty of a man* "is a woman [for she is] the beauty of her husband." That is, men consider their wives their beauty. And indeed, numerous idol figures are figures of women. Ibn Ezra explains, rather, that it is the repetition of the idea (see Hebrew below) that has led some to speculate that the beauty of a woman is meant, "*According to the beauty of a man*, that is, the female, according to the opinion of some; but I think that it is in reality only a repetition of the preceding idea." I have purposely rendered the translation more literal to make the point, which may be lost in the more poetical English translations:

כְּתִבְנִית אִישׁ כְּתִפְאֶרֶת אָדָם

*as the figure of a man, as the beauty of a man*¹⁹

"*Rabbi Joseph Kimchi*, remarks that the idol is of no use," explains R. Rosenberg, "but 'to sit in the house.'" Or, as some suggest, perhaps in an idolatrous temple.

14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengthened ✓ for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish [it].

✓ or, taketh courage

The Targum (**Ⲯ**) has, "and seasons them (or, 'makes strong')" instead of *strengthened for himself*. The LXX (**Ⲅ**) reads, "He cut wood from the forest which the Lord planted—a pine tree." The Peshitta (**Ⲫ**) then explains that this piece of wood, cut from a forest that was nourished by the rain is put in the house. The Douay-Rheims (**Ⲳ**) has, "He hath cut down cedars, taken the holm, and the oak that stood among the trees of the forest: he hath planted the pine tree, which the rain hath nourished." Perhaps, I thought, the idol maker finds and transplants a tree to a location where he can keep an eye on it. Rashi, according to Rabbi Rosenberg, has precisely this idea: after finding a *sapling* (**אֶרֶב**) he then transplants it. Delitzsch is alone in suggesting that the tree planted was a *fig tree*. Horace²⁰ was quoted by Greenfield as saying: "*Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum, Cum faber incertus faceretne, scamnum faceretne Priapum, Maluit esse deum: deus inde ego, furum avinumque Maxima formido*" that is, "Formerly I was the stump of a fig-tree, a useless log; when the carpenter, hesitating whether to make me a Priapus²¹ [god] or a stool, at last determined to make me a god; thus I became a god, and a great terror to thieves and birds!"²² ¶ Wade suggests that instead of he "strengthened for himself" we should understand he "secureth for himself." So Rotherham, "When one was

¹⁹ Ish (**אִישׁ**) and adam (**אָדָם**) are both synonyms for man.

²⁰ Horace wrote his book of satires about 35 BC. Satyr, lib. 1. sat. viii.

²¹ Πρίαπος, of all things!, a god protector of viticulture and horticulture and also a god of fertility. See *Greek Mythology Link*, Carlos Parada and Maicar Förlag. I say of *all things* because my undergraduate degree at UC Davis was in plant science with a specialty in viticulture and horticulture (pomology). I was baptized half-way through my studies but ended up working in agricultural labor management, instead.

²² Greenfield, William, *The Genuineness, Authenticity and Inspiration of the Word of God*. Robert Carter and Brothers: New York, 1853, p. 192.

cutting him down cedars, Then took he a holm-tree and an oak, And secured them for himself, among the trees of the forest,—He planted a fir-tree and the pouring rain made it grow.” HCSB has: “He cuts down cedars for his use, or he takes a cypress or an oak. He lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a laurel, and the rain makes it grow.” NASB reads: “Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow.” We also have: “He felleth for himself cedars, and taketh cypress and oak, and he chooseth for himself the strongest among the trees of the forest; he planteth an ash, and the rain causeth it to grow” (Leeser). A completely different translation is offered by the Spanish Reina Valera 1865, in which the idea is that the idol maker strengthens himself against the task of felling the trees that he finds: “Cortarse ha cedros, y tomará encima y alcornoque, y esforzarse ha contra los árboles del bosque [strengthens himself *against* the trees of the forest]: plantará pino, que se erie con la lluvia.” Alexander defends the AV, “as אָמַץ, in every other case where it occurs, admits of the translation *strengthened*, it cannot be consistently abandoned here without necessity; and this necessity cannot exist, because the strict sense of *making strong* is not only relevant in this connection, but corresponds exactly to that of *making great* expressed by גָּדַל, both meaning here “to cause to grow.” Thus understood, the word helps to bring out with more strength and clearness the main idea of the verse, viz. that the idolater not only chooses suitable trees, but plants and raises them for the purpose.” Cowles writes: “Note the underlying questions upon which the prophet would throw light, viz.. Is there any *god* at all in this image of metal or wood? If so, *how* did he get in, and when? Observe all the processes in the smith’s shop; did you see the god *there*? Go into the carpenter’s shop; mark carefully all he does in his department. Was the real god made there? And now lest some may still imagine that there was some antecedent sacredness in the wood before it came into the shop, the prophet takes you a step farther back. This idolater means to have first-rate timber; so he goes into the forest and selects some of the best varieties—cedar or cypress, oak or pine [‘ash’]; he transplants it; cultivates it well: the rains water it as they do other trees. That is, it is a mere tree, growing under the common laws of vegetation. Is the idol-god made and brought into existence *so*?” The idolater, for all his pretended self-sufficiency, still needs to use the trees given by God to man, as well as the nutrients and rain and plant nutrients that also come from God. Faussett points us to Jeremiah 14:22: “Are there any among the vanities²³ of the Gentiles that can cause rain?

or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.” Gill offers yet a different proposition: “The word for ‘rain’ signifies a body in the Syriac [*corpus*, Luke 3:22. 2Corinthians 10:10. Castel (*Lex. Polyglott.* col. 627. So in the Chaldee language). So, according to Schindler, signifies a body, *Lex. Pentaglott.* col. 347, 348] language, as Kimchi observes, and for which he produces (Daniel 4:33), and so Aben Ezra says it signifies in the Arabic language; and the sense is, ‘the body’ of the tree ‘grew up.’ and being grown up, was cut down . . .”

15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth [it], and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth [it]; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself. The Targum (ⓧ) has, “That it may *serve* a man to burn: and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Which the rain had nourished, that it might be fuel for the use of man: and having taken some of it he warmed himself.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “And it hath served men for fuel: he took thereof, and warmed himself.” ¶ *Yea, he kindleth [it], and baketh bread.* The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And with other pieces they made a fire and baked cakes.” Gill has: “*for he will take thereof, and warm himself*; with some part of it he makes a fire in his parlour, and warms himself when it is cold weather: *yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread*; he heats his oven with another part of it, and bakes the bread he has made for himself and family to live on, and which is putting it to a good use.” ¶ *Yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth [it]; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.* The Targum (ⓧ) has, “Yea, he maketh it a god, and worshippeth *it*, he formeth it an image, and prayeth to it.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And of the residue they made gods and worshipped them.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “But of the rest he made a god, and adored it: he made a graven thing, and bowed down before it.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓠ) has *or* {or maketh a god}, אָסַ, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *also* {also he maketh a god, compare with NASB, AMP}, אָסַ. ¶ *and he falleth down thereto* (אָסַ אָסַ אָסַ). Skinner explains: “The word rendered ‘falleth down (אָסַ)’ is an Aramaic verb meaning ‘worship,’ recurring in the

²³ Idols are sometimes called *vanities*. See also Jeremiah 10:14-15

(Geneva Bible translation notes).

O.T. only ISAIAH 44:17; 19; and ISAIAH 46:6. It is the root of the Arabic word *mosque* (musḡid).”

16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth [himself], and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

He burneth part thereof in the fire. The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “Did he not burn half of it in the fire.” Instead of *part*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has *half*. The word חֲצִי is often translated as *half* in the Scriptures, but this is somewhat artificial. Rawlinson suggests: “He burneth *part* thereof; rather, *half thereof*; ‘With *half* thereof’—not the other *half*, but the same—‘he eateth flesh.’ One fire serves for the two purposes of warming him and cooking his victuals.” So also Delitzsch who has: “The repeated חֲצִי (the *half* of it) in Isaiah 44:16 refers to the first *half*, which furnishes not only fuel for burning, but shavings and coals for roasting and baking as well. And as a fire made for cooking warms quite as much as one made expressly for the purpose, the prophet dwells upon this benefit which the wood of the idol does confer.” After reading Gill’s suggestion (ISAIAH 44:15) that all of this warming and cooking may be taking place indoors, I thought of the wood stoves that are used in Chile, that have a dual purpose as they function to both warm up a room and to cook therein. It is even clearer, then, how the one ‘*half*’ or *portion* of wood serves for giving warmth and for cooking; and the other *portion* used for making an idol. ¶ *With part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied:* The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “And, with the coals of that half, bake cakes; and having roasted meat with it did he not eat and was satisfied.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “And with part of it he dressed his meat: he boiled pottage, and was filled.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) has *and with and part* (the *and with* was added later above the line, so originally it read *and part*), ועל וחציו, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *with part*, על-חציו. ¶ *Yea, he warmeth [himself], and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:* The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “And when warmed say, ‘Aha! I am warmed, I have enjoyed the fire?’” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) has *in front of [the] fire*, נגד אור, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *I have seen [the] fire*, רָאִיתִי אֵשׁ. In modern Hebrew it seems the word used for *Aha!* is the same as in English: “אָהֵרֵי.”²⁴ In Biblical Hebrew, the word sometimes used was הֵאָח, Heaj

²⁴ Oxford English-Hebrew Dictionary, 1998.

(Spanish *j*). This is closer to the Spanish *¡Ea!* which has a number of meanings, including something like “look at that!” There also is, of course, the Spanish expression *¡ajá!* with its multiple meanings. Young says: “There is no need of taking the word ‘see’ in any other than its ordinary sense. Luther brought out the true meaning when he said that man has a desire to look into the fire. He sees and feels the fire and expresses his joy and satisfaction in its possession. In becoming fuel for fire, the wood truly serves man; in becoming an idol it does not serve him, but becomes an occasion for his stumbling.”

17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, [even] his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth [it], and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou [art] my god.

And the residue thereof he maketh a god, [even] his graven image: The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “‘Yet of the residue he made a carved god.’” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “But the residue thereof he made a god, and a graven thing for himself.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) has *to his Baal*²⁵ or *block*²⁶ {meaning uncertain, see DSSB, Accordance DSS-C, and note here, in v. 19), לבלוי, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *to his graven image*, לְפָסְלוֹ. ¶ *He falleth down unto it, and worshippeth [it], and prayeth unto it.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “he boweth down,” or Stenning (Ⓣ) “paid homage to it,” rather than “falleth down.” The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “And worshippeth it, and prayeth to it.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “He boweth down before it, and adareth it, and prayeth unto it.” ¶ *And saith, Deliver me; for thou [art] my god.* The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “Saying, ‘Deliver me, for thou art my God.’” Instead of *my god*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has *our god*. The absurdity, then, comes to its culmination. An individual has used the same tree to warm himself and cook and then fall down before a piece of wood to pray and ask for deliverance.

18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut[✓] their eyes, that they cannot see; [and] their hearts, that they cannot understand.

✓ daubed

²⁵ The god of the Babylonians, “בל” contr. from בעל i.q. בעל *Bel*” (בל—Gesenius). Also see בעל, *ruler*, or Phoenician god or idol (TWOT, Gesenius).

²⁶ בול עץ, *block [of] wood* (Gesenius, HALOT).

The Targum (T) has, “They know not, neither do they understand; for their eyes are closely shut up, so that they cannot see, and their heart, that they cannot understand.” The LXX (G) reads, “They had not sense to think; for they were so involved in darkness that they could not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts.” The Douay-Rheims (V) has, “They have not known, nor understood: for their eyes are covered that they may not see, and that they may not understand with their heart.” And, “Their eyes are besmeared, and they see not” (Tanakh). Jenour has: “*Their eyes hath he restrained from seeing* [טַח מִן־רְאוֹתָ]. The best commentary upon these words will be found in Romans 1:19-25. The apostle there shews that the *unwillingness* of men to retain in their minds the knowledge of the glory and perfections of the [incorruptible²⁷—GB] God, is the reason why he gives them up to the delusion and folly of idolatry.” Wordsworth has: “*he hath shut their eyes*. Literally, hath *smeared* them over, as with clay. See the use of this verb (טָיַן)²⁸ in Leviticus 14:42-43; Ezekiel 13:10-15. Hence the act of our Blessed Lord, in opening the eyes of the blind by means of clay *smeared*²⁹ on his eyes, is more remarkable (see John 9:6).” Kay has, “Or, ‘One hath plastered their eyes, that they see not, and their hearts, that they discern not’ (cp. 2 Corinthians 4:4, ‘In whom the god of this world [i.e., Satan—GB] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.’).”

19 And none considereth in his heart, ✓
neither [is there] knowledge nor
understanding to say, I have burned part
of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked
bread upon the coals thereof; I have
roasted flesh, and eaten [it]: and shall I
make the residue thereof an abomination?
shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? ✓ ✓

- ✓ setteth to his heart
- ✓ ✓ that which comes from a tree?

And none considereth in his heart, neither [is there] knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire. The LXX (G) reads, “Nor did any reason in his mind, nor by his understanding recollect, that he had burned half of it in the fire.” Instead of *part*, the Peshitta (S) translators have *half*. The Douay-

Rheims (V) has, “They do not consider in their mind, nor know, nor have the thought to say: I have burnt part of it in the fire.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Q) has *to say* repeated twice, לְאָמַר לְאָמַר, while the Masoretic text (M) has *to say*, לְאָמַר. The expression here is similar to Deuteronomy 4:39b, “and *consider* it in thine *heart*”; or in 1Kings 8:47, “*bethink* [*consider*] themselves [literally, *in their heart* (אֶל־לִבָּם)], in that in each case both שׁוּב (to turn, but here more as in to *reconsider*, to *really think something through*) and לִבָּב (heart) are used. So it means something along the lines of really thinking something through in the *heart*:

וְלֹא־יָשִׁיב אֶל־לִבּוֹ
(*And none considereth to/in his heart*)

Rawlinson says: “It is implied that the idolaters had once had it in their power to think and reason justly upon the absurdity of such conduct as that which was now habitual to them. But they had lost the power. They had suffered themselves little by little to be deluded.” And that is how Satan works, little by little getting us to veer off a little here and a little there until we get to think everyone else is lost and going the wrong direction and do not consider that we might have gone astray. ¶ *Yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten [it]:* The LXX (G) reads, “And on the coals thereof baked cakes, and had roasted flesh and eaten.” The Douay-Rheims (V) has *broiled* instead of *roasted*. The DSS 1QIsa^a (Q) has *and I have roasted*, וְאֶצְלָה, while the Masoretic text (M) has *I have roasted*, אֶצְלָה. ¶ *And shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?* Can you hear the sound of this mocking question? This is the culmination of the satire. The LXX (G) reads, “And of the residue had made an abomination; so they bow themselves down to it.” Instead of *fall down*, the Peshitta (S) has the synonym, *worshipped*. The Douay-Rheims (V) has, “And of the residue thereof shall I make an idol? shall I fall down before the stock of a tree?” The Douay-Rheims (V) has *broiled* instead of *roasted*. The DSS 1QIsa^a (Q), וְיָתֵרוֹ, and the Masoretic text (M) have וְיָתֵרוֹ, *and residue*, while the 4QIsa^b (Q) has *residue*, יָתֵרוֹ. The DSS 4QIsa^b (Q), לְתוֹעֵבָה, and the Masoretic text (M), לְתוֹעֵבָה, have *into [an] abomination*, while the 1QIsa^a (Q) has the plural *into abominations*, לְתוֹעֵבוֹת. Regarding *stock of a tree*, just as in verse 17, the meaning in 1QIsa^a (Q) seems to be uncertain (see DSS-C), לְבִלְוֵי עֵץ. However, the fact that the word *tree* is

²⁷ Romans 1:23.

²⁸ To cover over or smear with plaster or mortar or other material.

²⁹ ἀλείφω (anointed with or *smeared*)

associated with it makes it likely that it means *tree block* or *wood*.³⁰

20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, [Is there] not a lie in my right hand?

He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Behold his god, part of it is in ashes, his undiscerning (literally, ‘fat’) heart has caused him to err, so he cannot deliver his soul.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Know thou that their heart is ashes, and they are led astray and none can deliver his soul.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓜ) has, “Part thereof is ashes: his foolish heart adoth it, and he will not save his soul.” The DSS 4QIsa^b (Ⓢ), **וְלֹא יִצִּיל**, and the Masoretic text (Ⓜ), **וְלֹא-יִצִּיל**, both have *and not saved*, while the 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) has *and not able [to save]*, **וְלֹא יוֹכִיל**. ¶ Cowles says: “The prophet’s thought is that the man has not the sense to look over the process he has himself gone through and think a moment of its significance. He *lives* out the absurdity, but will not let it come into his mind—will not give it a moment’s thought. ‘He feedeth on ashes,’ bitter and caustic, with sorrow in the end. The phrase is analogous to that of Hosea (Hosea 12:1³¹) ‘He feedeth on wind.’ The phrase, ‘A deceived heart hath turned him aside,’ i.e., from truth and reason, assumes that the intellect is blinded by a wicked heart, perverted and misled by the strong love of sin. Hence he seems to have no power to say, Is not my whole system of religion a delusion? Is not this idol that I worship a *lie* in act, a mere falsehood, a vanity?” As I am working on this chapter of Isaiah, for over a week now *Volcán Calbuco* has been erupting and spewing out ashes, here in the south of Chile. We have had a devastating amount of ashes come out of the volcano and we fear that this damage will be even greater if it rains tomorrow, as predicted. Cattle has had to be moved out of the whole affected area and thousands of people have been displaced from their homes by the ashes. We may well say that the ashes, in these sorts of quantities, *kill life* (30 April 2015). By April 24, two days after the eruption,³² Rodrigo Álvarez Seguel, director of *El*

³⁰ **בֹּלַע עֵץ**, *block [of] wood* (Gesenius, HALOT).

³¹ “Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt” (Hosea 12:1).

³² Eruption of Volcán Calbuco began 22 April 2015, at about 17:50. I took my first photo at 18:11. At 17:14, I took a pre-eruption panoramic video of Lake Llanquihue. It was a beautiful clear day. Today, 30 April 2015, we had our third eruption.

Servicio Nacional de Geología y Minería, reported “that over 210 million cubic meters of ashes had been released from the volcano and that each cubic meter roughly corresponded to almost a ton of volcanic mater.”³³ Ashes have completely covered beautiful *Volcán Osorno*, so that it looks as a volcano might look in the moon, with hardly any snow visible on it (and none at all visible about a week ago). I am now putting the final touches on this chapter before posting it for the first time, and gladly there have been several snow falls over *Volcán Osorno* so it no longer has that eerie look (19 May 2015). ¶ *Nor say, [Is there] not a lie in my right hand?* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Nor say, Is it not a lie which I have made with my right hand?” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Take a view of it, will you not say, ‘There is indeed a lie in my right hand?’” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓜ) has, “Nor say: Perhaps there is a lie in my right hand.” The DSS 4QIsa^b (Ⓢ), **הֲלֹא שָׁקַר בְּיַמִּינִי**, and the Masoretic text (Ⓜ), **הֲלֹא שָׁקַר בְּיַמִּינִי**, both make this into a *question* (הֲ, here an interrogatory prefix), *not? a lie in my right [hand]?*, while the 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) makes a statement (is missing the interrogatory as well as the second negation), *[there is] a lie in my right [hand]*, **שָׁקַר בְּיַמִּינִי**. ¶ Jenour writes: “*He hath turned aside*. That is, he hath turned away from the true God, and is consequently become devoid of understanding, and has not power to deliver his soul from the bondage of superstitious folly; nor to discern, that whilst he is worshiping and idol, he is, as it were, holding *a lie in his right hand*; or, in other words that he is paying divine honour to a thing which cannot but disappoint all his expectations. Nor let the proud free-thinker of our times, who has also turned away from Jehovah, suppose that he is really any wiser than the poor idolater, whose folly he derides. He may have more *intellect*; but his idol which *he* worships will leave him as destitute and helpless in the time of trouble and in the hour of death, as the lifeless image of the idolater leaves its deluded votary.” Keith says: “A natural corollary from what precedes [i.e., the description of the making of the idol itself] is the delusion and blindness of idolaters . . . But a deceived heart prevents the idolater from seeing this, and that the idol which he holds in his hand is a lie—false and deceitful—and no god.” Orelli suggests: “*Deceit in my right hand*, i.e., in my course of action. He is so stupid and blind that he does not conceive the possibility of gross and sinful error.” We already quoted Delitzsch in the introduction: “All that belongs to idolatry is **שָׁקַר** a fabrication and a lie.” It is self-deception. Motyer has: “The idolater is ‘hooked’ on the idol and has lost all capacity to free himself. The

³³ Government of Chile, Ministry of Mines, URL accessed 30 April 2015, <http://www.sernageomin.cl/detalle-noticia.php?IdNoticia=213>.

idolater holds his idol, the product of his own strength (*his right hand*; cf. Isaiah 44:12), but the reality is that the idol now holds him and he cannot break free from the bondage of the lie (שָׁקֶר), this actual ‘false thing.’”

Baltzer well says: “‘Is it not a lie (שָׁקֶר) in my right hand’ is a confession of faith. According to the Psalter, Yahweh leads the human being ‘by his right hand.’ In Jeremiah, for example, ‘lie’ is code for the gods [i.e., idols—GB]. The ‘lies’ are the idols.” It is selling our birthright for a mess of pottage—actually, not even that, it is selling it for *deception*, for *ashes*. This holding the idol in *his right hand* is rejecting the *right hand of the Lord* with all of the attendant promises for strength, security, peace, and eternal life: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the *right hand of my righteousness* . . . For I the LORD thy God *will hold thy right hand*, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 41:10, 13-14, emphasis added).

vv. 21-28. The Lord will not forget Israel. Her sins will be blotted out. The Savior has paid the price for redemption but now it is our duty to repent and come unto Him if we wish to take full advantage of the same. Understanding the plan of happiness and the atoning sacrifice of our Savior gives us reason to sing and to shout for joy. The Savior directed the work of forming the heavens and the earth. Those who lean on false gods will be disappointed. God confirms the word of His Servant, Christ, and of each one of us as we are moved to act by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost—which was poured out on our dry souls. Cyrus is described as coming into the scene. A promise is given that Jerusalem will be rebuilt along with the foundation of the temple.

21 ¶ Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou [art] my servant; I have formed thee; thou [art] my servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant; I have formed thee; thou art my servant. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Remember these things,” and for the last clause, “I have formed thee that thou shouldest serve me.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Remember these things, Jacob, even thou Israel, for thou art my servant.” The Masoretic text (Ⓜ), יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל, as well as the DSS 4QIsa^b (Ⓞ), יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל, have *Jacob and Israel*, while 1QIsa^a (Ⓞ) has no conjunction: *Jacob*,

Israel, יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל. Here is a contrast with that of the idol makers and idol worshippers. The Lord says to Israel that He has formed them and also is able to redeem and save (ISAIAH 44:22). In the New Testament the Christ healed people and forgave sins to the marvel of the believers—and annoyance and envy of the unbelievers. Here He gives us a pre-taste of His redeeming love. Baltzer makes an important connection: “ISAIAH 44:10 asks: ‘Who has formed (מִי יֵצַר) a god,’ and ISAIAH 44:21 says once more: ‘I have formed you’ (יֵצַרְתִּיךָ).” ¶ *O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “O Israel, shouldest not forget my fear.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “I have made thee my servant; therefore O Israel do not thou forget me.” The Lamsa Peshitta (Ⓢ) has what might seem a pleading cry, “O Israel, from henceforth forget me not.” Very different in meaning, BPE (Ⓢ) has, “O Israel, thou shalt not forget me.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “O Israel, forget me not.” The 1QIsa^a (Ⓞ) has, *Israel*, יִשְׂרָאֵל, as does the Masoretic text (Ⓜ), יִשְׂרָאֵל, but the DSS 4QIsa^b (Ⓞ) has *and Israel*, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל. Calvin believes the rendering is one where the Lord is asking *not to be forgotten*: “We ought thus to observe carefully the cause of apostasy, that is, forgetfulness of God, which gradually withdraws us from the right path, till we leave it altogether.”

22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: The Targum (Ⓣ) has for the last clause, “as a cloud vanisheth away,” and Stenning (Ⓣ) has “as a passing cloud.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “For, lo! I have made thy transgressions vanish like a cloud—and thy sins like the murky vapour.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy sins as a mist.” Delitzsch would translate the first expression of cloud as *dark mist*; Leeser as a *vapor*. Such thoughts transport us to the vision that Lehi and Nephi had of the *tree of life*. Barnes has: “The true idea would be expressed by rendering it, ‘I have made them to vanish as a thick cloud;’ and the sense is, as the wind drives away a thick cloud, however dark and frowning it may be, so that the sky is clear and serene, so God had caused their *sins* to disappear, and had removed the storm of his anger. Nothing can more strikingly represent sin in its nature and consequences, than a dense, dark, frowning cloud—that comes over the heavens, and shuts out the sun, and fills the air with gloom; and nothing can more beautifully represent the

nature and effect of pardon than the idea of removing such a cloud, and leaving the sky pure, the air calm and serene, and the sun pouring down his beams of warmth and light on the earth.”³⁴ Cowles says: “The figure is two-fold. As clouds hide from us the face of the sun, so transgression hides from us the face of God: and again, as God brushes away the dark clouds with infinite ease when he will, and lets the sunshine come forth with double glory and sweetness, so he takes away the thick clouds of our sins and lets his own face shine forth in unwonted radiance upon us.” Keith likewise observes: “As the cloud which appears in the heavens is often carried away, so that no trace of it is left, so would the sin of Israel be finally removed.” ¶ Calvin notes: “We have said that it is the ordinary practice of Scripture, whenever redemption is mentioned, to exhort to repentance.” Rawlinson well says that: “*Return unto me*. This is an underlying condition, both of restoration and of forgiveness.” I was pleased to read this from Rawlinson. So also the Rabbis: according to Rabbi Rosenberg, *Ibn Ezra* and *Malbin* explain that we must return or turn unto God before sins will be blotted out: “Israel’s sins, too, will vanish likewise as soon as he will return wholeheartedly to his God.” Christ has done His part through the eternal atonement, which is here mentioned first, and we are to do our part, as we spoke in ISAIAH 43:25. Here we continue the conversation we started there. I wish to focus on the principle of grace as part of the atonement and as part of the forgiving process. Despite our imperfections, are we experiencing grace? We often hear people explain that they do not quite understand the atonement in all of its grandeur. And perhaps the most difficult part of all is to understand the supernal gift of grace that springs forth out of the atonement. “... for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). What does this scripture mean? Certainly we could reflect a lifetime on it and continue to learn from it. We often hear that grace requires repentance. Yet the scriptures teach us that true repentance means forsaking of our sins (Mosiah 4:10; Alma 39:9; Ether 11:1; D&C 93:48) and of course, the well knows scripture: “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43). I am such an imperfect man. I can only say that I am in the process of forsaking, but have not forsaken. I am not

³⁴ I love the sweet sentiment behind Barnes’ words. However, I should add to say that when one lives in the South of Chile, one better also find beauty in the clouds and not be so blind as to only find joy in a sunny day. Right now, as I write, there are glorious clouds before me, tossed about by the wind. I am grateful that I am just as happy for a classical beautiful sunny day, as I am for a cloudy day full of beauty and personality. The scenery before me is constantly changing and it is never boring. During my Sabbatical here in Llanquihue, I took over 18 thousand photos and videos. I am in awe to the wonderful beauty. If you are willing to love the clouds and a cloudy day, you will never be bored. These are also part of God’s magnificent creations.

even close to perfect nor do I expect to be on this side of the veil. Even the Savior, who indeed was perfect, while in His mortal ministry said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Note that it was only after He had overcome the world that He said: “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48). I infer from this that “be ye perfect” is an invitation to be true disciples of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with all that this entails. Through the process of justification and sanctification we can become disciples of Jesus Christ. Sometime around 1991, I was feeling very depressed and despondent because of all of my weaknesses. One day I was reading a newspaper report about someone who had been dishonest. At least, I thought to myself, this is one good quality I have, I am honest. After having these thoughts I had an open vision in which I saw the many times in my life when I had been dishonest—from both before and after my baptism. One of these scenes particularly stands out in my mind. I was a young lad and was near the door of our large home in Santiago. A poor old woman asked to see my mother. My mother is a very generous person and always gave to the poor—although a few times complained about this duty. I thought I would be doing my mother a favor so she would not have to be bothered by the poor old woman and explained that my mother was not home. The beggar’s words still ring in my ears, “¡mentiroso! (liar!).” I could see this and many other distinct scenes pass by me. It was by no means a short list of scenes. I believe I am slowly beginning to understand the purpose of this revelation. For years I did not understand the purpose of what I had seen. Now I know that God was trying to teach me something about grace. Even in those areas where I thought I may have been “doing well” I would need the grace offered to us through Christ’s atonement. Note that the Spirit *only* showed me the one area I felt I had done well. I shudder to think of all that I might have to see in my areas of even more imperfection if indeed the Lord would have to show them to me. A little more than ten years later I experienced a related revelation of a completely different nature, one that I also did not understand for years. After my second Sabbatical leave in Chile was coming to a close (2002), the Spirit of God manifested to me that my sins had been forgiven. What should have been a moment of great joy was not, because I did not understand the meaning of what was being said to me. I had gone out with the missionaries once a week during my Sabbatical. The Spirit of God was manifesting to me that the Lord had accepted my offering. But all I could think about was the uselessness of it all. I knew my imperfection. Instead, I should have dropped to my knees in thankfulness. The Lord was saying, in effect, yes, I know your weaknesses, but I

also can see the desire of your heart and your effort. I can now see the Lord saying: “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27). We also have: “Nevertheless, the Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things” (Jacob 4:7). So perhaps we can speak of a *repentant attitude* along with *repentance*. We may also well speak of the fruits of repentance, such as *joy* and *peace* and *the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost*. These also are part of the gift of grace. If we have a great desire to study the word, share the gospel with others, do temple work for our deceased ancestors, improve, do good, choose the right, serve in our callings and answer affirmatively the question that Alma poses: “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:26), perhaps these are indicators that the grace of God is working within us now despite our imperfections. We have no reason to believe that the grace required for exaltation is something different than the grace we receive in this mortal existence to help us here and now in our efforts to become men and women of God. Finally, I find these words from the Prophet Joseph Smith of great comfort to me: “When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.” ¶ *Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “Return to my worship, for I have redeemed thee.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Return to me and I will redeem thee.” Young says: “As in Jeremiah 31:18, 34, it refers to redemption from sin; it implies that a price has been paid in order that the people *may be brought back from their sins* and upon the basis of which God may forgive those sins” (emphasis added). One of the greatest miracles is that of redemption. The Lord is saying, speaking to each of us, I have *already paid the price for your redemption* through my atoning sacrifice, so, now, come back, *return unto me*. Make full use of the redemption. The invitation is unto all “Come unto Christ.” What does it mean not to accept such an invitation? Our Savior and Redeemer tells us: “Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I

smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:15-19). And what does it mean to those who accept such an invitation with a full purpose of heart and endure until the end? We have an intimation of it in our next verse.

23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done [it]: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done [it]: The Targum (Ⓢ) has for the second clause, “for the Lord hath wrought redemption for His people.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Rejoice, O heavens! because God hath compassionated Israel.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓛ) has, “Give praise, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath shewn mercy.” ¶ *Shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein:* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “Let the foundations of the earth rejoice; rejoice (or, ‘skip, dance’), O mountains, in praise, O forest, and all the trees therein.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Utter sounds of joy, ye foundations of the earth! Burst forth into songs, ye mountains and hills, and all ye trees which are thereon!” Instead of *lower parts*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has *foundations*. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓛ) has, “Shout with joy, ye ends of the earth: ye mountains, resound with praise, thou, O forest, and every tree therein.” The DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓛ) has *the earth* ארץ, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *earth*, ארץ. Young well says, “. . . the entirety of what God has created, are to burst forth into exultation, shouting and singing because of the great triumph their Creator has wrought.” Govett explains: “By ‘the lower parts of the earth’ is signified the souls of the righteous dead. Thus we find in Revelations 5:13, ‘And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and *under the earth* . . . heard saying, Blessing and honour . . . be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb forever.’ So Psalm 71:20 and Psalm 63:9.” A number of

exegetes are confused with the idea that those in *Sheol* could thus rejoice. When we understand the context of the redemption through the atonement, the matter is clear. I can just imagine the shout of joy coming from the Spirit World when the Savior fulfilled His work. President Joseph F. Smith received this wonderful open vision on 3 October 1918, regarding the *righteous dead* or the Savior's visit to the Spirit World: "As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great. And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality; And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer's name. All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death. Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fullness of joy. While this vast multitude waited and conversed, *rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance* from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful; And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance" (D&C 138:11-19, *emphasis added*). In Job 38:7 we read: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" The sons of God did not just *shout for joy* because they would be able to obtain a body, but because of the fullness of the plan of salvation or the plan of happiness, central to which is the atoning sacrifice of our Redeemer. ¶ All of nature also sings, including the trees. Baltzer has: "Here we must assume that the intention is to forge a link with the preceding scene. For there the most important trees in the forest were named. But now they need no longer fear that their wood will be misused for idols." ¶ *For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has for the last clause, "and will glorify himself in Israel." The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, "Because God hath redeemed Jacob and Israel shall be glorified." The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and Israel shall be glorified." In ISAIAH 43 we spoke extensively of the *prophetic perfect*. That is,

speaking of the future as if it had already taken place. In Slotki/Rosenberg we read that both Kimhi and Abarbanel noted the prophetic perfect used in "hath done it." Of course the prophetic purpose is used throughout, declaring the redemption as completed, "for the LORD hath redeemed," hundreds of years before the Savior paid the expiatory redemptive price for all.

24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I [am] the LORD that maketh all [things]; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I [am] the LORD that maketh all [things]. The Targum (Ⓢ) has, "who prepared thee from the womb," instead of *formed thee from the womb*. The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, "THUS saith the Lord, who redeemed thee — even He who formed thee from the womb; I am the Lord the Maker of all things." Instead of *redeemer*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has *savior*, and also adds *helper* (BPE) / *and helped you* (Lamsa). The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, "And thy maker, from the womb" instead of "Thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb." ¶ *That stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, "I have suspended the heavens by my Word, I have laid the foundations of the earth by my strength." The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, "I alone stretched out the heavens and firmly established the earth." The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, "I am the Lord, that make all things, that alone stretch out the heavens, that establish the earth, and there is none with me." Orelli explains the *written* (Ketib, כְּתִיב) vs. *read* (Keri, קֵרִי) text: "מִזֵּאתִי, with Keri: *from me*, out of my own means . . . ; Kethib, more graphically, מִי אֵתִי, who was with me, who was there? Compare Isaiah 40:12 ff." So AMP has: "Who alone stretched out the heavens, Who spread out the earth by Myself [*who was with Me*]?" To me it is very interesting that Gill says that *alone* does not mean: ". . . to the exclusion of the Father and the Holy Spirit." The definition of alone is important here, after all. Redak, in Rabbi Rosenberg, explains: ". . . the Rabbis (Genesis Rabbah 1:2) state: All agree the angels were not created on the first day, lest it be said that Michael was stretching at the southern end of the firmament, Gabriel at the northern end, and the Holy One, blessed be He, was measuring from the middle." Yet, we do believe, as LDS, that indeed Michael and others—yes, probably Gabriel, too—were involved—at some point—in the work of the earth's formation. Then Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said: "It is true that Adam [Michael] helped to form this earth. He labored with our Savior

Jesus Christ. I have a strong view or conviction that there were others also who assisted them.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie likewise taught: “. . . from other sacred sources we know that Jehovah-Christ, assisted by ‘many of the noble and great ones’ (Abraham 3:22), of whom Michael is but the illustration, did in fact create the earth and all forms of plant and animal life on the face thereof.”³⁵ But, according to Elder McConkie, the formation of man was an exception and a role taken solely by the Father (see notes on ISAIAH 45:12). But let us return to our present verse in Isaiah. Today, I was on the phone with our friends, Howard and Karleen Hamilton—the previous owners of *Vista Tres Volcanes* where we live. Because someone had tried to break into the home while Linda & I spent our Sabbatical here, they asked if there had been any further attempts to break in. I explained that I had fixed the section of the fence where the intruders had come in, and began to parenthetically explain that I had someone do this for me. They interrupted me with a “Yeah, yeah, of course, no need to explain that.” So, it is well possible that Jehovah is here saying that He directed the work of others as we mentioned in ISAIAH 44:8 (as He Himself was directed by the Father in all things) in the process of forming the earth. That He did not recall seeing any idols or false gods there to help with the work. It is also possible that there were portions of either the spirit pre-creation or the creation process where the Savior was indeed working alone (but under the delegation of the Father). Christ has made that very clear, that all things He has done have been what He had either seen the Father do before Him or what the Father had commanded. We just quoted President Brigham Young explaining that after we die we will need to “[pass] the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood.”³⁶ Yet we know that there is no contradiction between this and our knowledge from the Book of Mormon that after we die: “. . . the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name” (2 Nephi 9:41). I will conclude with one final illustration of how the Lord may have done something alone—yet at times not have been alone. Regarding the atonement, the Savior said: “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me . . . And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me” (ISAIAH 63:3a, 5). Yet, we know that our Redeemer was visited by a comforting angel in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). The next day, in

Calvary, He continued His suffering. In one of the most impacting talks on the atonement ever given, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland testified: “Now I speak very carefully, even reverently, of what may have been the most difficult moment in all of this solitary journey to Atonement. I speak of those final moments for which Jesus must have been prepared intellectually and physically but which He may not have fully anticipated emotionally and spiritually—that concluding descent into the paralyzing despair of divine withdrawal when He cries in *ultimate* loneliness, ‘My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?’ . . . With all the conviction of my soul I testify that He *did* please His Father perfectly and that a perfect Father did *not* forsake His Son in that hour. Indeed, it is my personal belief that in all of Christ’s mortal ministry the Father may never have been closer to His Son than in these agonizing final moments of suffering. Nevertheless, that the supreme sacrifice of His Son might be as complete as it was voluntary and solitary, the Father briefly withdrew from Jesus the comfort of His Spirit, the support of His personal presence. It was required, indeed it was central to the significance of the Atonement, that this perfect Son who had never spoken ill nor done wrong nor touched an unclean thing had to know how the rest of humankind—us, all of us—would feel when we did commit such sins. For His Atonement to be infinite and eternal, He had to feel what it was like to die not only physically but spiritually, to sense what it was like to have the divine Spirit withdraw, leaving one feeling totally, abjectly, hopelessly alone.”³⁷

25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise [men] backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad. The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Who else can dispel from the heart the signs of belly speakers and divinations?” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has the Lord making the efforts of diviners fail. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “That make void the tokens of diviners, and make the soothsayers mad.” We just spoke of the *signs* and *tokens* of the Priesthood and we must be aware and beware that there are always the counterfeits signs and tokens offered by Satan. Alexander has: “*Signs* are properly the pledges and accompaniments of predictions, but may here be regarded as equivalent to prophecy itself.” Horsley suggests that “the tokens of liars” should be translated as “the signs of astrologers.” JUB has, “that undoes the signs of the fortune tellers

³⁵ McConkie, Elder Bruce R. *The Promised Messiah*, p. 62.

³⁶ Young, President Brigham. *Journal of Discourses* 2:31, 1854.

³⁷ Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. “None Were with Him.” General Conference, April 2015.

and makes the diviners mad; that turns the wise *men* backward and makes their wisdom fade away.” It has been my personal experience that where people speak against the God of Israel they often give themselves to great superstitious beliefs. They accuse believers of using Christ as a crutch but they lean on false crutches. Cowles says: “The ‘liars’ and the ‘diviners’ are false prophets and prognosticators whose pretended ‘signs’ it was God’s delight to frustrate ...” Jenour further explains: “*Who frustrateth the lying tokens.* It was customary for the false prophets, as well as the true ones, to give some sign or token that the predictions they uttered would be fulfilled. Thus we read, 1Kings 22:11, that Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, made horns of iron, and put them upon his head, in token that Ahab would defeat and destroy the Syrians. But this was a *lying token*, for the Syrians were victorious, and Ahab was slain, according to the prediction of Micaiah, the prophet of Jehovah, who thus frustrated the lying token of the false prophet. The allusion here, however, is rather to the impotence and folly of the Chaldean astrologers and soothsayers, which were especially manifested on that memorable night when Belshazzar was suddenly arrested in his sinful mirth by the appearance of a man’s hand writing upon the wall the decree of Jehovah, meaning of which they were unable to explain (Daniel 5:5).” Gill says, regarding the diviners who are mad: “. . . soothsayers, astrologers, and such sort of persons, who pretended to foretell future events; but these not answering to their predictions, they became mad, because their credit was ruined, and they lost their reward.” ¶ *That turneth wise [men] backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.* The Targum (Ⓒ) has the last clause as, “and bringeth their knowledge into contempt.” The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “I am he who turneth sages backwards and maketh their counsel foolish.” The DSSB suggests that the Masoretic text (יִשְׁכַּל, means *wise*, while the DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) (as well as 1QIsa^b and 4QIsa^b) gives יִסְכַּל, *foolish*. All the translations into English, however, translate יִשְׁכַּל in Masoretic text (יִשְׁכַּל) as synonymous to יִסְכַּל, *foolish*. Indeed, the root שְׁכַל means *wise, of understanding, successful, prudent* (Gesenius, HALOT, BDB). The word יִשְׁכַּל in this form, however, appears only this once, here in Isaiah. This very idea of יִשְׁכַּל, Young reminds us, is the expression used in the case of 2Samuel 15:31: “And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness [יִסְכַּל].” Gesenius goes on to show how the plural, שְׁכַלֹת, also means folly (see Ecclesiastes 1:17) and is equivalent to סְכַלֹת. It

appears, then, that this is a straightforward translation, *foolish*, rather than a sarcastic one. This verse about putting the self-asserting wise in their place: *that turneth the wise backwards*, מְשִׁיב הַחֲכָמִים אָחֹר, is a common theme in Scripture. It goes along well with such declarations as: “O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish” (2 Nephi 9:28); “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (1Corinthians 1:19, see also Isaiah 29:14); and “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom” (Jeremiah 9:23a). Indeed, there is nothing more foolish (שְׁכַל) than a person who thinks he is wise (חָכָם and שְׁכַל) in himself and instead of *trusting the LORD will lean on his own understanding* (see Proverbs 3:5-7). Baltzer says: “But what one really expects of the wise (חֲכָמִים) is that with their knowledge (דַּעְתָּם) they ‘understand, have insight, make wise, have success and thus act discerningly, devoutly’; this indicates the semantic range of שְׁכַל ‘To be foolish’ (סְכַל) or ‘understand’ (שְׁכַל)—the difference is only a single *s*³⁸ sound, comparable with the famous ‘shibboleth.’ This is once more an indication that the text is conceived for speaking and listening.”

26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed ^v places thereof:

✓ wastes

That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers. The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “But establisheth the word of his servant, and verifieth the counsel of his messengers.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓢ) has, “That raise up the word of my servant and perform the counsel of my messengers.” Regarding the word *establish* or *stand* (קָיָם), Young makes a brilliant observation: “Earlier (ISAIAH 40:8) Isaiah had stated that the *word* of [our] God would *stand forever*; and

³⁸ In Modern Hebrew any such difference between ו and ש is even lost. Not so with ש and שׁ, or even between ש and ס (שְׁבִלֹת vs. סְבִלֹת) of *Shibboleth* vs. *Sibboleth* (see Judges 12:6).

now, employing the same verb, he points out that God causes *His servant's word* to stand.” So it is that in Isaiah 40:8 we saw: “:”וְדָבַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ יָקוּם לְעוֹלָם” and here we have: “:”מִקִּים דָּבַר עֲבָדִי.” ¶ Horsley testifies that “his servant” is none other than Messiah.³⁹ Through the principle of *how beautiful are the feet* we know that often we have verses that are intended as a description of Messiah, but that also He shares with us, as we attempt to be His disciples. Horsley also suggests that “the first seven verses of ISAIAH 45 should be joined to this chapter, and the new chapter should begin with the 8th verse, ‘Drop down,’ &c.” Many other exegetes offer suggestions as to how these chapters should have been divided a little different. ¶ Each priesthood holder seeks to give blessings such as that they are the word of the Lord, and as such, that *these words will be confirmed*, or come to pass, because they are indeed *His words*. Furthermore, not a few times have I prayed to God that I might be able to teach by the spirit or testify by the spirit in such a way that *those words are also confirmed* to those who hear them. We read about such teaching and testifying by the spirit in D&C 100:5-8: “Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men; For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say. But a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall declare whatsoever thing ye declare in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things. And I give unto you this promise, that inasmuch as ye do this the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever ye shall say.” Such things permit us to speak with great love and power such that the spirit is felt by those present and this is what it means to me to have the words of a servant confirmed. Now, these words are principally applied to the Savior, and we know *all of His* words were confirmed and that He spoke with great power and authority (Matthew 7:29). One of my favorite scriptures of all time is found in Samuel: “And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Samuel 3:19). I believe that this verse has a double meaning. That all the words that Samuel spoke as a prophet of God came to pass and none fell to the ground unaccomplished; and also, just as important, that Samuel did not permit the Lord’s words to fall to the ground but was obedient in all things. This was a type of Christ and His relationship with the Father. It is the privilege of every man, woman and child to live in this manner, so that our words will be confirmed as we follow the dictates of the Spirit. Can there be anything more wonderful? ¶ *That saith to*

³⁹ Others may also act as servants, but *the* Servant is Messiah.

Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited. The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “Who saith to Jerusalem, ‘Thou shalt be inhabited.’” Cyrus had a huge part in the re-building of Jerusalem in the early days (see ISAIAH 44:27-28). And now in the latter-days Jerusalem is once again being rebuilt. It is the Holy One of Israel who makes these things possible. ¶ *And to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:* The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “And to the cities of Idumea, ‘Ye shall be rebuilt, and in its deserts vegetation shall spring up.’” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has *wastes* instead of *decayed places*. Baltzer says, “Yahweh himself will raise up the ‘rubble.’ The word רָבַרְבָּה is generally found in connection with destroyed cities . . . [but later says] according to Elliger: ‘Yahweh personally intervenes on behalf of Jerusalem’s rebuilding.’” This is just another witness that Jerusalem and other cities in the Holy Land would indeed be *destroyed* and have to be *re-built*.

27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

The Targum (Ⓒ) has, “Babylon” rather than the *deep*. The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “Who saith to the deep, Thou shalt be wasted, and I will dry up the rivers.” The Peshitta (Ⓔ) seems to make these commands. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has *Be thou desolate* instead of *be dry*. Gill says: “. . . most interpreters, Jewish and Christian, understand it of Babylon, which was situated in a watery place, by rivers of water, particularly the river Euphrates, and in a low valley.” Jenour suggests: “*Who saith to the deep, Be thou dry.* The stratagem by which Cyrus entered the apparently impregnable city of Babylon is well known. Having dug a large deep trench near the Euphrates, he turned the water of that river into it; and the river thus becoming fordable, he marched up its bed straight into the city, the inhabitants of which made little or no resistance, being entirely unprepared for such an attack. It is evident, therefore, that by *the deep*, in this place, is meant the Euphrates, which Cyrus diverted from its original channel by the secret influence of Jehovah. The words of the conqueror upon this occasion, as we find them recorded by Xenophon, are remarkable. Having assembled the principal officers of his army, just before he was about to attack the city, ‘My friends,’ said he, ‘the river yields to us its bed, to make for us a way into the city; let us enter it with confidence,’ &c. (*Cyropaedia*, liber vii).” Keith writes: “This may be understood as a general truth, or—and this appears to be the allusion here—as referring to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt when a path was opened through the waters of the Red Sea, as in ISAIAH 43:16; or to the deliverance from Babylon, when the waters of the Euphrates were transferred into a new

channel by Cyrus, that by the old one he might introduce his army into the city.” Lowth probably has the most detailed explanation: “The Euphrates in the middle of the summer, from the melting of the snows on the mountains of Armenia, like the Nile, overflows the country. In order to diminish the inundation, and to carry off the waters, two canals were made by Nebuchadnezzar a hundred miles above the city; the first on the eastern side called Naharmalca, or the Royal River, by which the Euphrates was let into the Tigris; the other on the western side, called Pallacopas, or Naharaga, (נהר אגם, The river of the pool), by which the redundant waters were carried into a vast lake, forty miles square, contrived, not only to lessen the inundation, but for a reservoir, with sluices, to water the barren country on the Arabian side. Cyrus, by turning the whole river into the lake by the Pallacopas, laid the channel, where it ran through the city, almost dry; so that his army entered it, both above and below, by the bed of the river, the water not reaching above the middle of the thigh. By the great quantity-of water let into the lake, the sluices and dams were destroyed; and being never repaired afterward, the waters spread over the whole country below, and reduced it to a morass, in which the river is lost.”

28 That saith of Cyrus, [He is] my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

That saith of Cyrus (לְכֹרֶשׁ), note the great difference in pronunciation, *Joresh*, with a Spanish j). Gesenius notes: “The Greeks have remarked that the Persians called the *sun* by this name.” The Targum (ܥ), LXX (Ϟ) and Vulgate (Ϟ) also mention Cyrus by name. Keith writes: “A last illustration of divine power introduced by the prophet is the employment of Cyrus as the instrument of God in delivering the Jews from Babylon, and rebuilding Jerusalem and its temple. He was the son of Cambyses king of Persia, and of Mandane, the daughter of Astyages the king of Media, which two kingdoms were united in his reign. The employment of so celebrated a monarch as the shepherd of God in leading the Jews from Babylon to Judea, of which he was the means, is a fit illustration of divine power. The part he acted in the deliverance of the Jews, and in the rebuilding of the temple, is recorded in sacred history in 2Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1; and in profane history by Xenophon and others. Josephus relates that the prophecy by Isaiah was pointed out to Cyrus by the Jews when in Babylon. It has been supposed that it is to it that he refers in his edict inviting the Jews to return to

Jerusalem: ‘Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah: who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up,’ (2 Chronicles 36:23).” The naming of Cyrus over 150 years before the fact is considered by many exegetes, impossible. Whitehouse, for instance, has: “We can only conclude that we have here the language of a contemporary of Cyrus who watched his career with absorbing interest. The occurrence of this name in an oracle more than 150 years before he lived would be wholly unintelligible and purposeless.” And this is really the sum and substance of why moderns believe that there were two or more authors to the book of Isaiah. They do not believe that a prophet of God may speak of the future. They limit prophets to being wise men that can see and interpret the present. Certainly, wise men can read the present. One of the farm hands in my mother’s vineyard in San Javier, Chile, confidently and correctly predicted both of President Obama’s presidential elections. This was not a revelation from God, but simply astuteness on his part. The Savior castigated the Pharisees in Matthew 16:3 for leaning on their cleverness when it came to the weather but not on Scripture when it came to religious matters: “When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” (Matthew 16:3b-4). I wish to bear witness that God can and does reveal the future even to the least of His servants, and even more so to His living Prophet. I believe that the gift of prophecy is alive and well. And that God does reveal things that will take place in the near future or well into the future. So it is, that I find nothing more natural that God would reveal to Isaiah the name of Cyrus more than a hundred and fifty years before the latter came into the scene. Or, that Jesus was mentioned in the Book of Mormon hundreds of years before He was born. Such predictions seem to cause so much concern for those who do not understand that for God all things are present. Or, who do not understand that God does reveal things to man. Regarding the then future coming of Christ, for instance, Alma testified to his son Corianton: “And now, my son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come to take away the sins of the world; yea, he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people. And now, my son, this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; or rather that salvation might come unto them, that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming. And

now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject. Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming? Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children? Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of his coming?" (Alma 39:15-19). Similarly, we have the story of Sherem. I include Sherem's words of confession because I also have had a self-proclaimed atheist, a friend, tell me he had also lied to me. Note, in the case of my friend and in the case of Sherem, both of these individuals became *witnesses against themselves* (see note on ISAIAH 44:9). Sherem, then, openly shared his unbelief—not just sincere doubts and concerns—regarding the Christ. "And now it came to pass after some years had passed away, there came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem. And it came to pass that he began to preach among the people, and to declare unto them that there should be no Christ. And he preached many things which were flattering unto the people; and this he did that he might overthrow the doctrine of Christ. And he labored diligently that he might lead away the hearts of the people, insomuch that he did lead away many hearts; and he knowing that I, Jacob, had faith in Christ who should come, he sought much opportunity that he might come unto me. And he was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil. And he had hope to shake me from the faith, notwithstanding the many revelations and the many things which I had seen concerning these things; for I truly had seen angels, and they had ministered unto me. And also, I had heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto me in very word, from time to time; wherefore, I could not be shaken. And it came to pass that he came unto me, and on this wise did he speak unto me, saying: Brother Jacob [look at the subtlety of his addressing Jacob as *Brother Jacob*], I have sought much opportunity that I might speak unto you; for I have heard and also know that thou goest about much, preaching that which ye call the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ. And ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence. And now behold, I, Sherem, declare unto you that this is blasphemy; *for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come*. And after this manner did Sherem contend against me. But behold, the Lord God poured in his Spirit into my soul, insomuch that I did confound him in all his words. And I said unto him:

Deniest thou the Christ who shall come? And he said: If there should be a Christ, I would not deny him; but I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be. And I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea. And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.⁴⁰ And this is not all—it has been made manifest unto me, for I have heard and seen; and it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, I know if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost. And it came to pass that he said unto me: Show me a sign by this power of the Holy Ghost, in the which ye know so much. And I said unto him: What am I that I should tempt God to show unto thee a sign in the thing which thou knowest to be true? Yet thou wilt deny it, because thou art of the devil. Nevertheless, not my will be done; but if God shall smite thee, let that be a sign unto thee that he has power, both in heaven and in earth; and also, that Christ shall come. And thy will, O Lord, be done, and not mine. And it came to pass that when I, Jacob, had spoken these words, the power of the Lord came upon him, insomuch that he fell to the earth. And it came to pass that he was nourished for the space of many days. And it came to pass that he said unto the people: Gather together on the morrow, for I shall die; wherefore, I desire to speak unto the people before I shall die. And it came to pass that on the morrow the multitude were gathered together; and he spake plainly unto them and denied the things which he had taught them, and confessed the Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the ministering of angels. And he spake plainly unto them, that he had been deceived by the power of the devil. And he spake of hell, and of eternity, and of eternal punishment. And he said: I fear lest I have committed the unpardonable sin, for I have lied unto God; for I denied the Christ, and said that I believed the scriptures; and they truly testify of him. And because I have thus lied unto God I greatly fear lest my case shall be awful; but I confess unto God. And it came to pass that when he had said these words he could say no more, and he gave up the ghost" (Jacob 7:1-20, *emphasis added*). I humbly and most reverently witness that God does speak to man about the future. ¶ Returning to the book of Isaiah, Henderson explains: ". . . critics stumble at this express mention of the name of Cyrus by Isaiah, who flourished so long before his appearance; but king Josiah was likewise predicted by name, upwards of three centuries before his birth, 1 Kings 13:2. Cyrus was the son of Cambyses king of

⁴⁰ The Talmud, written by the Jewish Rabbis, likewise has "All the prophets prophesied not but of the days of the Messiah," *Sanhedrin 99a*. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

Persia, by Mandane, a daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes. When only sixteen years of age, he commanded an army against the Assyrians; he afterwards assisted his uncle Cyaxares II in an expedition against the Babylonians, on which occasion he obtained the command of all the Median troops; defeated Croesus, king of Lydia; and soon after put an end to the Chaldean monarchy, by the conquest of Babylon, in the year B.C. 538 or 539. On his return to Persia he married his cousin, and obtained with her the right of succession to the crown of Media, which he united in his own person with that of Persia on the death of Cyaxares, in 536 or 535. Scarcely had he ascended the throne of the Medo-Persian empire, than he issued his celebrated edict, granting permission to the Jews to return to their own country, and ordering them to be furnished with what was requisite for rebuilding the temple, 2Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1. He died at the age of seventy, after a reign of thirty years . . . Kings and princes are called shepherds in Scripture, as they are in the ancient classics. It was a title to which Cyrus was partial: it being a proverbial saying with him, ‘A good prince and a good shepherd have the same duties,’ (*Cyropaed.* viii).” Kay leaning on Birks says: “The only other instance of a person’s being prophesied of by name so long previously is that of Josiah (1 Kings 13:2); who (remarks Mr. Birks) inflicted judgment on the idol-gods of Samaria, as Cyrus did on those of Babylon.” Jennings well says: “When one remembers the day in which the ending of this chapter was written, that Jerusalem was still a great and prosperous city, that the cities of Judah needed no rebuilding, that Babylon was but a struggling petty power, that no potentate of the name of Cyrus was known to exist; there cannot be the least surprise that modern rationalism has to make the prophecy to date after the event. Since no miracles are possible; since the Creator of all has been, always ‘reverently,’ expelled from His own universe; and since this would be as wonderful a miracle as any that could be conceived, then to them it follows that Isaiah did not write this prophecy.” Nyman well says that those who believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon will have no problems believing that God, through His prophets, can provide names and dates far into the future: “Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, prophesied of Moses by name more than two hundred years before he delivered Israel out of Egypt. He further prophesied of a choice seer in the latter days who would be called after his own name—Joseph—and he said that his father’s name would be the same. This prophecy was fulfilled approximately thirty-five hundred years later.” ¶ [*He is] my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure:* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “That promises Cyrus that He will give him a kingdom; and *that* he shall establish all my pleasure.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Who saith, to Cyrus [I will give] wisdom, and he shall execute all my pleasure.

The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Thou art my shepherd, and thou shalt perform all my pleasure.” Gill says: “Justin [*Hist. ex Trogo* l. 1. c. 5.] says, he had this name given him, while he was among the shepherds, by whom he was brought up, having been exposed in his infancy.” The Shepherd is Christ and he utilizes many shepherds to help him. Not all of them, Cyrus being an example, are members of His Church. ¶ *Even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built.* The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Who saith to Jerusalem, ‘Thou shalt be rebuilt.’” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Who say to Jerusalem: Thou shalt be built.” Skinner says: “There have been abundant intimations that he is the destined instrument of Israel’s restoration, but these have hitherto occupied a secondary place in the prophet’s thoughts. Here, however, the figure of Cyrus is brought prominently on the scene, he is addressed directly and by name, and the ultimate scope of his mission is clearly unfolded. He is to set the exiles free, to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.” ¶ *And to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.* The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And the house dedicated to me I will found.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “And to the temple: Thy foundations shall be laid.” Kay well says: “Both this title [My Shepard] and that of ‘My Anointed’ (in ISAIAH 45:1) shew that Cyrus, the actual liberator of the Jews, was also a type of the world’s Saviour . . . Cyrus’s work fitted him to prefigure the *Sun of Righteousness* (Malachi 4:2), who should overthrow mystic Babylon, —the empire of darkness.” Clarke notes: “This Cyrus should say to the temple: ‘Thy foundation shall be laid.’ Not—thou shalt be *built*. The fact is, only the *foundation* was laid in the days of Cyrus, the *Ammonites* having prevented the building; nor was it resumed till the *second* year of Darius, one of his successors.” ¶ The Prophet Joseph Smith found an interesting article and mentioned it in his journal under the title of “A Jew’s Memorial,” and reads: “An interesting memorial concerning the Jews, ‘To the Protestant Powers of Europe and America,’ signed and sealed in London, the 8th of January, 1839, may be found in the *Millennial Star*, Vol. I, No. 6.4.” It is quite interesting in that the author is looking for modern-day Cyuses to help Israel. B.H. Roberts added the following footnote: “The article which appeared first in a periodical, entitled ‘Memorial Concerning God’s Ancient People of Israel,’ and then in the *London Times*, seems to have been written by a Christian Jew. It deals largely with the promises of God to ancient Israel, especially as to their return as a people to Palestine. The closing paragraph is an appeal to the Protestant powers of the north of Europe and America to assist in this restoration: ‘As the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, was stirred up to build the Lord a temple, which was in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22-23), who is there among you, high and mighty ones of all the nations, to fulfill the good pleasure of the holy will of the Lord of

heaven, saying to Jerusalem, “Thou shalt be built,” and to the temple, “Thy foundation shall be laid?” (ISAIAH 44:28). The Lord God of Israel be with such. Great grace, mercy and peace shall descend upon the people who offer themselves willingly; and the free offerings

of their hearts and hands shall be those of a sweet smelling savor unto him who hath said, “I will bless thee (Genesis 12:3), and contend with him that contendeth with thee.” (ISAIAH 49:25).”⁴¹

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⁴¹ Smith, Joseph and Roberts, B.H. History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Volume 4, p. 179, including Footnote 4.

