
Isaiah 64

If the Masoretic text (MT) is not corrupted in this respect, Isaiah prays to the LORD.¹ How do we reconcile the fact that today we pray to the Father when prayers seem to have been addressed to Yahweh in the Old Testament? Although *we cannot rule out textual corruption*, it has been suggested² that with the Fall mankind was separated from the Father—as part of the spiritual death. Under LDS Gospel Topics we learn: “Spiritual death is separation from God. The scriptures teach of two sources of spiritual death. The first source is the Fall, and the second is our own disobedience. Spiritual death can be overcome through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to His gospel.”³ We were not left alone, but were given access to pray to the mediator of the New Covenant, even Jesus Christ, the LORD—or Yahweh of the Old Covenant. Christ, through the atonement, opened the way for us to be reconciled again with the Father. In John we read of what seems to be a transition, wherein Christ is teaching His disciples that they will be able, “at that day,” probably speaking of a time after His atonement, to pray directly to the Father as long as they pray in the name of Christ: “At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you” (John 16:26). I was speaking to some missionaries recently, sharing with them some principles wherein they can help their investigators learn how to discern the way God will answer their prayers regarding the Book of Mormon, based on Moroni 10:3-6. I asked them to imagine how someone would be received back in their homes if they said, “Hi, are you Elder or Sister such and such parents? I met him or her in Chile and wanted to tell you how wonderful it was to see them.” Do you not suppose, I suggested, that the parents would quickly welcome you into their home and want to know all about how their son or daughter is doing? Back in the day when parents did not have e-mails I often would call missionaries parents to let them know how wonderfully their son or daughter was doing on their mission. This almost always caused great rejoicing. As we pray the Father in the name of His beloved Son, it is so similar to the analogy I have offered. We are importuning the Father, we approach Him, but we do so as having been sent by His beloved Son. Every time we pray to the Father, in the name of Christ, we are bearing witness to this great expiatory gift. We are also following the commandment of the Savior who repeatedly taught us to pray to the Father in His name: “... that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16b, also see John 16:23; Matthew 6:6; Ephesians 5:20). I do not know that we fully realize how wonderful a privilege it is to pray to the Father in the name of His Son. ¶ Rawlinson suggests: “Not content with praying God to look upon them once more with favour (ISAIAH 63:15), Israel now asks for a theophany, or manifestation of the Divine Presence, such as they have experienced in the times of old.” Mankind would experience a number of theophanies, including the birth of Christ, even Emmanuel, in the meridian of times. In the latter days, the Father and the Son would appear to the boy prophet, Joseph Smith. But my sense is that this prayer most especially looks on to the end-of-days, a prayerful pleading for the Lord’s Second Coming at the time when Jerusalem will be surrounded by her enemies in an epic battle. Then will Christ appear and stand upon the Mount of Olives, which will rend in two. ¶ Regarding the text itself, Cheyne writes: “In the modern editions of the Hebrew Bible, the verse which, in the printed editions of the ancient as well as in the modern versions, stands as ISAIAH 64:1, forms the second half of ISAIAH 63:19. Birks says: “The Masoretic pointing joins the first verse of this chapter to the verses before. But the other division (LXX, Syriac, Vulgate, AV, Gesenius, Ewald, Maurer, Henderson) is plainly required by the construction of the verses that follow, and also by the change from deep confession to earnest and intense prayer. Still the two passages, as a whole, are very closely linked together.” Cowles suggests: “In the Hebrew Bibles this verse stands at the close of the previous chapter. The division in our English version is better. Still better than either would be no division at all between these chapters.” In our English Bibles, then, ISAIAH 64:2 corresponds with the Hebrew ISAIAH 64:1; the English ISAIAH 64:3 to the Hebrew ISAIAH 64:2, and so on.

¹ See for instance, *All the Prayers of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer (Publisher: Zondervan Pub. House, 1970), and compare against the Hebrew text (MT) or the DSS (Q).

² For example, see “An Essay on Closet Prayer,” *The Primitive Methodist Magazine*, “We have no right to pray to the Father, but for the work Christ has wrought in our behalf” (p. 267, p. 1072 of 1583 in PDF), 1864.

³ LDS.org, accessed 13 February 2017, URL <https://www.lds.org/topics/death-spiritual?lang=eng&old=true>

vv. 1–5. Some of the sentiments in Joseph Smith’s prayers, while different, correspond in some ways with Isaiah’s prayer, “O GOD, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place? How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries? Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them, and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them? O Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven, earth, and seas, and of all things that in them are, and who controllest and subjectest the devil, and the dark and benighted dominion of Sheol—stretch forth thy hand; let thine eye pierce; let thy pavilion be taken up; let thy hiding place no longer be covered; let thine ear be inclined; let thine heart be softened, and thy bowels moved with compassion toward us. Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies; and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs. Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever” (D&C 121:1–6). Both Isaiah and Joseph Smith enjoyed of the Lord’s presence but they wished that presence to be made manifest to the whole world.

1 ¶ OH that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,

OH that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down [תִּפְּרֹץ]. The Targum (Ⓢ)¹ has, “Not unto them hast Thou inclined the heavens and revealed Thyself.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “If thou wilt open the heaven.” To *rend the heavens* means to part the veil in some fashion. Calvin says: “God is said to ‘rend the heavens,’ when he unexpectedly gives some uncommon and striking proof of his power.” Skinner has: “*that thou wouldst rend*] Lit. ‘hadst rent.’ So ‘hadst come down,’ ‘had quaked.’ This use of the perf in the expression of a real wish, whose realisation is contemplated, is unusual, and is only to be explained by the urgency of the speaker’s feeling (Driver, *Tenses*, § 140).” ¶ In the Doctrine and Covenants we have: “I have sent forth mine angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, who hath appeared unto some and hath committed it unto man, who shall appear unto many that dwell on the earth.

¹ Pauli includes the Targum (Ⓢ) from this verse from the last verse ISAIAH 63.

And this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. And the servants of God shall go forth, saying with a loud voice: Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come; And worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters—Calling upon the name of the Lord day and night, saying: O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. And it shall be answered upon their heads; for the presence of the Lord shall be as the melting fire that burneth, and as the fire which causeth the waters to boil ... Yea, when thou comest down, and the mountains flow down at thy presence, thou shalt meet him who rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, who remembereth thee in thy ways” (D&C 133:36b–41, 44). These seem to be prayerful, prophetic requests for the Second Coming of Christ. Because it is clear that the Doctrine and Covenants section was given by revelation, it follows that Isaiah’s prayerful words were also given by revelation. ¶ *That the mountains might flow² down at thy presence.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “The mountains quaked before Thee.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “At thy presence terror will seize the mountains.” Instead of *flow*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has *flee*. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓛ) has, “The mountains would melt away at thy presence.” When the Lord comes again, the earth will burn: ¶ Jenour and some others have suggested this is an allusion to Mount Sinai, “The purport of the prayer is, that Jehovah would manifest himself to the enemies of his people Israel as he had formerly done on that occasion, when the mountain burned with fire, ‘And so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake’ (Hebrews 12:21).” Rawlinson, as do several exegetes, see powerful earthquakes: “*That the mountains might flow down*] or, *quake*. When God descended on Sinai, ‘the whole mount quaked greatly’ (Exodus 19:18). When he appeared to David, ‘the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken’ (Psalm 18:7). When he was seen of Elijah, ‘a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; and after the wind was an earthquake’ (1 Kings 19:11). Micah saw the Lord

² President John Taylor speaks about another flowing down, one related to the return of the lost Ten Tribes: “Now, then, all of these dispensations had to be restored. Then comes Moses. Why? Because he held the keys of the gathering dispensation. And he conferred upon Joseph Smith the power to gather Israel from the four quarters of the earth, and also the ten tribes. But the latter have not come yet; but people are hunting them up, and they will be found by and by; when the time comes, and the mountains will flow down at their presence, and a highway will be cast up, and they will come to a knowledge of the people. But they could not come without the restoration of the keys I have referred to” (President John Taylor, “The Great Principles of Truth.” Ogden Tabernacle, 21 March 1880. JD 25:253a).

‘coming forth out of his place,’ and ‘the mountains were molten under him, and the valleys cleft’ (Micah 1:3, 4). The mountains represent that which is most firm and solid and strong upon the face of the earth. If even they ‘melt and flow and tremble’ at the presence of God, what might must his be! And who may abide him?” These thoughts certainly remind us of the earthquakes that made themselves present in the American continent after the death of our Savior. This flowing down, seems to be a combination of both earthquakes, and as we see in ISAIAH 64:2, of consuming fire. These things, once again, seem to especially point to the Second Coming. ¶ Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “When the Lord comes in his glory, in flaming fire, that fire will both cleanse the vineyard and burn the earth. In that day, so intense shall be the heat and so universal the burning, the very elements of which this earth is composed shall melt. The mountains, high and glorious and made of solid rock, shall melt like wax. They shall become molten and flow down into the valleys below. The very earth itself, as now constituted, shall be dissolved. All things shall burn with fervent heat. And out of it all shall come new heavens and a new earth whereon dwelleth righteousness.”³ Elder Orson Pratt shared: “Prior to [the Second coming] there will be numerous destructions, by way of earthquakes, plagues, hailstorms, wars, etc., that will prevail and that will sweep away millions from the face of our globe. But the great judgment that is to cleanse the earth from all sin, is to be by the element of fire . . . When he burns up the wicked, when he causes the elements to melt with fervent heat, when he causes the mountains to flow down and melt like wax before his presence . . . yet the Lord could reorganize these elements, so scattered in space, by his power, bringing them together again by his law and by his word, making a new world, and creating a new heaven, and a new earth . . . there will be an entire change in the condition of the earth, and also in the condition of the human family, the curses of the fall will not be found in either, and consequently there will be no more mortality upon the new creation, neither sorrow, nor weeping; neither will there be any more death; for the former things will have passed away, and all things will become new.”⁴ Earlier, Elder Orson Pratt said: “When the Lord shall again convulse this continent, as he assuredly will do, throwing down the mountains and raising up the valleys, at the time of his second coming, for then, says the prophet Isaiah, the mountains shall flow down at his

presence. Then, says the prophet David, the hills and the mountains shall melt like wax before the presence of the Lord. I say when this great and terrible convulsion shall come we may find cities rising, as it were, from the bowels of the earth, disgorged and brought to the surface. It need not surprise the inhabitants who then live to see cities brought up from the depths of the lakes and from the depths of great waters; to see mountains removed from their places and uncovering ancient cities that have been covered up for generations.”⁵

2 As [when] the melting fire √ burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, [that] the nations may tremble at thy presence!

✓ the fire of meltings

As [when] the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “When Thou didst send forth thine anger like fire in the day of Elijah, the sea was melted, the waters were flames of fire,” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “And they will melt as wax melteth before fire; and a fire will burn up the adversaries.” The Lamsa Peshitta (Ⓢ) has, “That they might melt as wax melts before the fire, and that fire might devour (or *burn*, BPE) thy enemies.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “They would melt as at the burning of fire, the waters would burn with fire.” Birks has: “The word rendered ‘melting’ AV [הַמְטִיחַ], occurs here only, and is now commonly held to mean dry twigs or **brushwood**. The rendering above, though not quite literal, retains the emphatic mention of fire first and last in the double clause. One figure is of swift, rapid, noisy consumption by the flames; the other of violent agitation and tumult, like water that boils over a glowing fire. The former has occurred before, ISAIAH 27:11. The nations, with all their might, will be agitated, dismayed, confounded, when the mighty King of nations reveals His presence.” Similarly, Cowles would translate: “As fire burns **brush-wood**—as fire will make waters boil.” Leeser has: “As fire is kindled on **brushwood**, as water is made to bubble up by fire.” The idea of brushwood, brush, twigs or stubble is utilized by most English translators (see e.g., AMP, ASV, BBE, CJB, Darby, ERV, ESV, GW, HCSB, ISV, JPS, LEB, LITV, MKJV, NASB, Rotherham, RV, TS2009, WEB, WEBA, YLT). Lowth prefers the Vulgate (Ⓥ): “*the dry fuel* [הַמְטִיחַ]. “It means dry stubble, and the root is הַמְטִיחַ,⁶” says Rabbi

³ Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 526–27, in *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual* (2000), Chapter 36: The Lord’s Second Coming.

⁴ Elder Orson Pratt, “Fulfillment of Prophecy.” Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, 23 June 1878. JD 20:11b-14 and also see JD 20:11a and JD 15:55a (Second Coming of Christ).

⁵ Elder Orson Pratt, “The Day of God’s Power.” Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, 11 February 1872. JD 14:328b.

⁶ Gesenius explains it: “הַמְטִיחַ, an unused root, i.q. همس, همش, which are used of a gentle noise of various kinds (comp. הַמְטִיחַ, הַמְטִיחַ, הַמְטִיחַ).”

Jonah, apud Sal. ben Melech in loc. Which is approved by Schultens, Orig. Hebr. p. 30 ... [but] The LXX and Syriac agree exactly together in rendering this line by, ‘As the wax *melting* before the fire,’ which can by no means be reconciled with the present text. Vulgate for **הַמַּטִּיחַ** reads **יָמַסוּ**.⁷ Alexander, still leaning on the Masoretic text (**MT**) suggests: “The ancient versions and several of the Rabbins derive it from **מָסַח**, to melt, but in violation of etymological analogy [while] Rabbi Jonah ... pronounces it to mean dry stubble (**קַמֵּץ**), and the definition has been since completed by the Arabic analogy.” Ibn Ezra explains, regarding ISAIAH 34:3 “**וַיִּמְסוּ** And shall be *melting*. Niphal of **מָסַח** ‘to melt.’” ¶ Rabbi Rosenberg explains that this verse is similar to Exodus, one of the plagues of Egypt: “And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation” (Exodus 9:23–24). Alternately, Rosenberg leaning on Rashi, suggests that it refers to the struggle between Elijah and the Priest of Baal, “Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench” (1 Kings 18:38). According to Redak, in Rabbi Rosenberg, “As a melting fire burned, a fire that bubbled water. This refers to the fire burning on Mt. Sinai at the time of the Revelation⁸.” Furthermore, we should note Exodus 19:18: “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.” Oswalt has: “Throughout the Bible, from

הַמַּטִּיחַ, as of persons walking, of small branches and twigs mixed together and breaking one another (Knicken des Reisholzes); compare transp. **הִשְׁמַח** to break any thing dry, as brushwood, **הִשְׁמַח** brushwood. Hence—**הַמַּטִּיחַ** m. pl. ISAIAH 64:1 [64:2 in AV], **brushwood**. Saadia has well retained **הִמְסַח**. See Schult. in Orig. i. p. 68, 69.”
⁷ Gesenius has the root **מָסַח**: “TO MELT, TO FLOW DOWN, TO WASTE AWAY. In Kal once found, used of a sick person wasting away, ISAIAH 10:18. (Kindred roots are **מָסַח**, **מָסַח** No. II; see also **מָסַח** to dissolve, to macerate in water, and the words given under **מָסַח**.) NIPHAL **מָסַח**, in pause **מָסַח**, fut. **מָסַח**, inf. I)—(**הַמַּטִּיחַ**) *to be melted*, used of the manna, Ex. 16:21; of wax, Psalm 68:3; by hyperbole of mountains melting with blood, ISAIAH 34:3.—Judges 15:14, ‘his bands *melting* [**הַמַּטִּיחַ**] from off his hands,’ i.e. fell from his hands as if loosed. Used of cattle when sick, 1 Samuel 15:9.” Judges 15:14, in AV, “and his bands *loosed* [**הַמַּטִּיחַ**] from off his hands” (Judges 15:14b). Leeser more literally has: “and his bands *melting* [**הַמַּטִּיחַ**] from off his hands.”

⁸ Refers to Moses experience with the Lord on top of Mount Sinai.

Genesis 3:24 through Exodus 3:1 and Acts 2:3 to Revelation 20:9, *fire* is intimately associated with the presence of the holy God. In no book is that more true than this one (ISAIAH 4:5; 6:6; 9:4 [Eng. 5]; 10:16; 29:6; 30:27, 30; 31:9; 33:12, 14; 66:15, 16, 24).” All of these things, of course, are only types of the burning that would take place during the Second Coming. ¶ *To make thy name known to thine adversaries, [that] the nations may tremble at thy presence!* The Targum (**T**) has, “To make Thy name known to the enemies of Thy people, *that* the nations may tremble at Thy presence.” The LXX (**G**) reads, “And thy name will be manifest to the adversaries—At thy presence the nations will be troubled.” The Douay-Rheims (**V**) has *enemies for adversaries*. Rabbi Rosenberg points us to Exodus 9:16 as an example: “And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” Skinner, along with almost every commentator, suggests that the requested theophany was for the purpose of making the Lord’s name known to His adversaries. So also in Joseph Smith’s prayer above, D&C 121:1–6. ¶ Elder Orson Pratt spoke of the prayers that would be uttered by the Brethren: “We are told . . . by the Prophet Isaiah, how that the servants of God in those notable days should call upon the name of the Lord, saying, ‘Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations might tremble at thy presence,’ which prayer shall be answered.”⁹

3 When thou didst terrible things [which] we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

When thou didst terrible things [which] we looked not for. The Targum (**T**) has, “When Thou didst wonderful things, which we expected not.” The LXX (**G**) reads, “When thou executest thy glorious works.” Instead of *terrible*, the Peshitta (**S**) has *wondrous* (Lamsa) / *impressive* (BPE). The Douay-Rheims (**V**) has, “When thou shalt do wonderful things, we shall not bear them.” Rather than *terrible*, the idea is that of *mighty* things. Wordsworth has: “*When thou didst terrible things* [At the Exodus, and at Sinai.]” Keith suggests: “The figures of the Lord coming down—of the mountains melting at his approach, are not, however, limited to the events of the last national woes, the text in ISAIAH 64:3 appealing

⁹ Elder Orson Pratt, “Changes in the Configuration of the Globe.” Twentieth Ward Meetinghouse, Salt Lake City, 3 December 1876. JD 18:315. See D&C 133:36b–41, 44, quoted above.

in the same language to what God had already done for Israel in punishing her enemies, as in the destruction of the Egyptian host, and in other miraculous interferences. He is urged to do for her again in reference to her final deliverance what he had done in former ages. There follows a declaration [see margin || ISAIAH 64:4] that there is no God who doeth such things for those who seek him as the true God.” These *marvelous*¹⁰ things are those alluded to in ISAIAH 64:2. Skinner says: “*while thou doest terrible things which we hoped not for*] i.e. surpassing all our expectations . . . *terrible things*] A standing phrase, as Cheyne remarks, for the marvels of the Exodus, the type of the great final deliverance (cf. Deuteronomy 10:21; 2 Samuel 7:23; Psalm 106:22).” These comments make me think of the deliverance that will take place as the Savior stands on the Mount of Olives and it splits in half, making a safe shelter for the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem to run away from the enemies surrounding that Holy City. So also Ironside, who says: “God has said in the book of Zechariah, ‘I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle’ (Zechariah 14:2). The remnant see that ominous gathering and cry, ‘O God, wilt Thou not intervene? Wilt Thou not rend the heavens and come down? Wilt Thou not deal with these nations Thyself and give the deliverance for which our hearts crave?’” ¶ *Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “Thou didst reveal Thyself; the mountains trembled at Thy presence.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Because of thee terror will seize the mountains.” Instead of *flowed*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has *fled*. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “Thou didst come down, and at thy presence the mountains melted away.” Cowles explains: “The verb, ‘*come down*’ [נִרְדָּה] [נִרְדָּה], is not only the same verb but the same form of it as in ISAIAH 64:1, and therefore should come under the force of the optative particle, which would make it a prayer.” As Rashi and Rabenu Tam, in Rabbi Rosenberg explains, as related to Mount Sinai, where the Lord came down to speak with Moses. Judges 5:5 is given as a reference: “The mountains melted from before the LORD, *even* that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.” Keith has: “In agreement with the whole context, their hopes and prayers for future deliverance are based on their memories of the past, ISAIAH 63:7, 9, 11. The allusion here is to the giving of the Law on Sinai, and completes those already made to the passing of the Red Sea, and the journey through the wilderness.” Dunash, in Rabbi Rosenberg, relates it more specifically to the plagues in Egypt. Shalom Paul

¹⁰ Shalom Paul also uses the word *marvelous* for *terrible*. Dr. Paul utilizes such words as *awesome*, *marvelous*, *awesome*.

observes: “The term מִפְנֵיךָ¹¹ occurs here for the third time and serves as the introduction to the threefold refrain: ISAIAH 63:19: “And mountains quaked *before You*”; 64:1: “So that nations will tremble *before You*”; 64:2: “And mountains quaked *before You*.” ¶ Apostle Moses Thatcher beautifully testified: “God dwells in eternal fire, and no human being who has not been baptized in water and Spirit can abide that which will come, when the earth is immersed in flames, mountains melt with fervent heat and run down like wax.”¹²

4 For since the beginning of the world [men] have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, [what] he hath prepared for him ~ that waiteth for him.

✓ or, seen a God beside thee, which doeth so for him, &c.

For since the beginning of the world [men] have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen. The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “And since the world was, ear hath not heard the report of such mighty deeds, nor hearkened to the speech of rapture, nor hath eye seen, what Thy people saw, the Shekinah of Thy glory, O Lord.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Never have we heard, nor have our eyes seen.” I would render this Scripture in Spanish as follows: “Ya que desde el principio del mundo los hombres no han oído, ni percibido en sus oídos, ni los ojos han visto, oh Dios, además de ti, lo que Él ha preparado para los que confían (o esperan) en Ti” (ISAÍAS 64:4). ¶ A number of exegetes focus on the comparison between what the true God can do and that which the no-gods can achieve, as in the margin ||. Rawlinson suggests: “*Neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared*] rather, as in the margin ||, *neither hath the eye seen a God, beside thee, which worketh for him that waiteth upon him.* The only ‘living God’ who really works for his votaries, and does them good service, is Jehovah.” We also have the testimony of Paul¹³ regarding this beautiful verse: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Jenour suggests: “The things therefore which their *ears had not heard*, &c. are the

¹¹ מִפְנֵיךָ is literally, *before your face*. Please remember that in the Biblia Hebraica the numbers are one off from the English.

¹² Apostle Moses Thatcher, “Baptism of Water and of Fire.” Tabernacle, Logan, 28 August 1885. JD 26:309b. Also see 26:211b.

¹³ Kay suggests of Paul’s quotation: “St. Paul refers to this passage as having been verified by the fact that, when ‘the Lord of glory’ came to redeem mankind, ‘none of the princes of this world recognized’ Him (see 1 Corinthians 2:7–8).”

wonderful blessings of the Gospel, which far exceeded what believers of old hoped for, or anything that man could ever have imagined or anticipated. This is the interpretation of the passage given by St. Paul, as cited above.” That these several interpretations are implied is undeniable, but they fail to capture the fuller meaning of this verse: related to the joy in this life as well as in the eternities. Birks, regarding this verse, calls it a “glorious promise.” ¶ My son David Marsing Billikopf passed to the Spirit World yesterday, 6 February 2017, after a battle with cancer. About three years ago, when the Lord gave him a priesthood blessing, where I was mouth—I saw the glorious state which awaited him—not really understanding that he would be moving on to his next mission so soon or precisely what all of this meant. Interestingly, my son fell asleep as soon as I put my hands on his head and I was the only one who heard the blessing. Now, I believe I understand why this happened. It was another of Heavenly Father’s tender mercies. It was I who needed to hear these words of comfort for a coming day: for today. The thoughts in ISAIAH 64:4 may be entertained by all those who have feared the Lord and loved Him, and who are candidates for exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom. The sufferings of the martyrs, and of all those who for Christ’s sake have endured difficulties, are now set aside. For truly, “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces” (ISAIAH 25:8a). We also find this scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants—in the context of the Second Coming, “For since the beginning of the world have not men heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath any eye seen, O God, besides thee, how great things thou hast prepared for him that waiteth for thee” (D&C 133:45). Yet, President Harold B. Lee warns that we not diminish the full force of these blessings—for we do not have to die or only look forward to the eternities to have the Lord *wipe away our tears* and fill us with joy unspeakable: “The Apostle Paul said something that was in reality a quotation from the prophet Isaiah: ‘But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9.) Sometimes that has been taken to mean blessings hereafter, and too little thought has been given that those great and wonderful blessings can apply to us here and now. [For there are ...] wonderful experiences and blessings that we here can enjoy that no one, outside of those who do enjoy them, can fully appreciate.’”¹⁴ ¶ *O God, beside thee, [what] he hath prepared* [עֲשָׂה] root [עָשָׂה] for him that waiteth for him. The Targum (Ⓢ)

¹⁴ *Stand Ye In Holy Places: Selected Sermons and Writings of President Harold B. Lee*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1988, pp. 113-115.

has, “For there is none beside Thee, who will do such things for Thy righteous people, who were of old; who hope for Thy salvation.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “A God besides thee; nor works such as thine, which thou wilt do for them who wait for mercy.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has *them* instead of *him*. ¶ Birks has: “The waiting on God, in the OT promise, becomes the love of God in the New.” As I suggested in ISAIAH 40:30, there is nothing *passive* about waiting on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord also entails honoring His timetable. In short, waiting on the Lord fully involves discipleship.

5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, and rejoiceth him [~~those that~~] remembereth thee in thy ways; in righteousness there behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we such shall be saved.

Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness, and rejoiceth him that remembereth thee in thy ways. The Prophet Joseph Smith, in the Inspired Version, has moved **לְעֹשֵׂי הַצְּדִקָּה**, *for/but have sinned*, to the next verse.

The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “The works of our righteous fathers were acceptable in Thy sight, who rejoiced to do Thy will in truth and in righteousness: in the way of Thy goodness and mercy they remembered Thy fear whenever (literally, ‘at all times’).” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “For it will meet them who practise righteousness.” The Peshitta (Ⓟ) renders it: “Thou meetest with joy him that works *righteousness* (Lamsa) / *justice* (BPE). The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Thou hast met him that rejoiceth, and doth justice: in thy ways they shall remember thee.” ¶ Cowles represents the view of many when he says: “Of this verse there have been an indefinite number of diverse interpretations.” Whitehouse calls it a “hopelessly corrupt text.” Keith has: “This passage has been very perplexing both to ancient and modern expositors, not from any diversity of readings, but from the difficulty of educing¹⁵ the meaning of the original. Lowth writes: “I am fully persuaded, that these words, as they stand in the present Hebrew text, are utterly unintelligible: there is no doubt of the meaning of each word separately, but put together they make no sense at all.” ¶ This is because the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has been so altered. “This is one of those verses,” I wrote in my handwritten journal on Isaiah, “that immediately screams out, ‘Look at the JST!’ Gladly, there is a JST to look at. The JST reads, with my observations in brackets: “Thou [God] meetest him [the man] that worketh righteousness, and rejoiceth him [the man who fears the Lord rejoices] that

¹⁵ That is, to draw out the meaning, *Webster*.

remembereth thee [or, the man who remembers God and His ways is filled with joy] in thy ways; in righteousness [or, righteous living is the key] there is continuance [rather, עולם, eternity, continuation, permanence, posterity], and such shall be saved [exalted]. Wordsworth interestingly notes: “the contrast is between the error and uncertainty of men’s ways, and the truth and stability of God’s ways ... since God’s ways are everlasting ... They who walk in His ways enjoy *continuance* (ISAIAH 64:5), but the wicked fade away as a leaf (ISAIAH 64:6).” ¶ Birks says: “Joy in God is one mark of a true faith, a contrast to the impenitence that only frets and murmurs under the hand of God.” Cowles has: “Thou meetest *with favor* him who joyfully does right; *i.e.*, who does righteousness not under compulsion but of his free will, as one who loves it. A further description of this class is that they *remember God as to his ways*. A case in illustration of this remembrance of God is that of Habakkuk in his third chapter, calling to mind the ancient ways of God so grandly and with such effective moral power upon his own soul.” ¶ Jenour has: “*In thy ways*] *i.e.*, walking in thy ways; or, living according to thy will.” ¶ *In righteousness there is continuance, and such shall be saved*. The Targum (Ⓒ) has, “Thy wrath from Thy presence was upon us, because we have sinned: on account of the works of our righteous¹⁶ fathers, we have been saved.” The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “And they will remember their ways.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has, “Behold thou art angry, and we have sinned: in them we have been always, and we shall be saved.” Despite the corruption of the text, Cowles also agrees with my interpretation of the second clause: “Literally the statement is, ‘In those ways there is an eternity’ ... The general strain of thought is richly hopeful. God will surely meet with interposing mercy the faithful few who truly love righteousness, known by their affectionate, trustful remembrance of God’s ways.”

vv. 6–12. Recognition for Israel’s need to repent and turn to the Lord. The people have not been praying. Christ, in His role as spiritual Father, helps mold us. Isaiah, as an intercessor, reminds the Lord that Israel are His people. A lamentation for Zion and for Jerusalem, including the destroyed temple, is heard. A request, once again—similar to that of the first verse—is uttered for the Lord to forgive and to manifest His presence.

6 ¶ But we have sinned; we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our

¹⁶ This is another of those rare circumstances where the Targum (Ⓒ) coincides with the Joseph Smith Translation or the Book of Mormon, in that it has the word *righteous* / *righteousness* repeated twice. Actually, the Targum (Ⓒ) has it thrice.

righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

But we have sinned; we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The Targum (Ⓒ) has, “But we are all as an unclean *thing*; all our righteousnesses are as an abominable garment.” The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “Behold thou wast angry when we sinned; because of this we wandered and became all of us as unclean, and all our righteousness was like a polluted rag.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has, “And we are all become as one unclean, and all our justices as the rag of a menstruous woman,” Vulgate (Ⓕ), *pannus menstruatae*, o *pañõ de menstruosa* (Ⓓ traducida al español).¹⁷ So also Horsley, “*As filthy rags*] properly, a menstruous rag.” Alternately, Horsley also says that the “rag of testimonies”¹⁸ wherein a woman’s virginity was proven on the wedding night may have been meant. Redak, in Rabbi Rosenberg, “since a woman in confinement¹⁹ soils her clothes.” In Hebrew we have נְדִיבָה associated with *ritual uncleanness* or impurity, associated with the menstrual discharge of blood (Gesenius). This was the state between the menstrual discharge and the ritual bath or נִקְיָהָ. A similar word, נְדִיבָה, a requirement of persons who were ritually impure remove themselves from the immediate association of others (see *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (7:82). Both men and women were prohibited from entering the temple when in a state of uncleanness. ¶ No doubt the unrighteous are here contrasted with the upright. We know this because of the context of this verse along with ISAIAH 64:7. But I cannot help but also think that this verse may well be a *warning against self-righteousness* (that is the topic of much of ISAIAH 65). I prefer, then, that we liken ISAIAH 64:6 to ourselves. Also see ISAIAH 40:6–7. Despite our efforts toward righteousness just mentioned (ISAIAH 64:5), this verse reminds us that “... all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23b) and all need to be redeemed and partake of the saving ordinances of the Gospel, and above all, the expiatory sacrifice of the Lamb. These sentiments are parallel to those we find in King Benjamin’s address: “I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and

¹⁷ *La Biblia, o el Antiguo y Nuevo Testamento traducidos al español de la Vulgata Latina* por el Rmo. P. Phelipe Scio de S. Miguel, Obispo de Segovia. Impreso en Londres en 1855.

¹⁸ See Deuteronomy 22:14–19, the *tokens of virginity*.

¹⁹ This is an allusion to

has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants” (Mosiah 2:20–21). Jenour suggests: “These words are only an enlargement upon the confession made in the preceding verse. The pious penitents acknowledge, in the name of their nation, that, like a leprous person, they were *unclean*, and unfit consequently to appear amongst the number of his chosen people. As a leper, on account of his uncleanness was excluded from the congregation of Israel, and from the worship of the Temple. They acknowledge further, that, being unclean themselves, their works also, even the best of them, are defiled with a mixture of sin, and as incapable of hiding the deformity of their souls and rendering them fit to appear in the presence of God, as *filthy rags* are of covering and adorning the body. Can language express the *insufficiency* of our works to justify us in the sight of the most high God? For let it be observed that the speakers in this instance are supposed to be the pious, not the reprobate part of the nation;²⁰ so that the acknowledgment they make of their guilt and pollution may be considered as of general application.” The words of ISAIAH 64:6 are given to put whatever righteousness man may have (ISAIAH 64:5) in context. This does *not* mean that we need not work towards righteousness and good. Our works are vital to our salvation. Even so, we depend on the Savior, “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). ¶ I love what Jenour has to say: “I beg any fellow-believer who reads these lines to note this mark of the Spirit of God in the last hours of any dispensation: the speaker is ever saying, ‘Every one of us.’ No Pharisee is this petitioner, thanking God that he is not as other men. He identifies himself with all the rest, confesses his own full share in all that has brought dishonor on the Name. It is by this humble confession, amid a mass of boasting, that the true Israel was, is, and ever shall be manifested. Surely we have, ‘every one of us,’ to use the words of our prophet, a part in that responsible witness, and so we will not say ‘they,’ but ‘we have

²⁰ This is certainly the case if we attach ISAIAH 64:6 to the previous verses, but in the next verse we have a people who will not even pray. What is most likely, however, is that these are abrupt changes in direction, wherein the prophet considers the more righteous portion, then man’s weaknesses and then the nation as a whole.

sinned,’ and thus confess to our place and part in the present Witness upon earth, a Witness that has failed as much beyond all who have gone before as its privileges have exceeded. But our boast and hope shall be in One sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, with whom failure is unknown, and with whom interest and love for His redeemed never chills nor varies!” ¶ *And we all do fade* [נִבְלָה] *as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* This reminds us of ISAIAH 40: “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodness thereof *is* as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the *flower fadeth* [נִבְלָה]: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass” (ISAIAH 40:6–7, emphasis added, also see ISAIAH 40:8, נִבְלָה צִיץ). The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “And we all do fade as the fading of a leaf; and because of our sins, we are taken away as by the wind.” The LXX (Ⓣ) reads, “And for our iniquities we have fallen like leaves; so that the wind will sweep us away.” Keith says: “The Jews [better, *Judah and Israel*—GB] have been tossed about and scattered over the earth like the faded leaves before the winds of autumn,²¹ and here they are represented as confessing [their fault].” Cowles likewise has: “As the leaves of a tree ... wither, fall off, and are carried about by the wind; so the Jewish people, being deprived of the protection of Jehovah and the consolation of his spirit, complain of having lost all their strength and glory, being scattered, and driven about from country to country, like withered leaves, the derision of their enemies.” Oswalt notes a similar sentiment in Psalms, where the chaff is driven away by the wind rather than a leaf: “Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Psalm 1:1-6).

7 And [there is] none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us,

²¹ Allusion to scattering of Israel in *Rain in Due Season*.

and hast consumed ✓ us, because ✓ ✓ of our iniquities.

✓ melted

✓ ✓ by the hand

And [there is] none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And there is none that prayeth in Thy name willing to lay hold on Thy fear.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “There is indeed none who invoceth thy name, or who remembered to lay hold on thee.” Instead of *stirreth up*, the Peshitta (Ⓢ) has *remembers*. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, for the second clause, “That riseth up, and taketh hold of thee.” Birks notes: “The figure is the same as ISAIAH 27:5, where Israel are exhorted to lay hold on the strength of their God.” ¶ Cowles well observes: “The most fatal fact in their condition was that no men of prayerful interceding spirit remained. There was no one who roused himself up to take strong hold upon God in prayer. Nothing can so surely presage the ruin of a nation as this prayerlessness...” Jenour has: “Although reduced to a state of the greatest distress and misery, they none of them think of turning to the only quarter from which they can obtain help, or of awaking from their stupefaction and folly to seek strength from Jehovah.” One of the most beautiful things about the USA, for me, is that prayers were often offered to God. And one of the saddest, to me, is that one of these places, one of the local Farm Bureaus, stopped offering prayers at the beginning of their meetings. I do not know if they realized the great, great privilege of offering prayers, and the sadness I felt that they gave away this privilege. Rawlinson suggests: “This expresses more than mere prayer; it is earnest, intense, ‘effectual fervent’ prayer.” I have come to love this word, *effectual*. It is used in Doctrine and Covenants: “Behold, and lo, I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an *effectual door* shall be opened in the regions round about in this eastern land” (D&C 100:3). Where there seems to be a wall or barrier to reach a goal, the Lord opens an effectual door for us to pass that obstacle and reach our goal. When used for prayer, it means that the heavens are rent and our prayer reaches our Father in Heaven. Rawlinson is talking about this sort of penetrating prayer that rends the heavens and reaches into the ears of our Father. ¶ *For thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Because Thou hast taken away the fear of Thy Shekinah from us, and Thou hast delivered us to the power (literally, ‘hand’) of our sins.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Because thou hast turned away thy face from us, and delivered us up for our sins.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, beginning with the second clause, “And hast crushed us in the hand of our iniquity.” This reminds us

of the Doctrine and Covenants: “They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble. In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me” (D&C 101:7–8, but also see D&C 101:9, which we quote in the next verse).

8 But now, O LORD, thou [art] our father; we [are] the clay, and thou our potter; and we all [are] the work of thy hand.

But now, O LORD, thou [art] our father. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And Thy mercies, O Lord, have been as many upon us as a father’s upon *his* children.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “But now, Lord, thou art our father.” Isaiah prays for mercy after confessing the people’s general sins, which fits perfectly with D&C 101:9: “Verily I say unto you, notwithstanding their sins, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them. I will not utterly cast them off; and in the day of wrath I will remember mercy.” ¶ Birks says: “The ‘now’ is not a mark of time, but of transition from deep confession, and guilty sleep in sin, to earnest cries for deliverance. They appeal to God’s love as their Father, to His power as of a potter over the clay.” Alexander also suggests that the *now* was “not merely [used] as a particle of time, but as a formula of logical resumption, which could not be omitted without obscuring the relation of this verse to the preceding context, as a summing up of its appeals and arguments.” Whitehouse says: “There is ... a gleam of hope in the use of the term father in the appeal addressed to Yahweh,²² which is therefore grounded on high moral relations subsisting between Yahweh and Israel greater than those of a potter to the clay or even of a sovereign to his subjects.” ¶ Alexander suggests: “Instead of relying upon any supposed merits of their own, they appeal to their very dependence upon God as a reason why he should have mercy on them.” Indeed, we are dependent on the atonement and the merits of Christ our Lord—yet we must permit that the Lord molds us. ¶ Elder Richard J. Maynes shared: “The ancient prophet Isaiah stated, ‘But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.’ If our lives are centered in Jesus Christ, He can successfully mold us into who we need to be in order to return to His and Heavenly Father’s presence in the celestial kingdom. The joy we experience in this life will be in direct proportion to how well our lives are centered on the teachings, example, and atoning sacrifice of Jesus

²² See Mosiah 15:3.

Christ.”²³ ¶ *We [are] the clay, and thou our potter; and we all [are] the work of thy hand.* The LXX (6) reads, “Though we are clay, we are all the works of thy hands.” The Douay-Rheims (9) has, “And we are clay: and thou art our maker, and we all are the works of thy hands.” ¶ In Jeremiah we read: “The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel” (Jeremiah 18:1–6). We also have: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Romans 9:20, see also notes on ISAIAH 63:17). ¶ Wade says: “What the Lord had made He would surely not allow to perish.” Skinner has: “Can the potter allow the work on which he has lavished his utmost skill and care to be broken in pieces?” Jenour has: “In these verses [ISAIAH 64:8–9] the supplicants again express their confidence in the mercy of Jehovah. They plead their relationship to him as his children, and as being in a peculiar manner the *work of his hands*. God indeed is the Creator of all men; but the Jews might, in an especial sense, call him *their* Father and Creator, because of those peculiar favours he had shewn to them above every other nation upon earth. Could he then now cast them off? Could he neglect the work of his own hands?” Redak, in Rabbi Rosenberg, has: “Now if we have sinned against You and angered You, we are an inferior vessel. Make us, then, into another vessel.” It seems to me a request for the Lord to help us soften our hearts and be receptive to the things of the Spirit. It is the Book of Mormon which has had the greatest effect on softening my heart. I have a strong testimony that as we read daily from the Book of Mormon, we will be strengthened in the Gospel and our hearts will be softened. ¶ Alexander suggests: “There is more dignity in the original expression than in the English phrase *our potter*, as the Hebrew word properly denotes one forming or imparting shape to anything, though specially applied in usage to a workman in clay, when that material is mentioned ... The same plea [than found on this verse is], derived from the relation of the creature to the maker, is used in Psalm 138:8, *forsake not the work of thy hands.*” ¶ President Brigham Young taught: “When we get to understand all knowledge, all wisdom, that it is necessary for us to understand in the

²³ Elder Richard J. Maynes, “The Joy of Living a Christ-Centered Life.” October 2015 General Conference.

flesh, we will be like clay in the hands of the potter, willing to be molded and fashioned according to the will of him who has called us to this great and glorious work, of purifying ourselves and our fellow beings, and of preparing the nations of the earth for the glory that awaits them through obedience.”²⁴ On another occasion President Young taught: “We should divest ourselves of all feelings of selfishness, become like clay in the hands of the potter, and say, ‘I have no mind of my own; it must be passive, and suffer God to direct. He has given me good powers of mind, and he shall have the privilege of directing them.’ Then you can enjoy this, that, or the other, and all will be right.”²⁵ ¶ President Harold B. Lee taught, “This is what Isaiah said: ‘But now, O lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. (Isaiah 64:8.) I’ve read that verse many times but had not received the full significance until I was down in Mexico a few years ago at Telacapaca, where the people mold clay into various kinds of pottery. There I saw them take clay that had been mixed by crude, primitive methods, the molder wading in the mud to mix it properly. Then it was put upon a potter’s wheel and the potter began to fashion the intricate bits of pottery, which he was to place on the market. And as we watched, we saw occasionally, because of some defect in the mixing, the necessity for pulling the whole lump of clay apart and throwing it back in to be mixed over again, and sometimes the process had to be repeated several times before the mud was properly mixed. With that in mind, I began to see the meaning of this scripture. Yes, we too have to be tried and tested by poverty, by sickness, by the death of loved ones, by temptation, sometimes by the betrayal of supposed friends, by affluence and riches, by ease and luxury, by false educational ideas, and by the flattery of the world. A father, explaining this matter to his son, said: ‘And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter’ (2 Peter 2:15). It was the Prophet Joseph Smith who said, speaking of this refining process, that he was like a huge, rough stone rolling²⁶ down the mountainside, and

²⁴ President Brigham Young, “The Lord’s Supper.” Special Conference, Brigham City, Box Elder County, for the Purpose of Organizing a Stake of Zion in said County, 19 August 1877. JD 19:93b.

²⁵ President Brigham Young, “Religion of the Saints.” Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, 22 April 1860. JD 8:72b-73a.

²⁶ These words have become popular of late by some who like to speak of the Prophet Joseph Smith weaknesses. While I have no doubt that our beloved Prophet had weaknesses—for he was fully human—I really worry when people point out *specific* behaviors and label them

the only polishing he got was when some rough corner came in contact with something else, knocking off a corner here and a corner there. But, he said, ‘Thus will I become a polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty.’ So, we must be refined; we must be tested in order to prove the strength and power that are in us.”²⁷ President Lee also spoke in this context, about the need to “start all over” through disciplinary councils, in order to permit a person to improve his or her life. President Lee explains, “... when one has sinned so seriously that to hold further membership or to hold the holy priesthood would be as a stumbling block and burden rather than a blessing. In the wisdom of the Lord, these privileges are taken from him that he might be ground as ‘clay in the hands of the potter,’ again tried and tested, until he is again worthy to receive these holy blessings.”²⁸ ¶ Then Elder Russell M. Nelson reminds us: “Personal identity is much more than a passport photograph. We also have roots and branches. Divinity is rooted in each of us. ‘We all are the work of [our Creator’s] hand.’ We are eternal beings. In premortal realms, we brethren were foreordained for our priesthood responsibilities. Before the foundation of the world, women were prepared that they may bear children and glorify God.”²⁹

9 Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we [are] all thy people.

Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Let there not be, O Lord, very sore wrath from Thee against us, neither remember iniquities for ever.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Be not angry with us to the uttermost; nor remember forever our sins.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “Be not very angry, O Lord, and remember no longer our iniquity.” ¶ Kay notes, “*wroth very sore*] the last words of the Book of Lamentations.” Westermann suggests: “The line taken in asking for forgiveness is not that God should simply cancel this sin; it has been committed, and it has its inevitable consequences. Instead, supplication is made that, in spite of it, it

as weaknesses. I fear that doing so is engaging in unrighteous judgment. I resent it when people engage in such judgment of the Prophet Joseph Smith or Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or any of the prophets. Let us say that they are men like us, but not permit ourselves to pass judgment on particular behaviors that most probably we do not understand.

²⁷ *Stand Ye In Holy Places: Selected Sermons and Writings of President Harold B. Lee*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1988, pp. 113-115.

²⁸ *Stand Ye In Holy Places: Selected Sermons and Writings of President Harold B. Lee*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1988, pp. 119-122.

²⁹ Elder Russell M. Nelson, “Roots and Branches,” *Ensign* (CR), May 2004, p.27.

should still be possible [to have God turn] again towards sinful Israel.” Gill has: “*neither remember iniquity for ever*] to afflict and punish for it, but forgive it, for not to remember sin is to forgive it.” ¶ *Behold, see, we beseech thee, we [are] all thy people.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Behold, it is revealed before Thee, that we *are* all Thy people.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “But, O look down now upon us; for we are all thy people.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) does not contain the words, *we beseech thee.* The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “Behold, see we are all thy people.” Similar to ISAIAH 63:19, Isaiah reminds the Lord of His covenant relationship with Israel, “thy people” עַמִּי. Gill has: “*Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people*] look upon all our troubles and distresses, and upon us under them, with an eye of pity and compassion; and consider that we are thy people, not only by creation, but by covenant and profession.”

10 Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness.

The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “The city of thy sanctuary is become a desert: Sion is become like a desert.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “The city of thy sanctuary is become a desert, Sion is made a desert.” Several LDS³⁰ note that two distinct places are here mentioned, Zion in contrast to Jerusalem. Both need to be built up. ¶ Birks has: “The holy cities are those of [the Holy Land], not Jerusalem only (Vitringa). The words will apply to the exile in Babylon. But they apply, even more forcibly still, to the later and longer Roman desolation, in which one stone of the temple has not been left on another, and Jerusalem has been trodden down for long ages.” Jenour, likewise, thinks of the post-Roman devastation of Jerusalem, which is the condition in which the House of the Lord in Jerusalem finds itself in even today. So also Rabbi Rosenberg who points out that “Even today, part of Jerusalem is occupied by Arabs, as is the Temple Mount.” Calvin suggests, “She calls them ‘cities of holiness,’ because, as the Lord had sanctified a people, so he also wished that the cities, and even the whole country, should be consecrated to himself.”

Westermann explains: “Certain striking expressions such as ‘our beautiful house’ and ‘thy holy cities’ are probably due to the tradition of the lament for the sanctuary.” ¶ *Jerusalem a desolation.* The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Jerusalem, for a curse.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “Jerusalem is desolate.” In contrast to the House of the Lord, Jerusalem has ceased to be desolate but the

³⁰ For example, see Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little, *Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel*, p.175; Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man*.

lamentation surely continues. Oswalt suggests: “This emphasis on the destroyed temple is of special significance at this point in the lament form. Laments normally close with a vow of praise, which is frequently to be fulfilled in the temple (cf. Psalm 22:26 [Eng. 25]; 26:6, 12; 27:4; 42:5 [Eng. 4]; 43:4; 51:21 [Eng. 19]; 54:8 [Eng. 6], etc.). But here the temple where praises were wont to be given does not even exist! How then can one make a vow of praise? This is some measure of the desperation that the writer feels.” Wordsworth has: “The fulfilment of this prophecy, which foretells the lamentations of the Jews over this desolation of their city and the Temple, is remarkably exemplified in the name, ‘... wailing-place,’ [in Spanish, *el muro de lamentación*, the Wall of Lamentation—GB] assigned to a spot on the Tyropoemum, at the ‘base of the wall which supports the south-west side of the Temple area.’ On Fridays they assemble there in great numbers. This ‘wailing’ is of great antiquity. It is mentioned by Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century ...” ¶ I love and honor my Jewish ancestry so much that Tomás Fernández, one of my nephews, asked me last week (first week of February 2017) why I was not a Jew. I told him that it was because I have a deep and abiding testimony that Jesus is the Christ. When I went to Jerusalem a few years ago I fully expected to wail at the wall—that tears would flow freely. Tears of joy frequently come to me. But when I was standing by that awesome wall so full of history I was not able to cry at all and felt that the Lord was telling me, “I am no longer here.” A few weeks later, when I was able to walk into the garden tomb outside the city walls, on the other hand, I was so filled with the Spirit, “I am not here but am risen,” reverberated through my soul—and the tears flowed strongly as the Holy Ghost testified of the divinity of our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that the day will come when the Spirit of the Lord will be fully poured upon the Lord’s temple to be built in Jerusalem: HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “The house of our holiness and of our glory, where our fathers worshipped Thee, is burned up with fire.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “The house, our sanctuary—even that glory which our fathers blessed, is utterly burnt up with fire.” Instead of *house, our sanctuary*, the Peshitta (Ⓢ) has *temple* (Lamsa) / *house of our sanctuary* (BPE). The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “The house of our holiness, and of our glory, where our fathers praised

thee, is burnt with fire.” Kimhi, in Slotki-Rosenberg, thinks it of the “First and Second Temples.” Keith says: “‘Our holy and beautiful house’ refers to the temple at Jerusalem.” ¶ *And all our pleasant things are laid waste.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And every place of our desire hath become a waste.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And all our glorious things are in ruins.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “And all our lovely things are turned into ruins.” Slotki-Rosenberg has: “‘Desirable places’ (Targum, Kimhi), referring to the Holy of Holies (Abarbanel).” Redak, in Rabbi Rosenberg, “The Temple, which has been a waste for many years.” Gill explains: “*and all our pleasant things are laid waste*] their pleasant land, and pleasant cities, and especially Jerusalem, the palaces of their princes and nobles, and all the riches and grandeur of them, the temple, and all the rich vessels and utensils in it.”

12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these [things], O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

Wilt thou refrain thyself for these [things], O LORD? The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Yet for all these things, thou, Lord.” The BPE (Ⓢ) has, “In these matters thou hast persisted (or *restrained thyself*, Lamsa), O Yahweh.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Wilt thou refrain thyself, O Lord, upon these things.” Keith says: “The prayer throughout, and especially the close of it, is distinguished by the greatest tenderness and earnestness; and the plaintive and sad air which pervades it, renders it most suitable in the circumstances of the Jewish nation.” It seems to be a plea for mercy against the consequences for estrangement from God. Gill has: “*Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord?*] From delivering us out of our troubles and miseries, and taking vengeance on our enemies, and showing thy zeal for thine own glory; or, as Kimchi paraphrases it, ‘how canst thou contain thyself for these things, and not have mercy?’ how canst thou bear to see Judea, and all its cities, a wilderness; Jerusalem, and the temple of it, in ruins?” ¶ *Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And wilt Thou give prosperity (or, ‘continuance’) for ever to the wicked, who made use servile (the Royal Polyglot reads אֶרֶב לְחַדָּא, ‘very much’)?” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Hast refrained, and been silent. Thou hast humbled us exceedingly.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) makes this whole clause a statement of fact, rather than a question. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us vehemently?” Jennings says: “So wrote the prophet with eyes so anointed that he saw afar to a time that even now, to this day, lies in the future, when a God-fearing remnant of Jews will thus be mourning as they

who mourn for their first-born (Zechariah 12:12). The interposition of Jehovah on behalf of the penitent remnant of His people of which Isaiah speaks, is to be final.” Westermann observes: “The fact that a psalm of lamentation like this ends with an anxious question put to God shows how genuine the language of these psalms is, and how it chimes in with the facts of the case. The final words make it apparent that the entire psalm is designed as a question put to God by men who waited anxiously for him. It also shows that men who spoke in this way looked to God and to his turning again towards them as the sole source of a change in their lot.” Jenour suggests: “*Be silent*] That is, ‘Wilt though disregard our prayers, and take no notice of our

calamities?’” Cowles has: “In view of all these things, wilt thou, O Lord, still shut up thy bowels of compassion; hold thy tender sympathies under stern constraint, and still go on to afflict us even to extremity? What God will do in answer to these imploring supplications, will appear in the next chapter.” It should be clear that the prophet does not question whether the Lord hears his petition, but rather, wishes the Lord to act presently.

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