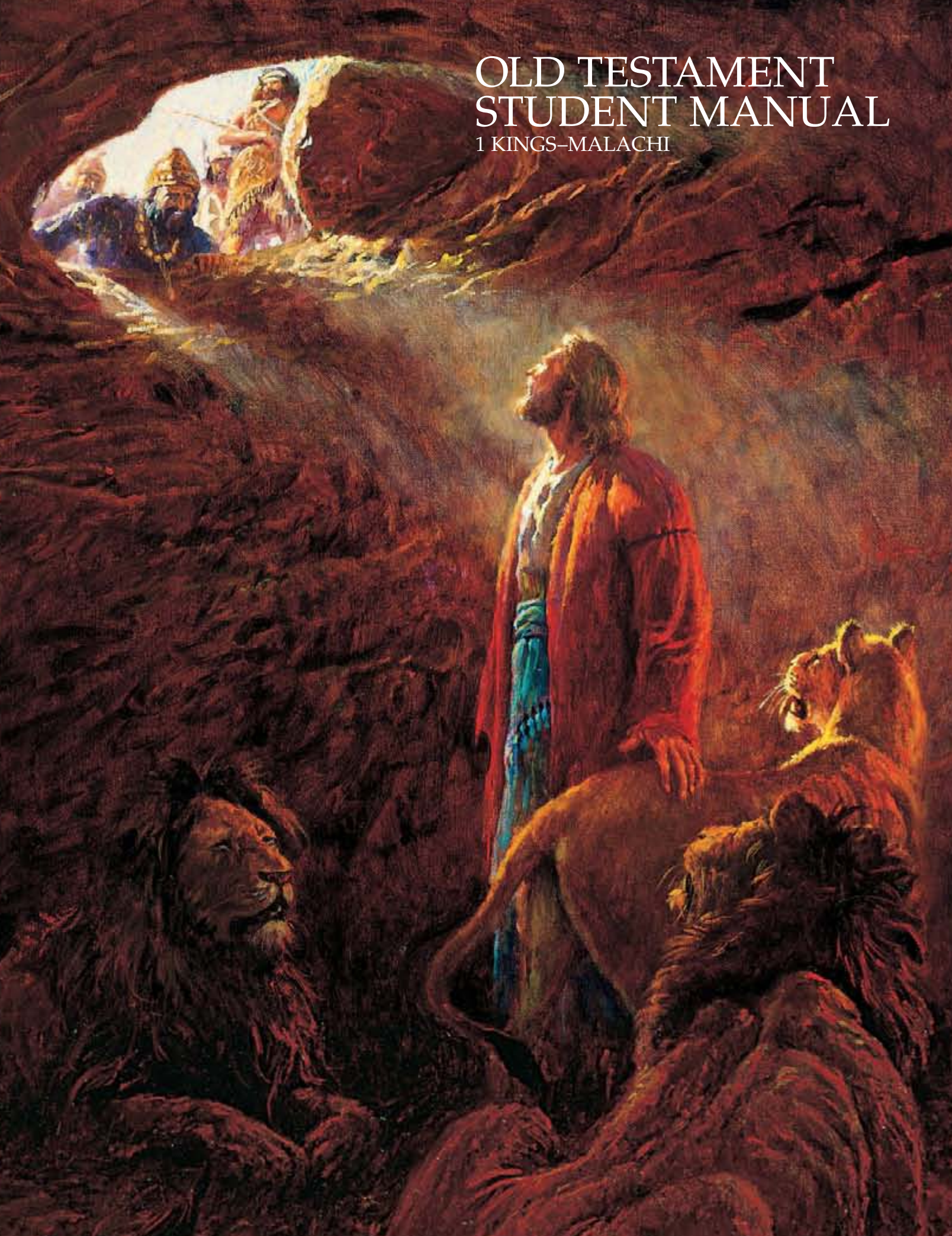


OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT MANUAL

1 KINGS–MALACHI



OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT MANUAL 1 KINGS–MALACHI

Religion 302

Prepared by the
Church Educational System

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Salt Lake City, Utah

Send comments and corrections, including typographic errors, to
CES Editing, 50 E. North Temple Street, Floor 8, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-2772 USA.
E-mail: ces-manuals@ldschurch.org

Third edition
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English approval: 11/02

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Preface

The Importance of Studying the Old Testament

The Old Testament has greatly influenced many people down through time. The roots of three of the world's great religions—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—have sprouted from the richness of its soil. Except perhaps to those for whom the books were originally written, these recorded messages are of greater value to those living in the dispensation of the fulness of times than to any other people. And they are especially valuable to Latter-day Saints.

Some of the lessons and insights that make a careful study of the Old Testament not only meaningful but critical are—

1. The testimony of the existence of God.
2. The record of the beginnings of mankind as a divine race placed on the earth for eternal purposes.
3. The importance of establishing a covenant relationship with God.
4. The history and purpose of the establishment of the elect lineage through which the priesthood would be restored and the blessings of the gospel extended to all in the last days.
5. The revelation of a divine law upon which civil and criminal codes of many nations would be built.
6. The knowledge that God intervenes directly in the lives of men and nations and that through Him many are divinely led, directed, and protected.
7. The blessings of obedience to the laws of God and faith in His name.
8. The consequences of disobedience and rebellion against God and His laws.
9. The corruption that results from any form of idolatry and the reasons for the commandments of the Lord against it.
10. The need to live and endure throughout mortality in obedience to God's laws, even though suffering and pain and persecution may come.
11. The way by which the Saints can escape the corruptions and resulting judgments of the last days.
12. The promises of a literal gathering of Israel in the last days and a time of restoration and redemption for Israel.
13. The greatness and the dreadfulness of the day when the Lord will come in His glory.
14. The testimony that the God of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ and that He came to earth to free us from death and make it possible for us to be freed from sin and thus return to the presence of God the Father.

The spiritual gems in the book were meant to be enjoyed. The prophets whose words are recorded in the Bible were anxious that their message be clear and comprehensible. Through time, mistranslation, and corruption, part of that clarity has been obscured. Fortunately for Latter-day Saints, much of this clarity has been restored by (1) inspired commentary of modern prophets; (2) the guidance of the Holy Ghost;

and (3) the revelation of the fulness of the gospel in the other standard works, including the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible.

Your Goal in Taking This Course

To Israel Moses declared, "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him" (Deuteronomy 4:35). This course of study is designed to increase your opportunity to come to know the God of the Old Testament in an intimate, personal, and powerful way. He is our Redeemer, and your goal in taking this course should be to declare as did Job: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25). In the pages of the Old Testament we see the Lord, the premortal Jesus, working with our Heavenly Father's children to save them from various perils. From these accounts we can learn much about how to come unto Christ. Moses summed up the process with these words: "If . . . thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29). What better guidance and greater goal could we seek?

Reaching This Goal Most Effectively

Through the prophet Jeremiah the Lord declared, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Cisterns, as sources of a reserve water supply, were extremely important to people in the arid lands of the Old Testament, for it was on these that they relied to preserve themselves during the dry seasons. Cisterns were carved out of rock. They could only *retain* water; they could not *produce* it. On occasion the rock would prove full of fissures and be unable even to hold water. Using this fact as a metaphor, the Lord brought two accusations against Israel. The first was their lack of trust in Him. Jehovah, as the spring of living water, could always be relied upon, but ancient Israel hewed new cisterns for themselves; that is, they turned to idolatrous sources for security and spiritual life and power. Second, the new cisterns could preserve the Spirit no better than a fractured cistern could hold water. Thus, Israel was like a people in a drought who ignore a living spring that provides sufficient reserves and trust instead in broken wells that provide nothing.

Each chapter in this manual is designed to help you find the true source of living water—the Lord Jesus Christ. Your study of the Old Testament is an opportunity to come to know Him better.

Each lesson designates a part of the Old Testament as a reading assignment. This assignment will be the core of your study and should be read carefully for each lesson.

The student manual for Religion 302 covers approximately one-half of the Old Testament, from 1 Kings through Malachi except for Psalms. The rest of the Old Testament is covered in the student manual for Religion 301.

The course does not require you to read every chapter of the second part of the Old Testament. After you complete the parts assigned in the reading blocks, however, you will have read the greater part of the Old Testament and acquired the skills necessary to understand the rest on your own. Combined with sincere prayer, scripture study can become a source of personal revelation and an avenue to increased spiritual power in your daily life. It is the way to come to the true spring that will quench your thirst, the one cistern filled with living water.

Why a Student Manual?

Some parts of the ancient scriptures are not easily understood by today's readers. Even the Jews who returned from exile (around 500 B.C.) needed assistance. The Bible records that Ezra the scribe "caused the people to understand the law. . . . So they [the scribes] read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [the people] to understand the reading." (Nehemiah 8:7–8.) Although their problem was caused primarily by changes in their language, the word of the Lord still needed some explaining. So it is today. Corrupt texts, archaic language, and a lack of understanding of the doctrinal, historical, or geographical settings cause some of the difficulty in reading and comprehending the Old Testament. For these reasons this student manual provides the following to assist you:

1. Background information to help you better understand the Middle Eastern world in which the prophets declared their messages.
2. Background information about Old Testament prophets and important contemporary political figures.
3. Background information on many of the books in the Old Testament.
4. Interpretive and prophetic commentary on many of the most important passages and some of the difficult passages.
5. A maps section, which identifies key geographical places, some of the major activities of the prophets and the Israelites, a time line for the events being studied, and modern equivalents of ancient measurements.

How the Manual Is Organized

The twenty-eight chapters in the manual are organized to correspond with the chronology of events in the Old Testament. This organization does not strictly follow the sequence of books as they appear in the Old Testament. It is not possible to adhere exactly to the chronology because several accounts overlap in the time periods they cover, and sometimes several prophets ministered at the same time in different areas. Also, the time of the writing of some books is not known (Job and Proverbs, for example). This manual does, however, basically follow the chronology of the Old Testament.

Throughout the text you will find special enrichment sections—eleven in all—that provide information to help you better understand the chapters that follow them.

This manual should be used to help you organize your study and get the most from your reading of the scriptural passages. Each chapter includes:

1. A short introduction that sets the stage for the scriptures you will read.
2. A reading assignment.
3. Notes and commentary that will help with particularly difficult passages.
4. Points to ponder that call your attention to some of the major lessons of the part of the Old Testament you are studying and give you the opportunity to thoughtfully consider how these lessons can be applied in your life.

How to Use Your Student Manual

The basic text for this course is the Old Testament. This student manual does not replace your reading of the scriptures nor can it substitute for inspired guidance of the Holy Ghost as you seek that guidance in humble prayer. Here are some suggestions on how this manual may be used most profitably:

1. Before reading the scriptures, study the maps to get a feeling for the location of various lands, areas, peoples, geographical features, and cities. Then, throughout your study, refer to the maps as needed.

2. Read the reading assignment for each chapter. The number of chapters you are asked to read for each class period may vary according to your instructor's wishes and according to whether you are studying on the semester, quarter, or individual-study system. Whatever system you are on, however, you will read most of the Old Testament from 1 Kings to Malachi.

3. Study the enrichment sections as you come to them. You will find that understanding the history, geography, or doctrine explained in these sections will help you better understand the scriptures as you read them.

4. Read Notes and Commentary on any passages that are difficult to understand.

5. Complete the assignments in Points to Ponder as directed by your instructor.

6. Use the indexes at the end of the manual to locate a particular scripture, author, or subject.

Which Version of the Bible Should You Use in Your Study of the Old Testament?

A large number of Bible translations are now in existence. The King James Version, the translation recommended for English-speaking Latter-day Saints, has been spoken of many times by the Church leaders. The following are examples of their counsel:

"None of these [other] translations surpasses the King James Version of the English Bible in beauty of language and spiritual connotation, and probably in faithful adherence to the text available to translators. It is this version which is used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in all of its official work [in the English language] both at home and abroad. The literature of the Church refers invariably to the King James translation. Other translations are used by the Church only to help explain obscure passages in the authorized version." (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 120.)

"This King James or Authorized Version, 'as far as it is translated correctly,' has been the version accepted by this Church since it was organized" (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, p. 38).

"The Official Bible of our Church is the King James version" (editorial, *Church News*, 14 Nov. 1970, p. 16).

In languages other than English, available versions are acceptable, of course.

The official recommendation does not mean that the King James Version is a perfect translation. Elder James E. Talmage gave a reason why there is not a perfect translation: "There will be, there can be, no absolutely reliable translation . . . unless it be effected through the gift of translation, as one of the endowments of the Holy Ghost. The translator must have the spirit of the prophet if he would render in another tongue the prophet's words; and human wisdom alone leads not to that possession." (*The Articles of Faith*, p. 237.)

Such an effort to translate the Bible scriptures by the power of the Holy Ghost was begun by the Prophet Joseph Smith at the command of the Lord (see D&C 45:60–61; 93:53). The status of the Joseph Smith Translation in the Church today is as follows:

"The Inspired Version [as it is called by its publishers] does not supplant the King James Version as the official church version of the Bible, but the explanations and changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith provide enlightenment and useful commentary on many biblical passages.

"Part of the explanations and changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith were finally approved before his death; and some of these have been cited in current church instructional materials or may be cited in future church instructional materials.

"Accordingly, these cited portions of the Inspired Version may be used by church writers and teachers, along with the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, in connection with Biblical interpretations, applying always the divine injunction that 'whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom.' (D&C 91:5)

"When the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price offer information relative to biblical interpretation, these should be given preference in writing and teaching. But when these sources of latter-day revelation do not provide significant

information which is available in the Inspired Version, then this version may be used." (Editorial, *Church News*, 7 Dec. 1974, p. 16.)

References from the Joseph Smith Translation are used throughout this manual for clarification of particularly vague or faulty passages of the King James Version.

In 1979 a new edition of the King James Version was published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It contains an extensive cross-referencing system that includes latter-day and biblical scriptures, alternate renderings of difficult passages, language insights to certain Hebrew and Greek words, and many helpful changes from the Joseph Smith Translation. It also has an appendix, which includes a Topical Guide, a Bible Dictionary, passages from the Joseph Smith Translation too long to include in the footnotes, and a section of maps. Similar Bible study helps have been added to triple combinations in other languages since that time. These are without question the finest collection of study aids designed specifically for Latter-day Saints ever provided with the scriptures. They will prove to be an invaluable aid as you study the Old Testament. A selection of cross-references and significant Joseph Smith Translation changes are also included in this manual.

Using the Internal References

Numerous works by biblical scholars have been cited throughout the manual. Shortened references to these works have been used in order to interrupt the reading as little as possible. Complete reference information has been given in the bibliography near the end of the manual.

A special system of referencing was devised for quotations taken from *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. The original work was published in twenty-five books, but the reprint edition quoted in this manual combines the twenty-five books into a ten-book set. This organization means that in some cases one book may have three different pages with the same number. To minimize confusion and to keep a shortened reference, a three-number system was devised. *Commentary*, 3:2:51, means that the reference is found on page 51 of the second volume contained in book 3.

Maps and Charts

Old Testament Canaan

Old Testament World

Old Testament Chronology Chart

The Empire of David and Solomon

The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

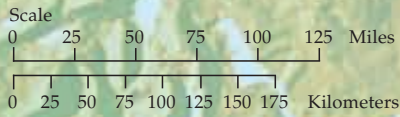
Empires in the Mediterranean World

Standards of Measurement

Jerusalem

Ancient Jewish Calendar

Old Testament World



HITTITES

Tarsus

Carchemish

Haran

Padan-aram

KITTIM
(CYPRUS)

Hamath

Kedesh

Tadmor

Byblos

Syria

GREAT SEA

Damascus

Sidon

Tyre

Bashan

Acco

Megiddo

Shechem

Ammon

Joppa

Jericho

Jerusalem

Moab

Gaza

Hebron

Beersheba

River of Egypt

Kadash-barnea

Edom

Alexandria

Zoan (Rameses)

Goshen

Heliopolis (On)

Memphis (Noph)

Nile River

EGYPT

Petra

Ezion-geber

Midian

Mt. Sinai

Red Sea

CUSH
(ETHIOPIA)



Caspian Sea

● Nineveh

ASSYRIA

● Asshur

MEDIA

● Ecbatana

Euphrates River

Tigris River

BABYLONIA

● Babylon

ELAM

● Susa

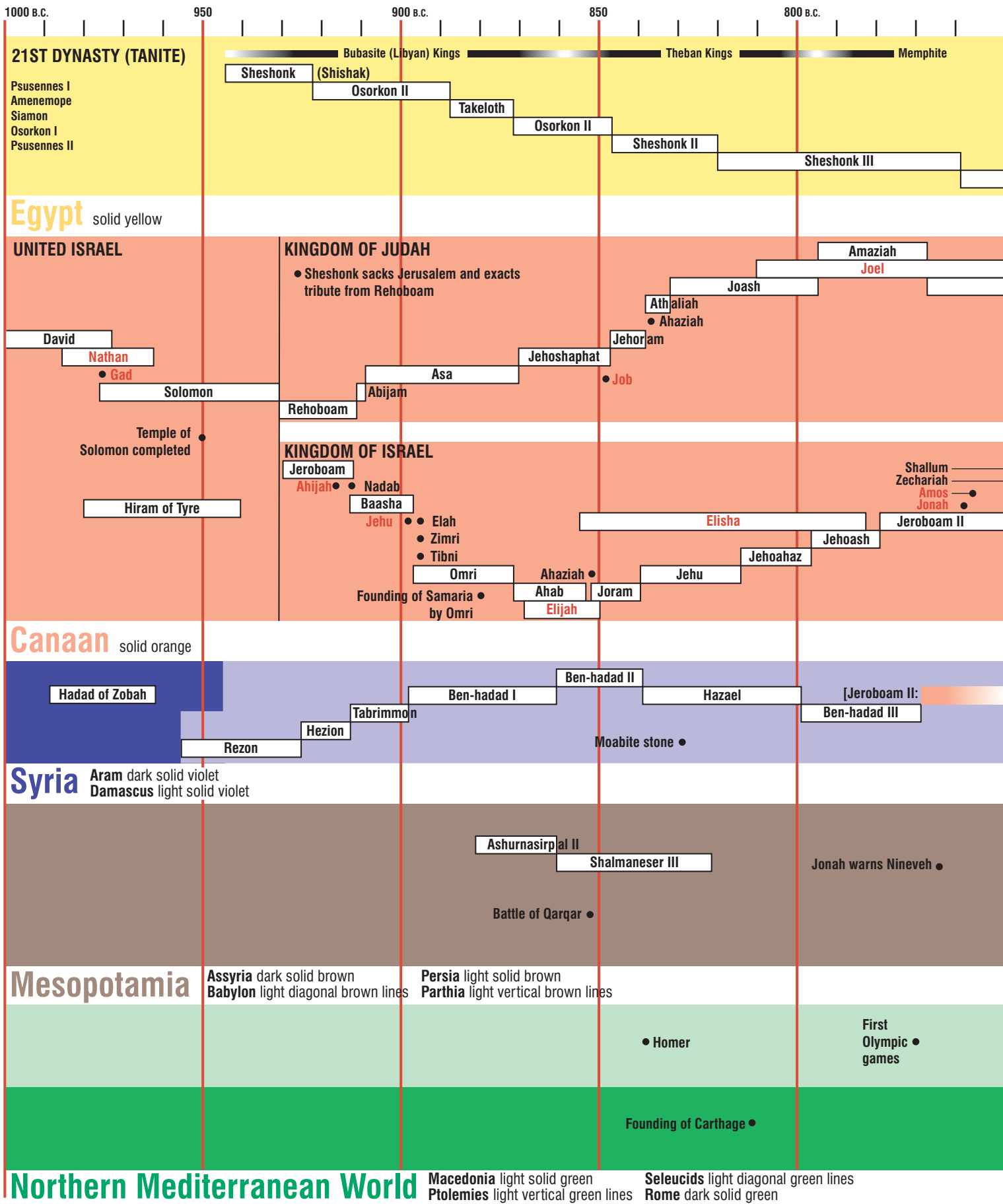
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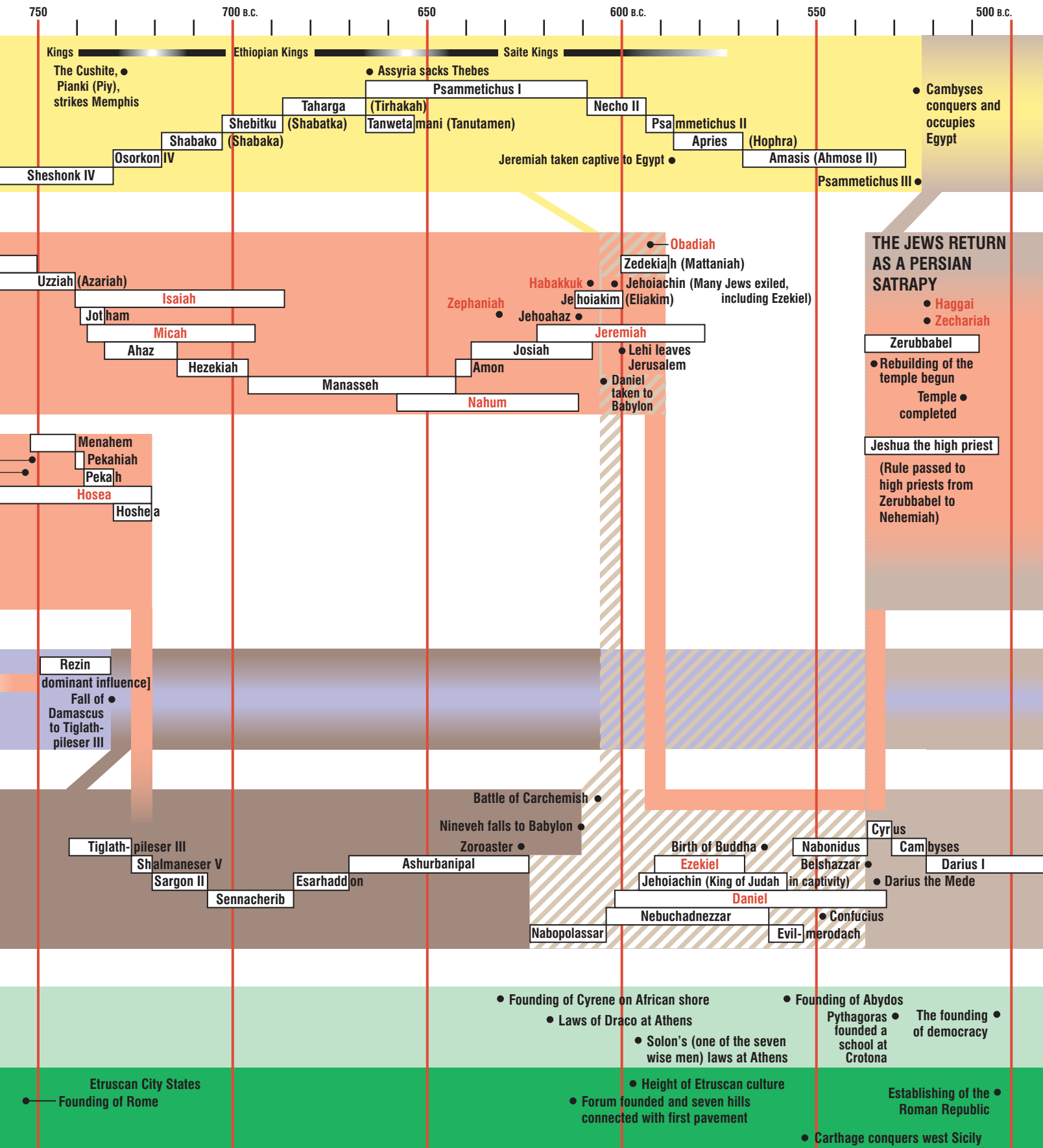
● Ur

Chaldea

(Persian Gulf)

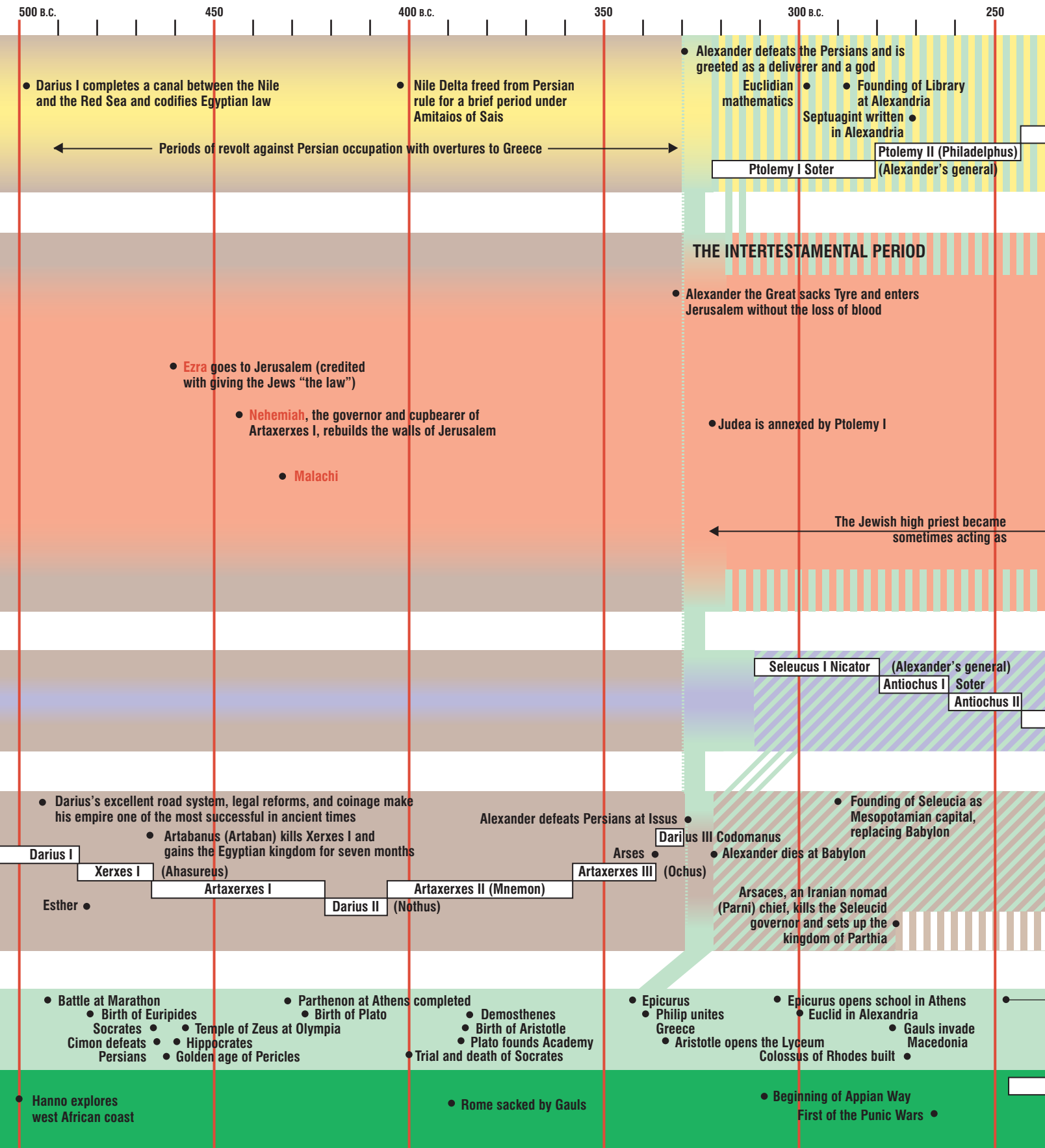
Old Testament Chronology Chart



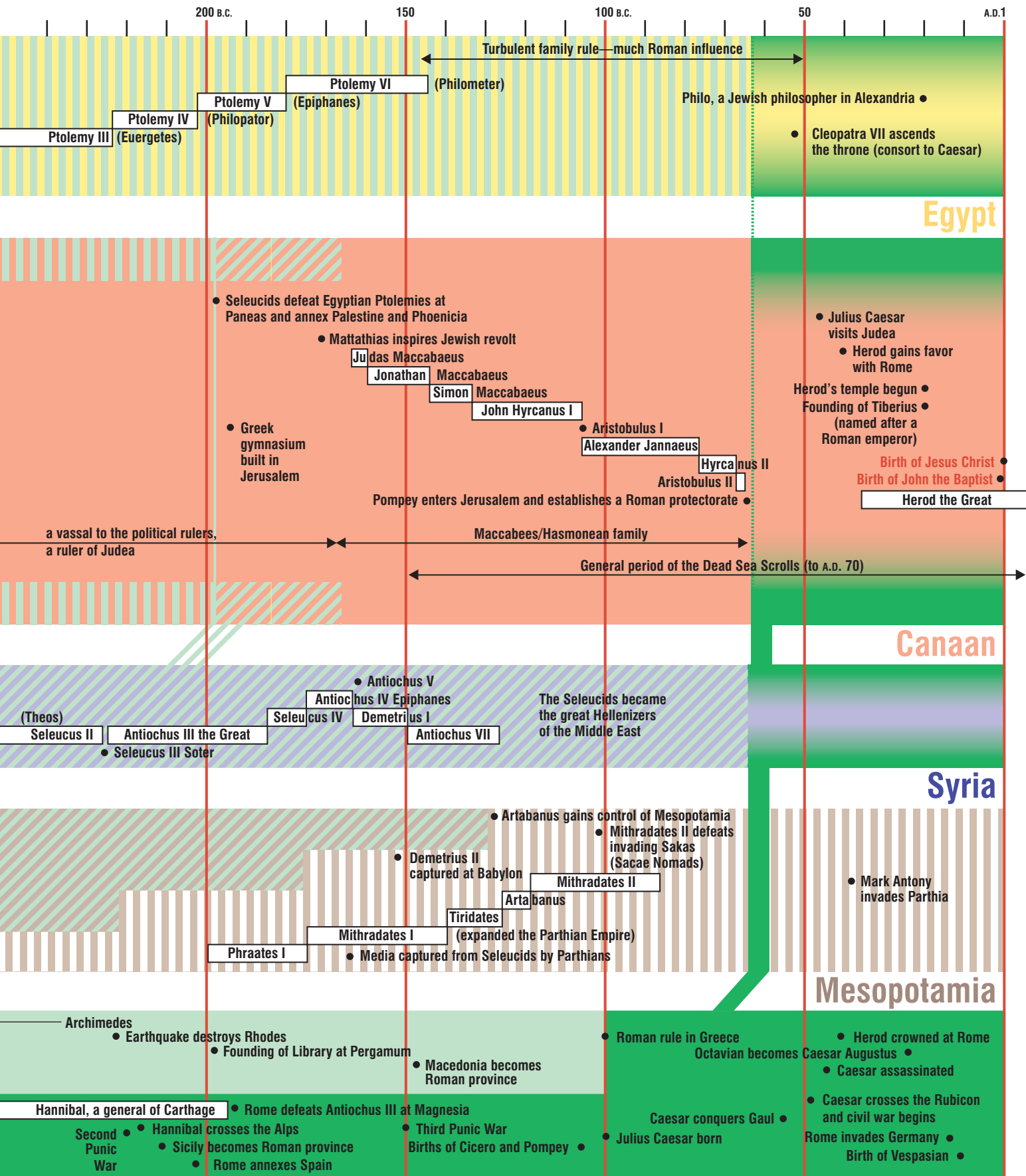


Foreign political influence in a nation is identified by a shading or line pattern that matches the color of that influential nation.

Old Testament Chronology Chart

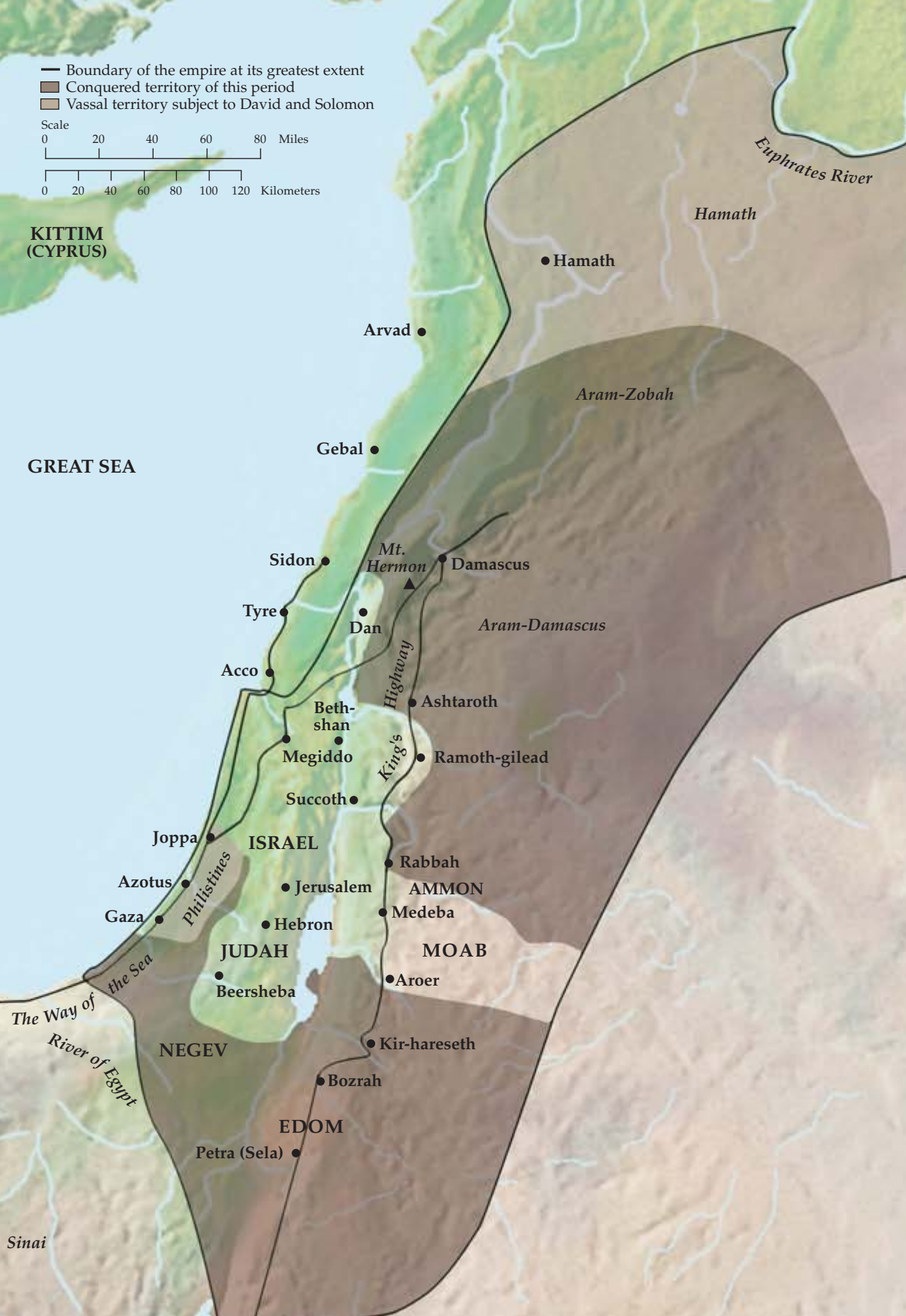


Dates represent a consensus and are best taken as approximate (earlier dates may differ slightly in other chronologies).



Northern Mediterranean World

The Empire of David and Solomon



The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah



Empires in the Mediterranean World



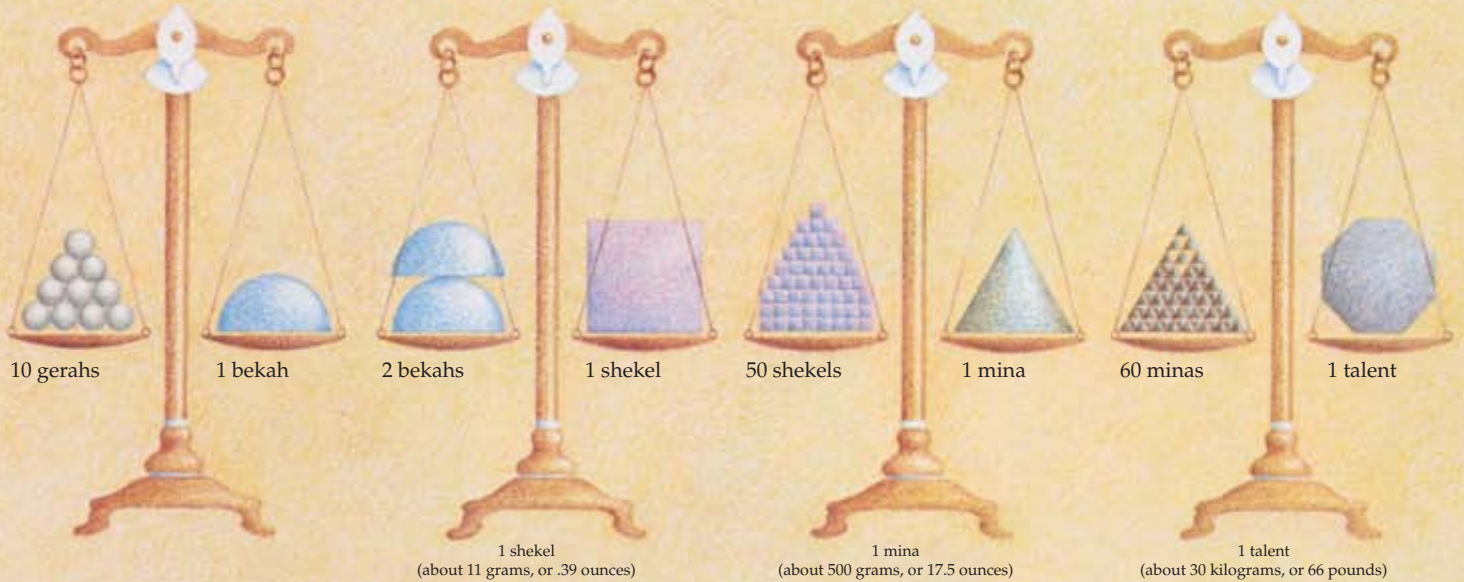


Standards of Measurement

MEASURES OF WEIGHT

Although both David and Ezekiel attempted to standardize weights, complete uniformity was never achieved. Some unscrupulous people tried to turn this situation to their advantage by possessing two sets of weights. To guard against unfairness,

individuals commonly carried their own weights with them in a bag. The need for this practice brought strong rebukes from the prophets because it was a symptom of the poor spiritual condition of the Israelites.



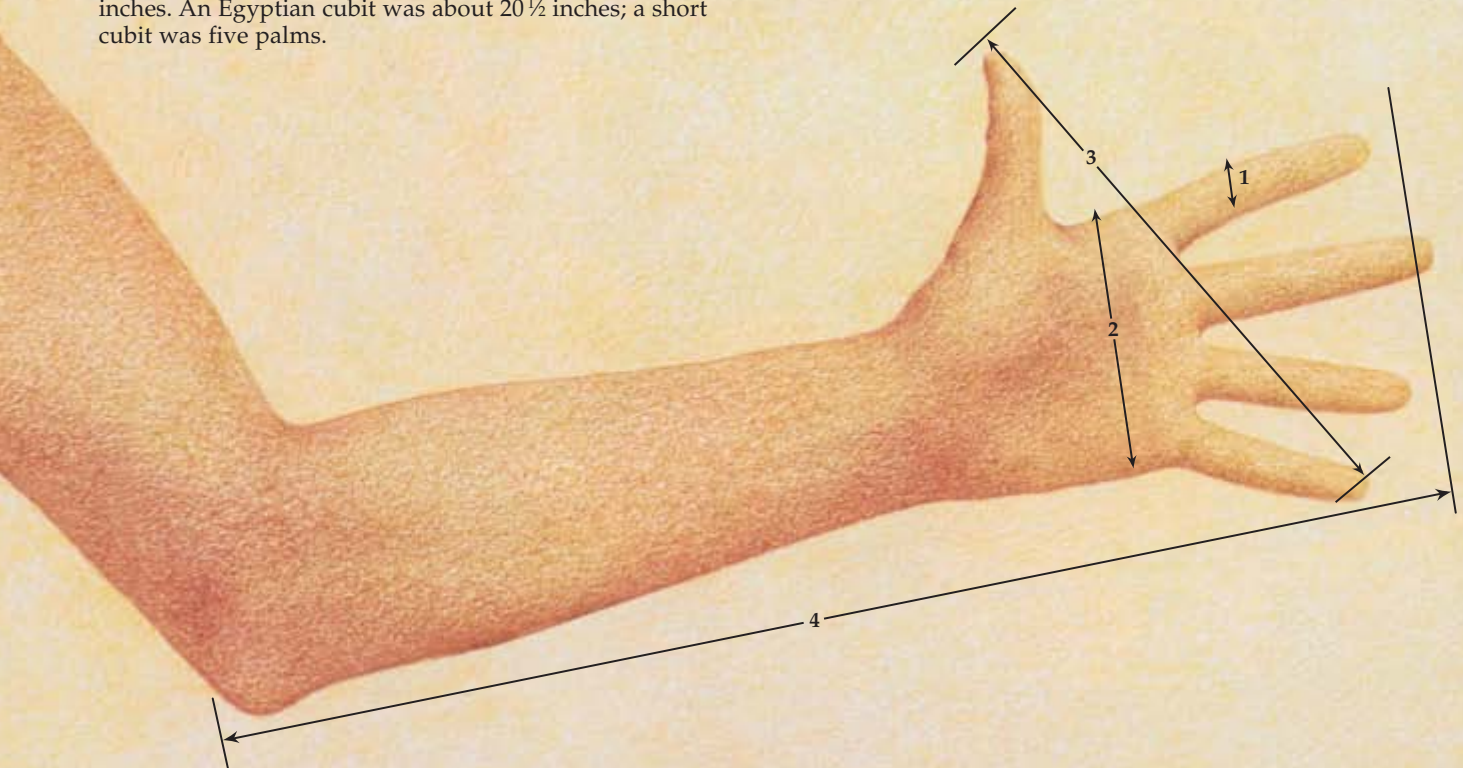
LINEAR MEASURES

Small Measurements

1. The width of one finger is equal to two barleycorns laid end to end, or about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch (a barleycorn is the smallest unit of measure).
2. The width of one palm is four fingers, about $3\frac{3}{16}$ inches.
3. One span is three palms, about 9 inches.
4. One cubit is two spans, or six palms, or about $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches. An Egyptian cubit was about $20\frac{1}{2}$ inches; a short cubit was five palms.

Large Measurements

1. A fathom is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet (a Greek unit).
2. A reed is about $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet.
3. A furlong is $607\frac{3}{4}$ feet (a Greek unit).
4. A mile is 1,618 yards (a Roman unit).
5. A Sabbath day's journey is 2,000 cubits.
6. One day's journey was about 30 miles (among the Jews).



The relationship between measures used anciently and measures used today is approximate and may vary from source to source.

MEASURES OF VALUE

Hebrew System (Old Testament)

The silver measures of value were the same as the weights in the chart on measures of weight. Initially, these weights were

the means of exchange, but gradually coins came into common use.



Roman System (New Testament)



MEASURES OF VOLUME

Liquid

1 log = 4 auphauks
 1 hin = 12 logs
 1 seah = 2 hins
 1 bath = 3 seahs
 1 homer = 10 baths = 1 donkey load (also called a cor)

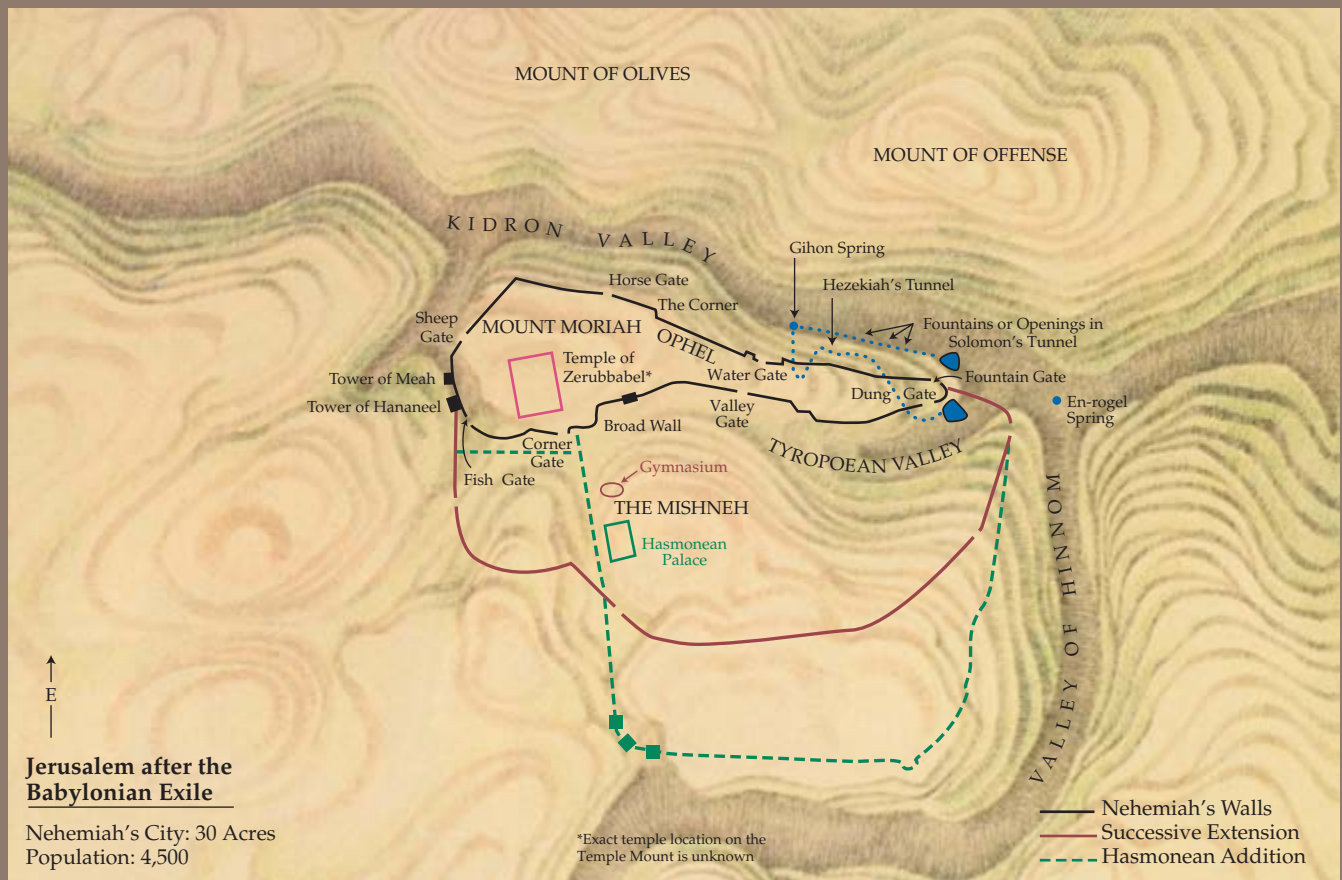
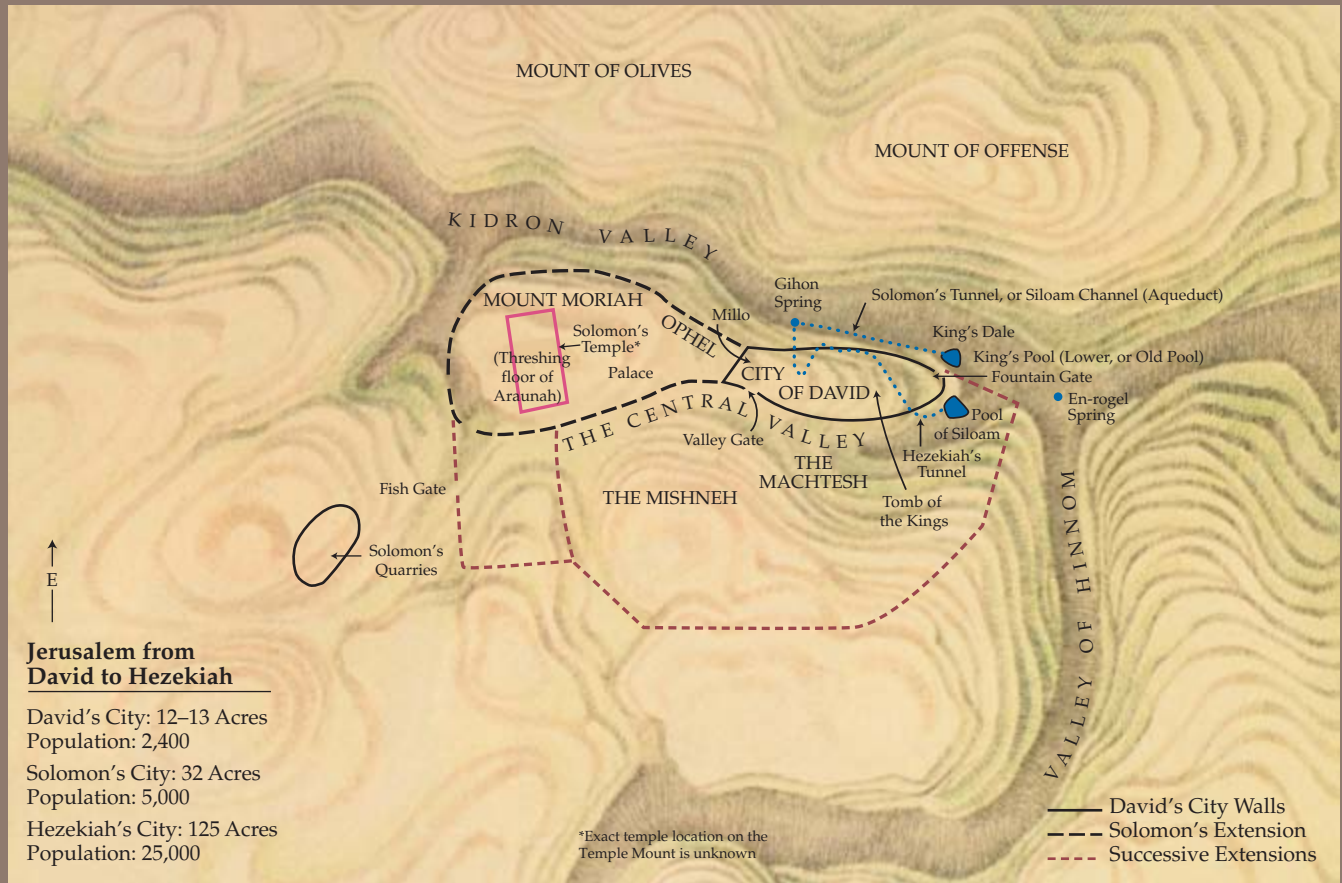


Dry

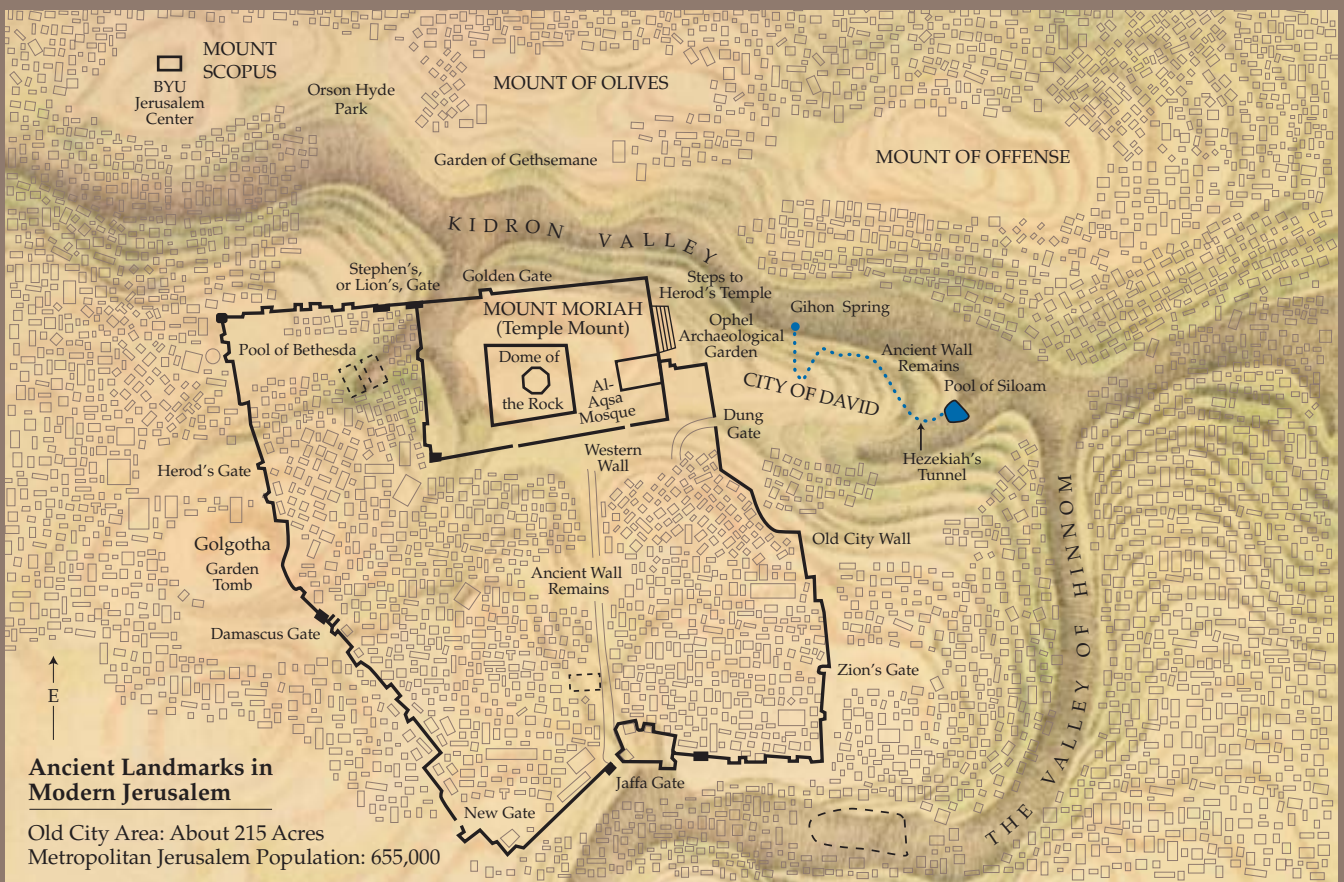
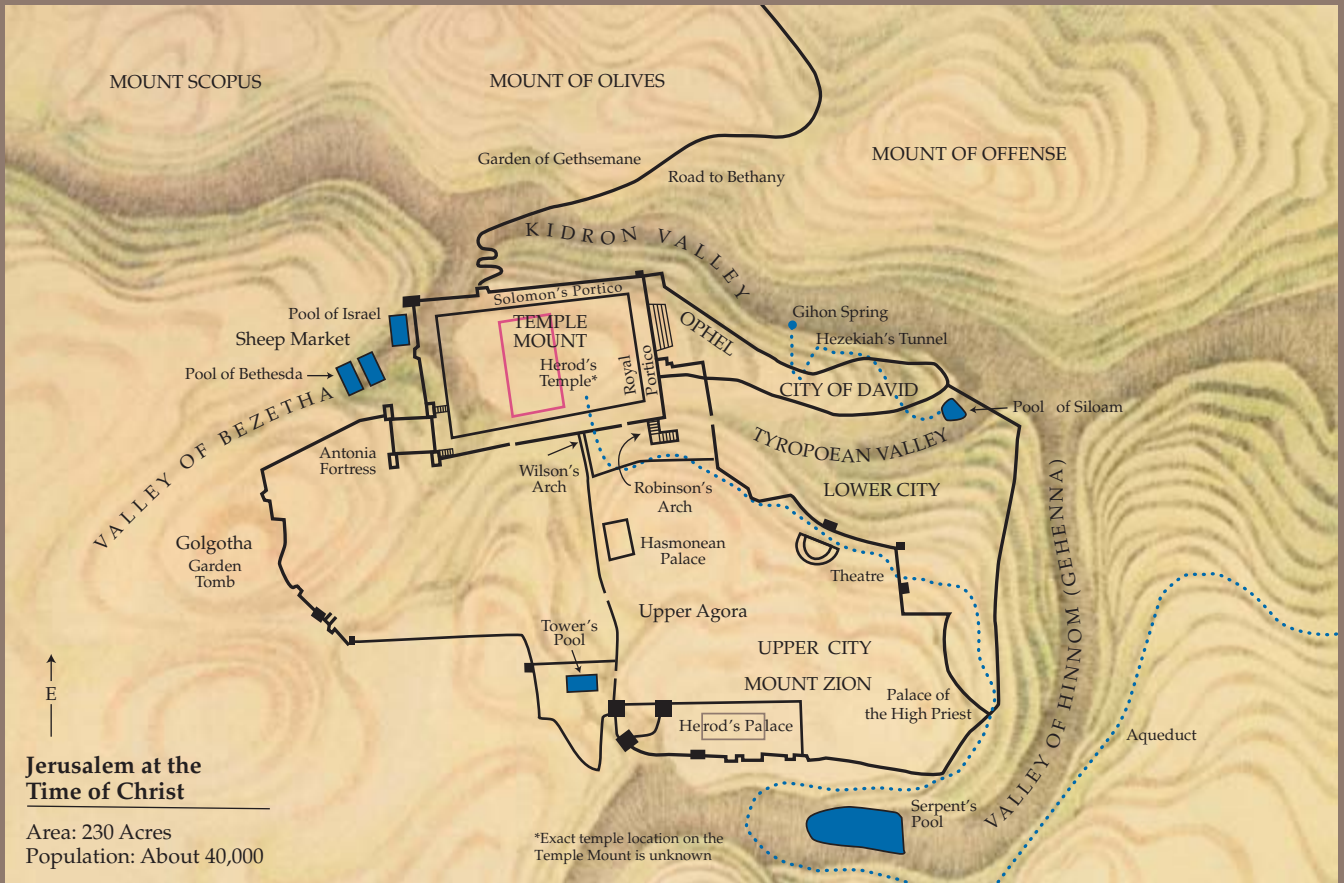
1 seah = 6 cabs
 1 ephah = 3 seahs = 10 omers = 1 bath
 1 homer = 10 ephahs, or about 6.2 bushels (also called a cor)
 Note: The omer, the ephah, and the cor (or homer) form a decimal scale of measurement



Jerusalem



Jerusalem



The Empire of David and Solomon



Solomon: Man of Wisdom, Man of Foolishness

(1-1) Introduction

Many kings ascended the throne of Israel from the time of Saul to the dissolution of both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. None of these kings, however, obtained the power and prestige that Solomon did. Nearly a thousand years before Solomon, Abraham had been promised that his seed would receive the land of Canaan for their inheritance, including territory as far north as the Euphrates River (see Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:18). But not until Solomon's time was this promise fully realized. Solomon extended the domain of Israel from the Red Sea on the south to the Euphrates River on the north (see Maps, "The Empires of David and Solomon"). The golden age of Israel, started under King David, continued under Solomon. During the forty years that Solomon ruled as king of Israel, there was peace and unity throughout his vast domain.

At the beginning of his reign, Solomon loved the God of Israel and covenanted with God that he would walk in obedience throughout his administration as king of Israel. Solomon was promised wisdom, riches, honor, and long life if he would continue in righteousness before the Lord. The promise was fulfilled. During his life, Solomon became famous for his wisdom. Great men and women from many nations came to hear him and test his understanding and knowledge. Solomon also acquired great wealth, and there were said to be no kings in all the earth who could compare to him. Under Solomon's reign Israel reached her greatest point as a nation—honor, wealth, power, and respect were hers because of the administration of her greatest king.

Nevertheless, at the end of Solomon's reign, Israel became temporally and spiritually bankrupt. Deterioration and strife were everywhere. Within a year of Solomon's death, the land was divided into two kingdoms, and the course of Israel's history was permanently altered. What actions or events led the nation from such heights to such depths? You will find the answers in the first book of Kings. As you read, try to identify the events that brought about the decline of Israel.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 1 Kings 1–11. See also 1 Chronicles 22–23; 28–29; 2 Chronicles 1–9 for a parallel account.

2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 1 KINGS 1–11

(1-2) 1 Kings 1. How Could Adonijah and Solomon Both Have Claim to the Throne of Israel?

According to the customs of succession, Adonijah could well have been the heir to the throne of David. Adonijah was the fourth son of David (see 2 Samuel 3:4). Two of his older brothers, Amnon and Absalom, were already dead, and a third, Chileab, is not mentioned in the text except for the account of his birth.

David's old age and feeble condition (see 1 Kings 1:1–4) evidently convinced Adonijah that it was time to show the people that he was the successor to the throne. His actions were thus designed to convince the people of his right and to create a base of popular support that would consolidate his position. He set up a royal procession (see v. 5); sought the support of important people, including Joab, the commander of the military, Abiathar, the high priest, the other princes of the court, and David's personal staff (see vv. 7, 9); and prepared a great feast (see v. 9). He deliberately excluded those loyal to Solomon as the successor, including Zadok, another important priest; Benaiah, one of the military commanders (perhaps second in command to Joab); the "mighty men" (v. 8), who were probably David's personal body guards; and the prophet Nathan.

Adonijah's plan was thwarted, however, when Nathan heard what Adonijah was doing and reported it to Bath-sheba, Solomon's mother. His warning to her that her life as well as Solomon's life was in danger (see v. 12) illustrates one of the problems with a monarchical system of government. Because of the competition that typically existed in the royal family itself, the new king often assassinated all his brothers and other possible heirs who might pose any threat to his rule.

Moving swiftly, Bath-sheba and Nathan joined together (see v. 11) to bring Adonijah's manipulations to the attention of King David. When David learned that Adonijah sought to take the throne, he quickly appointed Solomon as co-regent. They ruled together until David died.

Although only twenty years of age, Solomon, like David and Saul before him, was anointed to his kingship by a rightful priest and by the prophet (see vv. 34, 39). To clearly show the people that Solomon was David's choice and the Lord's, David commanded that the inauguration of his co-regent take place immediately. He commanded that Solomon be placed on his (David's) mule to ride in procession to Gihon in the traditional way that a king made his triumphal

entry into a city (see J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 693; compare with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem recorded in Matthew 21:1–11). The people responded joyously and accepted Solomon as their new king (see 1 Kings 1:39–40).

Thus, in one quick and decisive move, David cut off Adonijah's attempts to usurp the throne, and Solomon was established as king. One can easily imagine why those at Adonijah's feast were struck with fear and hastened to desert Adonijah's presence. They were caught in the midst of what bordered on treason against the new king, and they were anxious to disassociate themselves from Adonijah.

Now it was Adonijah's life that was in danger. Not only was he a potential rival to the throne, but he had been obviously making an open effort to preempt Solomon's claim. So, as soon as he learned of the enthroning of Solomon, Adonijah fled not to his home, but immediately to the heights of Mount Moriah just above the city of David. Here an altar of sacrifice had been set up by David. The horns of the altar of sacrifice were considered a sanctuary where a person could cling until his case was investigated and tried (see Exodus 21:13–14). There Adonijah waited, hoping for some indication of Solomon's clemency toward him, which was granted (see 1 Kings 1:50–55; see also *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 167, 268 for a detailed explanation of why the horns of the altar were seen as a place of refuge).

(1-3) 1 Kings 1:38. Who Were the Cherethites and the Pelethites?

The Cherethites were “a people who were settled alongside the Philistines in southern Palestine [see 1 Samuel 30:14; Ezekiel 25:16; Zephaniah 2:5]. In the reign of David they formed, with the Pelethites, his private bodyguard under the command of Benaiah the son of Jehoida [see 2 Samuel 8:18; 20:23; 1 Chronicles 18:17]. They remained loyal to him through the rebellions of Absalom [see 2 Samuel 15:18] and Sheba [see 2 Samuel 20:7], and were present when Solomon was anointed for kingship [see 1 Kings 1:38, 44].” (J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Cherethites.”)

(1-4) 1 Kings 2:1–9. David's Final Instructions to His Son Solomon

David charged his son to keep all the commandments of God, to study the law, and to exercise righteous judgment upon the people. Solomon was also instructed concerning some of David's enemies as well as some of his friends.

First Kings does not record the large assemblage of government administrators and military commanders that David called together when he sensed that his death was near; however, the historic gathering is recorded in 1 Chronicles 28:1–29:24. At this conference David performed four great services: (1) he gained the support of the people for the completion of the temple; (2) he presented a vast treasure for the temple; (3) he publicly turned over to Solomon the plans for the temple and disclosed that they had been given to him by divine revelation; and (4) he succeeded in having Solomon crowned and anointed a second time when the people of every tribe were officially represented and could declare their loyalty.



The traditional tomb of David, king of Israel

(1-5) 1 Kings 2:2–3. “Be Thou Strong . . . Shew Thyself a Man”

This plea for manhood and strength is a familiar Old Testament theme. It was Moses' last counsel to Joshua (see Deuteronomy 31:6–7, 23). The Lord gave Joshua the same encouragement (see Joshua 1:5–9). This advice was given to Solomon repeatedly. The courage to obey the law was just as much a part of the plea as to have physical courage.

(1-6) 1 Kings 2:5–6. Why Didn't David Punish Joab Sooner?

Joab, out of jealousy and fear of losing his position as commander of the armies of Israel, had murdered Abner (see 2 Samuel 3:27) and Amasa (see 2 Samuel 20:10).

Commentators have noted that “David ought to have punished these two crimes; but when Abner was murdered, he felt himself too weak to visit a man like Joab with the punishment he deserved, as he had only just been anointed king, and consequently he did nothing more than invoke divine retribution upon his head [see 2 Samuel 3:29]. And when Amasa was slain, the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba had crippled the power of David too much, for him to visit the deed with the punishment that was due. But as king of the nation of God, it was not right for him to allow such crimes to pass unpunished: he therefore transferred the punishment, for which he had wanted the requisite power, to his son and successor. . . . ‘Do according to thy wisdom (“mark the proper opportunity of punishing him”—Seb. Schmidt), and let not his grey hair go down into hell (the region of the dead) in peace (*i.e.*

unpunished)' [1 Kings 1:6]. The punishment of so powerful a man as Joab the commander-in-chief was, required great wisdom, to avoid occasioning a rebellion in the army, which was devoted to him." (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:1:29.)

(1-7) 1 Kings 2:7–8. Who Were Barzillai and Shimei?

Barzillai and Shimei both lived at Mahanaim. Shimei, instead of showing kindness to David when he fled from Absalom, threw rocks at him and cursed him (see 2 Samuel 16:5–11). Barzillai, however, showed great kindness to David and those who had fled with him by providing them with food and clothing. David asked Solomon to provide for the family of Barzillai as a payment for his kindness (see 2 Samuel 17:27–29; 19:31–38).

(1-8) 1 Kings 2:17–22. Why Was Solomon Upset by Adonijah's Request?

"Amongst Eastern nations the wives and concubines of a deceased or dethroned king were taken by his successor [see 2 Samuel 12:8; 16:21–22]; and so Adonijah's request for Abishag was regarded as tantamount to a claim on the throne" (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 212).

Solomon knew and understood this law, as 1 Kings 2:22 makes clear. At first it may seem puzzling that Bath-sheba would take Adonijah's request to Solomon since she almost certainly knew and understood this law. Perhaps she, knowing how Solomon would react, recognized an opportunity to rid Solomon of the threat that Adonijah continued to be to the throne of Israel. Solomon did react quickly, for this was the second time Adonijah had attempted to take the throne by subtlety.

(1-9) 1 Kings 2:23. Adonijah Had Spoken "against His Own Life"

Solomon meant that Adonijah's request was either treason or a plan to commit treason and was therefore worthy of death. (Note 1 Kings 2:15, which records that Adonijah knew that the Lord had given the throne to Solomon.)

(1-10) 1 Kings 2:26–36. Were Abiathar and Joab Still Conspiring against Solomon?

Abiathar and Joab were still conspiring to put Adonijah on the throne (see 1 Kings 2:22). Solomon banished Abiathar from Jerusalem and took from him the office of high priest in Israel. Abiathar was a great-grandson of Eli, who was both priest and judge in Israel, and the last of his descendants to hold a priestly office. This punishment and restriction of Abiathar fulfilled the prophecy announced to Eli by the Lord (see 1 Samuel 2:31–36).

Abiathar probably escaped with the punishment of exile only because Solomon was reluctant to execute a high priest. Joab, however, was a much more dangerous enemy because he had commanded the army. There was no question concerning Joab's guilt. Because of the murders he had committed, he was indeed worthy of death (see Exodus 21:12–14). Thus, he had no right to claim the sanctuary of the altar, and Solomon was not obligated to honor his claim to sanctuary.

(1-11) 1 Kings 2:35. Benaiah

Benaiah succeeded Joab as captain of the host, the top military position in the kingdom under the king.

(1-12) 1 Kings 2:36–44. The Punishment of Shimei

Continuing to follow the final counsel of his father (see Notes and Commentary on 1 Kings 2:7–8), Solomon now undertook to punish Shimei. At first this punishment may seem vindictive on David's part and cruel for Solomon to follow through with it, since all Shimei had done was to curse David and throw rocks at him (see 2 Samuel 16:5–11). At that time, however, David's kingdom was rent by civil war. Shimei's action was therefore equivalent to treason against the government.

There may have been an additional reason for David's counsel to Solomon. Shimei was from Bahurim, which was a short distance east of Jerusalem. The Ammonites and Moabites who lived across the River Jordan were traditional enemies of Israel. To have a known enemy of the crown in a city where the Ammonites and Moabites could easily go to conspire with him would have provided future opportunity for treason. This situation may explain David's counsel.

Solomon's treatment of Shimei was just and tolerant. He could have had Shimei executed by royal order. Instead, Solomon brought him to Jerusalem and made him swear on oath that he would not cross the Brook Kidron, the eastern boundary of Jerusalem. This restriction lends further support to the idea that Solomon did not want Shimei collaborating with the eastern enemies of Israel.

Three years later, because Shimei violated his oath, Solomon had him executed. Keil and Delitzsch noted that "this punishment was also just. As Solomon had put Shimei's life in his own hand by imposing upon him confinement in Jerusalem, and Shimei had promised on oath to obey the king's command, the breach of his oath was a crime for which he had no excuse. There is no force at all in the excuses which some commentators adduce in his favour, founded upon the money which his slaves had cost him, and the wish to recover possession of them, which was a right one in itself. If Shimei had wished to remain faithful to his oath, he might have informed the king of the flight of his slaves, have entreated the king that they might be brought back, and have awaited the king's decision; but he had no right thus lightly to break the promise given on oath. By the breach of his oath he had forfeited his life. And this is the first thing with which Solomon charges him, without his being able to offer any excuse; and it is not till afterwards that he adduces as a second fact in confirmation of the justice of his procedure, the wickedness that he practised towards his father." (*Commentary*, 3:1:27.)

(1-13) 1 Kings 2:46. Why Was Benaiah the Executioner?

The army was also the police power. Therefore, by virtue of his office as captain of the host, executions were Benaiah's responsibility. If he were sent, the job was sure to be done.

As long as Israel remained free and under the Lord's direct influence, they did not have prisons. Criminals were punished by death for specified crimes. Otherwise, they were required to make restitution to the person harmed. Sometimes they were placed under house arrest on their own honor, as was Shimei, or they were banished.

(1-14) 1 Kings 3:1. Why Did Solomon Take a Daughter of the Pharaoh to Wife?

Early in his reign Solomon elected to marry the daughter of the Egyptian pharaoh. Since Israel had imposed its sovereignty throughout the region, Solomon apparently considered it important to neutralize any hostility on the part of Egypt, for Egypt had been accustomed to using Canaan as a base for military operations. Marriages between royal families were often politically motivated; such a marriage was a way of signing a treaty between two countries. Nevertheless, the marriage of Solomon to the daughter of the pharaoh showed a lack of faith in the Lord, who had promised to defend Israel and fight her battles (see Deuteronomy 20:4; Joshua 23:10). Later, this marriage and other marriages to foreign wives proved to be a major factor in the downfall of Israel, for Solomon began worshiping the false gods of these other nations and was condemned by the Lord (see 1 Kings 11:1-9).

(1-15) 1 Kings 3:4. Why Did Solomon Go to Gibeon to Offer Sacrifice?

The tabernacle built by Moses was at this time located in Gibeon along with the great altar upon which sacrifices had been offered since the days of Moses. That is why Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices (see 1 Chronicles 21:29; 2 Chronicles 1:2-3).



Cisterns at Gideon, traditional site of a winepress

(1-16) 1 Kings 3:5-28. What Was Important about Solomon's First Heavenly Vision?

Solomon approached the Lord as a humble, obedient servant, and he was rewarded for his meekness with a wise and understanding heart. Perhaps no other person was ever given a greater gift of wisdom. Solomon was charged to keep the Lord's commandments and statutes so that the Lord might lengthen his days as king.

(1-17) 1 Kings 3:14. Why Did the Lord Praise David's Righteousness When He Had Violated the Law of Chastity and Had Caused Uriah's Murder?

There are numerous places in the historical books where David is held up as an example of one who was pleasing in God's sight. The Prophet Joseph Smith corrected each of those references to show that David was being used by the Lord as an example of what David's successors should not do. For example, in the Joseph Smith Translation 1 Kings 3:14 reads: "And if thou wilt walk in my ways to keep my statutes, and my commandments, then I will lengthen thy days, and thou shalt not *walk in unrighteousness, as did thy father David.*"

In the King James Version, 1 Kings 11:4 records that Solomon's heart "was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." The Prophet corrected the passage to read that Solomon's heart "was not perfect with the Lord his God, and it became as the heart of David his father" (JST, 1 Kings 11:4; see also 1 Kings 11:6, 33-34, 38-39; 14:8; 15:3, 5, 11; compare JST).

Solomon's prayer for an "understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:9) was surely granted, as the incident of the two harlots demonstrates. The brilliance of Solomon's strategy is seen when one reflects that the woman who was willing to give up the baby rather than see it killed would be the best mother to the child, whether she was the natural mother or not.

(1-18) 1 Kings 4:1-25. How Did Solomon Organize the Government to Give Himself Greater Control over the Kingdom?

"Upon his accession to the throne, Solomon made the first of several administrative changes: he created three new offices in his cabinet. David had governed his new empire almost single-handedly, needing only a commanding general, a chief scribe and a few secretaries. To this basic staff Solomon added Ahishar, who 'was in charge of the palace.' He would serve as prime minister, second only to Solomon in power. Adoniram was named the chief of forced labor—for Solomon had a tremendous building program in mind and no way to begin it without a steady supply of workers. Adoniram would supervise both foreign slave laborers (the descendants of those people who had survived the Israelite Conquest) and a newly organized, conscripted labor force of Israelites, who served one out of every three months. In addition, 'Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers [provincial governors]' of the 12 districts of Israel.

"Up to now the government of Israel, even under Saul and David, had never been controlled by an 'administration' as we know it, but rather by a patriarchal or charismatic leader who ruled largely

by personal magnetism and inspiration from the Lord. Such leadership had been necessary to unite the 12 independent and often quarrelsome tribes during the military conquest of Canaan. But now Israel was at peace and her territory was greatly enlarged. The nation sorely needed a more efficient method of government. So Solomon divided Israel into 12 administrative districts, all comparatively equal in population and resources. To accommodate the new territory, the arbitrary divisions ignored the old tribal boundaries, and for all practical purposes the tribal distinctions were abandoned except for temple duties and genealogies.

"Solomon assigned one officer to head each district; all of them were responsible to Azariah. The 12 officers were in charge of raising provisions for the king's household—each district supplied food for one month of every year. The officers in turn imposed the burden of providing food on the farmers and shepherds, and quite a burden it was. The provision needed for *one day* by Solomon's court 'was thirty cors [188 bushels] of fine flour, and sixty cors [about 370 bushels] of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides harts, gazelles [fallow deer], roebucks, and fatted fowl . . . And those offices . . . let nothing be lacking. Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds they brought to the place where it was required, each according to his charge.' And this was only part of the taxation." (*Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, pp. 186–88.)

Such taxation fulfilled the words of the prophet Samuel, who many years before had warned Israel what would happen if they chose to have a king rule over them (see 1 Samuel 8:11–20).

(1-19) 1 Kings 4:21. The Extent of Solomon's Kingdom

"The meaning of this verse appears to be, that Solomon reigned over all the provinces from the river Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the frontiers of Egypt. The Euphrates was on the *east* of Solomon's dominions; the Philistines were *westward* on the Mediterranean sea; and Egypt was on the *south*. Solomon had, therefore, as tributaries, the kingdoms of *Syria, Damascus, Moab, and Ammon*, which lay between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean." (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:398.)

(1-20) 1 Kings 4:30. Who Were the "Children of the East Country"?

"The term is applied [in Jeremiah 49:28] to the Arab tribes dwelling at Kedar, and probably describes generally the inhabitants of the Syrian desert" (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 213).

(1-21) 1 Kings 4:32. Proverbs and Song of Solomon

The book of Proverbs contains some of the proverbs of Solomon, though not all that he wrote, and almost certainly not all writings in the present book of Proverbs were written by Solomon.

The Song of Solomon, which the Prophet Joseph Smith said is not an inspired writing (see Song of Solomon 1:1a), is only one of many songs written by Solomon. Also, two of the psalms are attributed to Solomon (see Psalms 72, 127).

(1-22) 1 Kings 5. How Did Solomon Use Hiram's Services in Building the Temple?

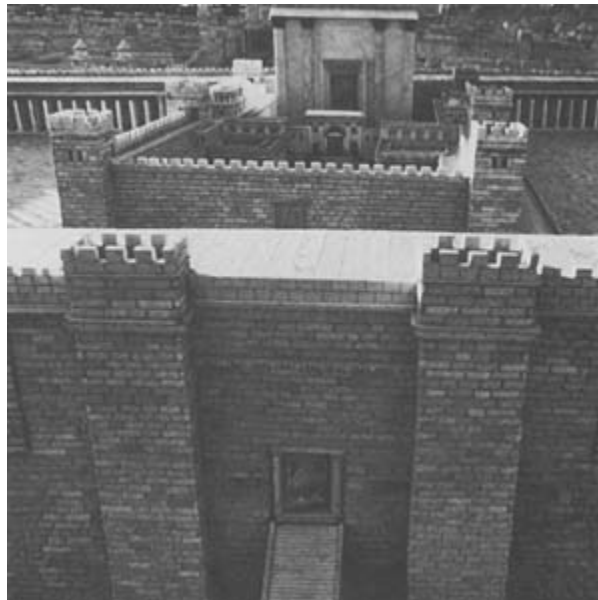
The prophet Nathan instructed David that one of his children would build a temple unto God (see 2 Samuel 7:12). So, David spent much time and energy in gathering materials for the temple. When Solomon came to the throne, one of the first things he did was direct his attention to building the temple. In order to make the building as beautiful as possible, Solomon employed the services of King Hiram of Tyre: "Solomon had depended on the skill of Hiram's Phoenician architects and laborers, as well as precious Lebanon cedar, to construct the most impressive buildings in Jerusalem—the temple and the royal buildings for government. From almost the beginning of Solomon's reign, . . . Hiram supplied Solomon with all the timber of cedar and cypress that he desired, while Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand cors [125,000 bushels] of wheat as food for his household, and twenty thousand cors [over a million gallons] of beaten oil. Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year, on an installment plan." (*Great People of the Bible*, p. 190.)

(1-23) 1 Kings 5:13. Conscription of Israel

Compare with 1 Samuel 8:11–18.

(1-24) 1 Kings 6. How Did Solomon Learn How the Temple Should Be Built?

Although David received some revelation about the building of the temple (see 1 Kings 6:30–33), apparently Solomon received even more. President Brigham Young said: "The pattern of this temple, the length and breadth, and height of the inner and outer courts, with all the fixtures thereunto appertaining, were given to Solomon by revelation, through the proper source. And why was this revelation-pattern necessary? Because Solomon had never built a temple, and did not know what was necessary in the arrangement of the different apartments, any better than Moses did what was needed in the tabernacle." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 414.)



The temple of Herod as it appears in the model city at the Holy Land Hotel in Jerusalem

Photograph by Don Thorpe

The temple of Solomon was later destroyed, and the kingdom of Judah was scattered. Zerubbabel's temple, which Herod renovated, was later built on the same spot. This later temple was the one standing in the Savior's day. (See Notes and Commentary on Ezra 6:13–15.)

(1-25) 1 Kings 6. The Significance of the Building of Solomon's Temple

"Soon after Solomon's accession to the throne he set about the labor, which, as heritage and honor, had come to him with his crown. He laid the foundation in the fourth year of his reign, and the building was completed within seven years and a half. With the great wealth accumulated by his kingly father and specifically reserved for the building of the Temple, Solomon was able to put the [surrounding lands] under tribute, and to enlist the co-operation of nations in his great undertaking. The temple workmen numbered scores of thousands, and every department was in charge of master craftsmen. To serve on the great structure in any capacity was an honor; and labor acquired a dignity never before recognized. . . . The erection of the Temple of Solomon was an epoch-making event, not alone in the history of Israel, but in that of the world." (James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, pp. 5–6.)

(1-26) 1 Kings 6. How Did Solomon's Temple Differ from the Tabernacle of the Wilderness?

"A comparison of the plan of Solomon's Temple with that of the earlier Tabernacle shows that in all essentials of arrangement and proportion the two were so nearly alike as to be practically identical. True, the Tabernacle had but one enclosure, while the Temple was surrounded by courts, but the inner structure itself, the Temple proper, closely followed the earlier design. The dimensions of the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the Porch, were in the Temple exactly double those of the corresponding parts in the Tabernacle." (Talmage, *House of the Lord*, p. 6.)

The temple was long and narrow. According to the dimensions cited in the Bible, the temple was about one hundred feet long and thirty feet wide. It stood on a platform about nine feet high. The temple itself was about forty-five feet high. The Salt Lake Temple is 186 1/2 feet long, 118 1/2 feet wide, and 210 feet high.

(1-27) 1 Kings 6:5–8. Chambers of the Temple

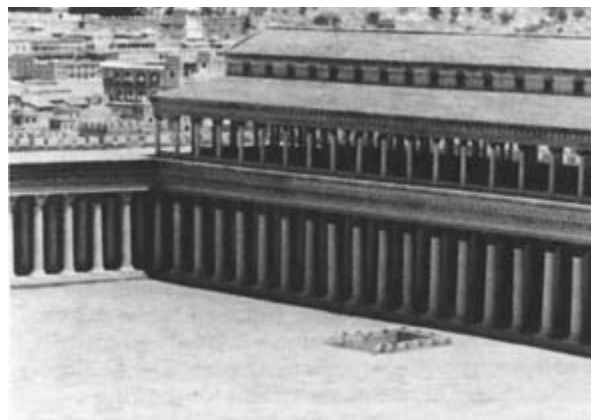
See *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel*, pp. 154–56.

(1-28) 1 Kings 6:23. What Are Cherubim?

See *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel*, p. 148.

(1-29) 1 Kings 6:38. What Is the Month "Bul"?

The month of Bul corresponds approximately with the month of November. "As this was the eighth month and the Temple was begun in the second, the time actually occupied in its construction was, in strictness, 7 1/2 years" (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 215).



"Solomon's Porch" was the name of this part of Herod's temple.

(1-30) 1 Kings 7:1–8. Solomon's Palace

It took an additional thirteen years to build Solomon's palace (see 1 Kings 9:10). Solomon's palace "consisted of several buildings connected together; namely, (1) the house of the forest of Lebanon [see 1 Kings 7:2–5]; (2) the pillar-hall with the porch (ver. 6); (3) the throne-room and judgment-hall (ver. 7); (4) the king's dwelling-house and the house of Pharaoh's daughter (ver. 8). . . . The description of the several portions of this palace is so very brief, that it is impossible to form a distinct idea of its character. The different divisions are given in vers. 1–8 in their natural order, commencing at the back and terminating with the front (ver. 8)." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:89.)

(1-31) 1 Kings 7:16. What Is a Chapter?

A chapter is an ornament or decoration at the top of a column or pillar (see William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "chapter").

(1-32) 1 Kings 7:23–26. What Was the Molten Sea and How Was It Used?

Bible scholars have generally been confused concerning the use of the huge molten sea of brass. Modern revelation assists the student today to understand its purpose. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

"In Solomon's Temple a large *molten sea* of brass was placed on the backs of 12 brazen oxen, these oxen being symbolical of the 12 tribes of Israel. (1 Kings 7:23–26, 44; 2 Kings 16:17; 25:13; 1 Chron. 18:8.) This *brazen sea* was used for performing baptisms for the living. There were no baptisms for the dead until after the resurrection of Christ.

"It must be remembered that all direct and plain references to baptism have been deleted from the Old Testament (1 Ne. 13) and that the word *baptize* is of Greek origin. Some equivalent word, such as *wash*, would have been used by the Hebrew peoples. In describing the molten sea the Old Testament record says, '*The sea was for the priests to wash in.*' (2 Chron. 4:2–6.) This is tantamount to saying that the priests performed baptisms in it.

"In this temple building dispensation the Brethren have been led by the spirit of inspiration to pattern the baptismal fonts placed in temples after the one in Solomon's Temple." (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 103–4.)

(1-33) 1 Kings 8. What Occurred at the Dedication of the Temple?

“When the House of the Lord was completed, elaborate preparations were made for its dedication. First came the installation of the Ark of the Covenant and its appurtenances, the Tabernacle of the Congregation, and the holy vessels. With great solemnity and to the accompaniment of ceremonial sacrifice, the Ark was brought by the priests and placed within the Holy of Holies beneath the wings of the cherubim. At this time the Ark contained only the two tables of stone ‘which Moses put there.’ The staves by which the Ark was borne were so drawn out as to be visible from within the Holy Place, and then ‘it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.’ [1 Kings 8:10–11.]

“Then Solomon addressed the assembled multitude, reciting the circumstances under which the building of the Temple had been conceived by his father David and executed by himself, and proclaiming the mercy and goodness of Israel’s God. Standing before the altar of the Lord, in the court of the Temple, the king spread forth his hands toward heaven, and offered the dedicatory prayer. The king then blessed the people, saying ‘Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us.’ [1 Kings 8:56–57.]

“The principal services with the attendant festivities lasted seven days, and ‘on the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.’ [1 Kings 8:66.]” (Talmage, *House of the Lord*, pp. 34–35.)

(1-34) 1 Kings 8:10–11. The Glory of God

Before Solomon gave the dedicatory prayer, a cloud of glory filled the house of God, indicating the very presence of God. That this glory should accompany the dedication exercises is interesting for Latter-day Saints, since a similar glory attended the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on 27 March 1836. Many present reported seeing angels and hearing the “sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple,” and many in the community reported “seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple” (*History of the Church*, 2:427). The special events attending the dedication of both temples are signs of the Lord’s divine acceptance of the houses built in His name to His honor.

(1-35) 1 Kings 8:22–53. Solomon, a Faithful Man

Solomon’s dedicatory prayer gives a good insight into the state of Solomon’s heart at the time. His closeness to the Lord is very evident, particularly in 1 Kings 8:23, 28, 50–52. When the prayer was over, Solomon addressed the people and urged them to be faithful to the Lord. As the record of 1 Kings unfolds, however, it becomes evident how far Solomon and his

people later departed from the spiritual state they were in on the day of dedication.

(1-36) 1 Kings 8:35–36. Tempering the Weather through Prayer

These verses contain a remarkable promise to Israel. In several places the Lord indicated that He uses the weather to chastise His people to bring them to repentance. President Spencer W. Kimball said:

“The Lord uses the weather sometimes to discipline his people for the violation of his laws. He said to the children of Israel:

“‘If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

“‘Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

“‘And your threshing shall reach into the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

“‘And I will give you peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: . . . neither shall the sword go through your land.’ (Lev. 26:3–6.)

“Perhaps the day has come when we should take stock of ourselves and see if we are worthy to ask or if we have been breaking the commandments, making ourselves unworthy of receiving the blessings.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1977, pp. 4–5; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 4.)

First Kings 8:35–36 indicates that if the people repent of their sins, looking to the house of the Lord in prayer and supplication, the weather can be tempered and made to operate in behalf of the righteous.

(1-37) 1 Kings 8:41–43. “A Stranger . . . Cometh out of a Far Country”

As part of his dedicatory prayer, Solomon referred to a stranger who—

1. Comes from a far country (see v. 41).
2. Comes in the name of the Lord (see v. 41).
3. Prays toward the house of the Lord (see v. 42).
4. Asks the Lord for certain blessings upon Israel which Solomon asks the Lord to heed (see v. 43).

(1-38) 1 Kings 9:7. Was the Temple Built by Solomon “Cast Out”?

Elder James E. Talmage explained how the prophetic warning was ignored and came to fulfillment: “The glorious pre-eminence of this splendid structure was of brief duration. Thirty-four years after its dedication, and but five years subsequent to the death of Solomon, its decline began; and this decline was soon to develop into general spoliation, and finally to become an actual desecration. Solomon the king, the man of wisdom, the master-builder, had been led astray by the wiles of idolatrous women, and his wayward ways had fostered iniquity in Israel. The nation was no longer a unit; there factions and sects, parties and creeds, some worshipping on the hill-tops, others under green trees, each party claiming excellence for its own particular shrine. The Temple soon lost its sanctity. The gift became depreciated by the perfidy [betrayal] of the giver, and Jehovah withdrew His protecting presence from the place no longer holy.” (*House of the Lord*, pp. 6–7.)

(1-39) 1 Kings 9:15–23; 10:14–29. What Were the Effects of Solomon’s Massive Building Projects and Economic Changes?

Though Solomon’s remarkable building projects became world famous, they created serious problems in his own kingdom. He taxed the people heavily and used forced labor to complete his massive projects. The people began to complain, and a deep resentment, especially in the northern tribes, began to fester.

“The life of the common man had been disrupted. In the past, a man’s wealth had been calculated mostly by the land he owned, the number of flocks he had and the size of his family. Solomon’s sweeping economic changes altered that system. Land was no longer of supreme importance—in fact, it may have become somewhat of a burden. The more land a man owned, the more crops he could grow, and thus the more he would have to turn over to the king’s officers when collection time came around every 12 months. Likewise, flocks were surrendered to tax collectors and sons were forced to serve one month of every three in the king’s labor force.

“Now wealth was calculated not by property ownership but by the amount of money a man controlled. Certainly more and more money in gold and silver came into Israel every year, but very little of it ever filtered down to the average Israelite, who had to surrender so much of his livelihood to the king’s coffers. Instead, the money was used to pay growing international debts, salaries for the full-time government officials, commissions to merchants and artisans in the king’s employ, temple and palace upkeep and other expenses.

“For the first time in Israel’s history, there began to be a distinct difference between ‘rich’ and ‘poor.’ The king and his household were rich; the common people were poor. In between were the salaried civil servants and the merchants and artisans, many of whom had

organized craft guilds by that time. Such class separations had not been known in the Israel where a shepherd boy like David could be anointed king—only 50 years earlier.” (*Great People of the Bible*, pp. 192–93.)

(1-40) 1 Kings 9:26–28. Israel’s Navy

Hiram’s people, the Phoenicians, were masters of the sea, whereas the Israelites were not. First Kings 9:26–28 indicates that Hiram’s servants taught Solomon’s men the seafaring trade. As a result, Solomon was able to secure gold from Ophir (thought to be a port in southern Arabia) to be used to build the temple. (See also 1 Kings 10:23.)

(1-41) 1 Kings 10:1. Where Was the Queen of Sheba From?

It is very likely that the woman was a Sabean from Arabia near the southern end of the Red Sea (see Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:421). Three proofs are offered: (1) the area in which the Sabaeans lived is known to have abounded in riches and spices; (2) many ancient writers refer to the gold and silver mines of Saba; and (3) the Sabaeans had women rather than men for their rulers.

(1-42) 1 Kings 10:19. What Were the Stays Attached to the Throne?

The description here indicates that the throne was similar to a round-topped, two-armed chair. The stays, or hands, were armrests on which the king could lean.

(1-43) 1 Kings 10:23–29. Solomon’s Wealth

These verses sum up the tremendous wealth Solomon had amassed. Part of his wealth came through trading and international commerce, but much of it came through the economic oppression of the people.



Sheba was a wealthy nation in Solomon’s day.

(1-44) 1 Kings 11. Effect of Solomon's Sins

This chapter details the tragic fall of King Solomon. Although the Lord did not take Solomon's kingdom from him as punishment, Solomon's disobedience resulted in his kingdom being divided at his death. Like Saul and David who preceded him, Solomon began his reign in favor with God and man, but he soon let the power of the throne turn his heart away from God. Just as Saul's and David's had, Solomon's promise turned into tragedy (see Notes and Commentary on 1 Kings 3:5–28).

(1-45) 1 Kings 11:1–10. What Can We Conclude Regarding Solomon's Many Marriages?

Solomon married "strange women," that is, foreign women, or those not of the covenant. Solomon's marriages were for political expediency (see Notes and Commentary on 1 Kings 3:1) and perhaps for personal reasons as well. But these women brought to Israel their idols and heathen worship, which corrupted not only Solomon but the people also.

According to the Doctrine and Covenants, however, some of Solomon's wives were given to him of the Lord: "David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me" (D&C 132:38).

President Joseph Fielding Smith further explained that the Lord "did not condemn Solomon and David for having wives *which the Lord gave them*."

"Now turn to [2 Samuel] 12:7–8 and you will find that the Lord gave David wives. In your reading of the Old Testament you will also find that Solomon was blessed and the Lord appeared to him and gave him visions and great blessings when he had plural wives, but later in his life, he took wives that the Lord did not give him." (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:214.)

Jacob 2:24–31 clearly teaches that plural wives may be taken only when doing so is authorized by the Lord. David's taking plural wives was authorized by the Lord, for David's wives "were given unto him of me [the Lord], by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power" (D&C 132:39). No plural marriages are authorized by the Lord today, and any attempt to justify them from ancient scripture will result in condemnation from the Lord.

(1-46) 1 Kings 11:26–27. What Was the "Millo"?

Millo is "a place-name derived from the verb . . . 'to be full', 'to fill'. . . . It was probably part of the fortification of [Jerusalem when it was a] Jebusite city, perhaps a solid tower ('full') or a bastion 'filling' some weak point in the walls, for it was evidently already in existence in the time of David [2 Samuel 5:9; 1 Chronicles 11:8]. It was rebuilt by Solomon [see 1 Kings 9:15, 24; 11:27]; the 'breach' here referred to was probably a different thing) as part of his programme of strengthening the kingdom, and was again strengthened some two and a half centuries later when Hezekiah was preparing for the Assyrian invasion [see 2 Chronicles 32:5]. This verse is taken by some to indicate that Millo was another name for the

whole city of David, but it is more probable that it formed part of the defences of this, the south-eastern hill of later Jerusalem. Many theories have been put forward as to what part of the city of David was strengthened by the Millo, but excavation has not yet been sufficiently systematic to make identification possible." (Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Millo.")

(1-47) 1 Kings 11:11, 29–38. How Was the Israelite Kingdom to Be Taken Away from the House of David and Solomon?

After Solomon had directly disobeyed the Lord by going after the gods of his heathen wives, the Lord told him that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to one of his servants (see 1 Kings 11:11). The servant was Jeroboam, whom Solomon had given authority over Ephraim and Manasseh (see v. 28). Jeroboam was told by the prophet Ahijah that he would rule over ten of the tribes of Israel. The tribe of Judah, however, was to continue under the reign of David's line so that the promise that the Messiah would come through the lineage of David and from the tribe of Judah would be fulfilled (see Genesis 49:10). The kingdom of Judah would include half the small tribe of Benjamin, the Levites, and the strangers that were in Judah's territory. At first, only part of Levi was with Judah, but after Jeroboam turned to idolatry, many more deserted to Judah. Eventually a good share of the tribe of Levi was in the south. (See 2 Chronicles 15:9.)

Because Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, were two tribes, counting Levi there were thirteen tribes at this time instead of twelve.

(1-48) 1 Kings 11:36. Promise Given to David

This verse reiterates the promise made by the Lord to David that his kingdom would never become extinct while the earth should stand. The promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, a descendant of David.

See Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1 for a discussion of Christ's holding the keys of David.

(1-49) 1 Kings 11:40. Who Is Shishak?

See Notes and Commentary on 1 Kings 14:25.

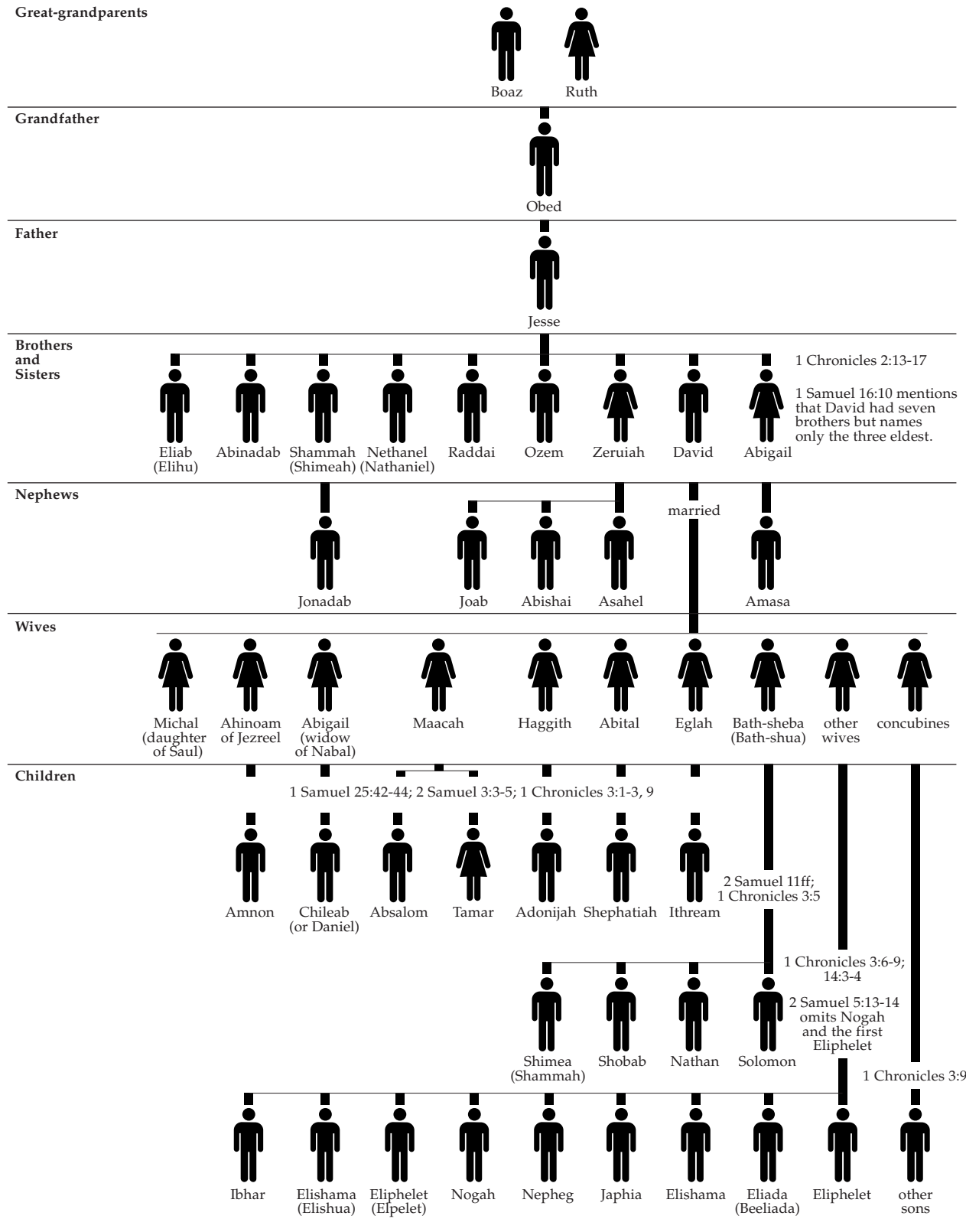
POINTS TO PONDER

(1-50) The Greatness and Tragedy of Solomon

Solomon's career began in as promising a way as anyone's in the Old Testament. Israel had finally reached the borders that were to be hers, according to the Lord's promise to Abraham, and the Lord had promised that peace would exist throughout Solomon's entire reign.

The Lord appeared to the young king in a dream and asked, "What shall I give unto thee?" (see 1 Kings 3:5). Solomon, then humble and dedicated to the Lord, sought wisdom and was richly rewarded: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." (1 Kings 4:29–30.)

The family of David of Judah



The family of David. Chart redrawn from Douglas, Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1:367

Elder Howard W. Hunter likewise challenged us to obtain an understanding heart:

“If the Lord was pleased because of that which Solomon had asked of him, surely he would be pleased with each of us if we had the desire to acquire an understanding heart. This must come from conscious effort coupled with faith and firm determination. An understanding heart results from the experiences we have in life if we keep the commandments of God. . . .

“ . . . The ills of the world would be cured by understanding. Wars would cease and crime disappear. The scientific knowledge now being wasted in the world because of the distrust of men and nations could be diverted to bless mankind. Atomic energy will destroy unless used for peaceful purposes by understanding hearts.

“We need more understanding in our relationships with one another, in business and in industry, between management and labor, between government and the governed. We need understanding in that most important of all social units, the family; understanding between children and parents and between husband and wife. Marriage would bring happiness, and divorce would be unknown if there were understanding hearts. Hatred tears down, but understanding builds up.

“Our prayer could well be as was Solomon’s, ‘Lord, give me an understanding heart.’” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1962, pp. 75–76.)

What are the necessary steps given by Elder Hunter to obtain an understanding heart? What problems would be solved in the world if everyone would strive to have an understanding heart?

Solomon allowed his love for material things and his great accomplishments as a builder to wean him

from his early devotion to the Lord. True, he achieved great fame while the temple was being built, and his dedication of the house of the Lord was one of his most spiritual moments; but later, when the Queen of Sheba and other foreign visitors paid their respects, they said little about Solomon’s righteousness or wisdom. Rather, they expressed amazement and awe at his tremendous achievements in building. Solomon appears to have grown hungry for the plaudits of men. He decided to construct even grander structures. To do so, he enforced heavy taxation upon his people—so heavy that he eventually forced his people into poverty. Samuel’s warnings about what would occur if Israel were governed by a king were fulfilled in every particular (see 1 Samuel 8:11–18). Mismanagement of the nation’s wealth left united Israel tottering.

We all enjoy blessings from the Lord. If we are wise, we will accept the blessings with a grateful heart and walk in righteousness before the Lord.

Is affluence in the Church a problem today? Why? Do we sometimes forget the instructions given by the Savior in Matthew 6:33?

We, as modern Israel, need to avoid pride, misuse of wealth, and lust for the world’s esteem—three temptations that beset Solomon and led to his downfall. Are we any different? Even if we make some good decisions, could we also make some foolish ones that might destroy us?

Your patriarchal blessing can be an important guide to you. Because Solomon forgot his blessing from the Lord, he lost it. To help you remember, you might want to analyze your blessing by making a chart as follows:

My Patriarchal Blessing

Who Am I?	Promises	Admonitions
Statements about you, your potential, your destiny, your relationship with God	Those things the Lord promises on condition of your faithfulness	Counsel, warnings, and reminders to you



“Wisdom Is the Principal Thing; Therefore Get Wisdom”

(2-1) Introduction

The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are sometimes called the “wisdom literature.” The sages of the ancient Near East realized the superiority of wisdom over knowledge, for wisdom encompasses knowledge and includes understanding and moral conduct. One was not wise, regardless of his vast learning, if his actions did not comply with his righteous beliefs: “Like all Hebrew intellectual virtues, wisdom . . . is intensely practical, not theoretical. Basically, wisdom is the art of being successful, of forming the correct plan to gain the desired results. Its seat is the heart, the centre of moral and intellectual decision [see 1 Kings 3:9, 12].” (J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “wisdom.”)

“The book of Proverbs in the Old Testament . . . is the best sample of Hebrew ‘Wisdom Literature’ derived apparently from the experiences of the race, epitomized by wise men into brief rules for behavior. The book contains less material accredited to divine revelation and more attributed to human evaluations than the books by the Prophets. As to Solomon’s authorship of proverbs, he is said in 1 Kings 4:33 to have spoken thousands of them, covering all facets of the relationships of nature, man and God. Whether the extant proverbs in the Bible include all of them, and whether all that are attributed to him are really his would be difficult to tell now. In any case, Proverbs, chapters 1–9 are entitled ‘Proverbs of Solomon.’ They are largely in the form of advice from a father to his son, but include also some long poems about wisdom (e.g., chapter 8, wherein ‘Wisdom’ is personified, and seems to be not an abstraction, but a personality, a member of the Godhead). Chapters 10–22:16 are appropriately entitled ‘Proverbs of Solomon,’ for they contain only the formal pithy little poetic couplets that are by definition proverbs proper. From 22:17 to the end of chapter 24 there are a variety of longer admonishments and maxims on matters moral and social. Chapters 25 to 29 also constitute a unit called ‘Proverbs of Solomon.’ Chapter 30 is called ‘The Words of Agur,’ and chapter 31 ‘The Words of King Lemuel.’” (Ellis T. Rasmussen, *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings* [1st ed., 1969], 2:45.)

Instructions to Students

1. Read the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in their entirety to get the full impact of the wisdom in these works. Individual excerpts are often quoted, but the collection as a whole is also impressive.
2. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

3. The footnotes in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible are invaluable in helping you to interpret Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Be sure to check the alternate translations, definitions, and explanatory helps as you read these two books; they will greatly enhance your appreciation of the wisdom literature.

4. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON PROVERBS

(2-2) Proverbs 1:1–6. What Is the Book of Proverbs?

“The word translated ‘proverb’ . . . comes from a root which seems to mean ‘to represent’ or ‘be like’ . . . The word was, however, extended to sayings where no such analogy is evident, and came to designate a short pithy saying or byword.

“But the proverbs in this book are not so much popular sayings as the distillation of the wisdom of teachers who knew the law of God and were applying its principles to the whole of life.” (D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 549.)

(2-3) Proverbs 1:1. Who Wrote the Book of Proverbs?

“The general title is ‘The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David’. At several points in the book, however, there are rubrics [headings] giving the authorship of different sections. Thus sections are ascribed to Solomon at 10:1 and to ‘the wise’ at 22:17 and 24:23. At 25:1 there is the rubric ‘These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied’; ch. 30 is headed ‘the words of Agur son of Jakeh’, and ch. 31 ascribed to ‘King Lemuel’, or, rather, to his mother.” (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 548.)

According to the scriptural record, Solomon spoke or compiled three thousand proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs (see 1 Kings 4:32). Some of his wisdom was undoubtedly preserved by later writers and editors of the Old Testament and is now found in the wisdom literature.

(2-4) Proverbs 1:6. What Are “Dark Sayings”?

The first verses of Proverbs state that one purpose of this collection of wisdom is to help men understand the “dark sayings” of the wise. The Hebrew idiom *dark*

sayings connotes riddles or puzzles. The idea here is that the sayings of the wise are hidden or puzzling to those who are not wise.

(2-5) Proverbs 1:7. What Is the Theme of the Book of Proverbs?

The theme of the book of Proverbs is stated in verse 7: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” *Fear* as used here means reverence or deep respect for God. Though there is much in the book that does not rise above worldly wisdom, the whole serves as a reminder that to the Lord all things are spiritual (see D&C 29:34). The book underscores the idea that even in mortal life, when properly viewed, all things testify of God.

(2-6) Proverbs 1:8–9. Obeying Parental Counsel

These verses express the idea that wisdom won through obedience to parental counsel is as a lovely ornament (crown) to one’s head and as chains (necklaces) about one’s neck.

(2-7) Proverbs 2. Wisdom Comes from God

This chapter stresses that wisdom is a gift of God obtained only by diligent searching, and God will watch over and protect those who receive it and remain faithful to it. This promise can be understood only when one remembers that to Israel, wisdom meant obedience to God’s laws.

(2-8) Proverbs 2:10. The Head, the Heart, and the Bowels

In the Eastern and Western cultures, different parts of the human body symbolize the ideas of understanding and feeling. In the East one “understands” in his heart and “feels” in his bowels; in the West one “understands” in his head, or mind, and “feels” in his heart. Contrast Doctrine and Covenants 9:8, which says “your bosom shall burn within you,” with Proverbs 2:10, which says that “wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul” (see also Proverbs 6:18; 22:17).

(2-9) Proverbs 2:14. “Frowardness of the Wicked”

The word *froward* as used in Proverbs is a translation of several Hebrew words which share the common idea of deceitfulness, perverseness, and foolishness.

(2-10) Proverbs 2:16. What Is a “Strange Woman”?

The term *strange women* used throughout Proverbs refers not only to foreigners (non-Israelites) and idolaters but also to unchaste women. It is often synonymous with *harlot*.

(2-11) Proverbs 3:5–7. “Trust in the Lord”

President N. Eldon Tanner often quoted Proverbs 3:5–7. On one occasion he said:

“How much wiser and better it is for man to accept the simple truths of the gospel and to accept as authority God, the Creator of the world, and his Son Jesus Christ, and to accept by faith those things which he cannot disprove and for which he cannot give a better explanation. He must be prepared to acknowledge that there are certain things—many, many things—that he cannot understand.



Ashtoreth

“How can we deny or even disbelieve God when we cannot understand even the simplest things around us—how the leaf functions, what electricity is, what our emotions are, when the spirit enters the body, and what happens to it when it leaves? How can we say that because we do not understand the resurrection, there is not or cannot be a resurrection?

“We are admonished to ‘trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.’ (Prov. 3:5.) And we are warned: ‘Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!’ (Isa. 5:21.)” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, p. 49.)

(2-12) Proverbs 3:11–12. “Despise Not the Chastening of the Lord”

These verses sound an often repeated theme in the scriptures: the Lord frequently chastens His children to help them grow and progress spiritually (see Helaman 15:3; D&C 95:1; 101:4–5).

(2-13) Proverbs 4:7. Get Wisdom, the “Principal Thing”

After quoting Proverbs 4:7, Theodore M. Burton, then Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles, said: “We must feed the spirit as well as the mind and as well as the body. I plead with our youth, get learning, and with all your getting get understanding. Get learning of the spirit. Get learning of the mind. Get learning of the soul, and become a rounded man or a rounded woman, learned in all ways, for I testify to you this day that security, true security, comes from a knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ. This is the beginning of all learning and of all wisdom. This is the greatest knowledge, the greatest learning, the greatest comfort that men can have. If men have this knowledge in their hearts, they can withstand all the vicissitudes of life.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1961, p. 129.)

(2-14) Proverbs 4:18–19. Light for Darkness

President Brigham Young once commented on these verses:

“The life of a Christian is said to be full of pain, tribulation, sorrow, and excruciating torments; of fightings without and fears within, of anxieties, despair, gloominess, and mourning. His path is supposed to be spread with gins [snares], pitfalls, and uncertainties, but this is a mistake, for ‘the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,’ while ‘the wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips, but the just shall come out of trouble.’

“The faith I have embraced has given me light for darkness, ease for pain, joy and gladness for sorrow and mourning, certainty for uncertainty, hope for despair.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 9:318; see also Proverbs 4:18; 12:13.)

(2-15) Proverbs 6:16–19. Seven Things the Lord Hates

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., quoted these verses and commented: “I read these to show you that the Lord has not left us in doubt nor in darkness as to the things, some of them, that we should not do. We add these to the Ten Commandments.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1952, pp. 97–98.)

Proverbs 6:16 mentions six things and then a seventh that the Lord hates. This “Recalling of what has been said, in order to correct it as by an Afterthought” is a literary device often used by Hebrew writers to add beauty and power to expressions and to convey the idea of completeness (E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, pp. 909–10). Other examples of this literary device are found in Proverbs 30:15, 18.

(2-16) Proverbs 6:18. “An Heart That Deviseth Wicked Imaginations”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on this verse: “If we think evil thoughts, our tongues will utter unclean sayings. . . . If our minds are centered on the carnality and evil of the world, then worldliness and unrighteousness will seem to us to be the normal way of life. If we ponder things related to sex immorality in our minds, we will soon think everybody is immoral and unclean and it will break down the barrier between us and the world. And so with every other unwholesome, unclean, impure, and ungodly course.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1973, p. 56; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, p. 48.)

(2-17) Proverbs 7:2. “Apple of Thine Eye”

This phrase is one of many commonly used expressions that come from the Old Testament. The phrase is also found in Deuteronomy 32:10, Psalm 17:8, and Lamentations 2:18. The word *apple*, however, refers not to the fruit but to the pupil of the eye (see William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “apple”). The idiom suggests that just as the eye is a sensitive organ requiring care and protection, so is the law precious and worthy of protection.

(2-18) Proverbs 8. Wisdom Personified

Wisdom is enthroned and contrasted with the seductive, evil, and death-giving woman of Proverbs 7 (see vv. 10–23). In dignity and in the light of day,



Nose jewels

Wisdom beseeches all to come and partake of her life-giving rewards.

(2-19) Proverbs 8:17. A Key to Spiritual Power

This verse expounds one of the simplest and yet most profound truths one can learn in life. Too often God’s children wait until times of distress to seek Him, and thus they may deprive themselves of the power and solace they need (compare Helaman 12:1–5; D&C 101:7–8).

(2-20) Proverbs 10:18. “He That Uttereth a Slander, Is a Fool”

“Slander is of the devil; the very word devil itself comes from the Greek *diabolos* which means a slanderer. It is natural, therefore, that slanderous reports against the Church have their origin, most generally, among those who are living carnal and sensual lives, whose conduct is such as to cause them to be guided and dominated by Lucifer.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 738.)

(2-21) Proverbs 11:22. Nose Jewels

Nose jewels were a common adornment for the women of Israel and surrounding cultures, but a jewel in a swine’s snout was unthinkable because swine were held in such contempt among the Israelites. This proverb thus dismisses the value of physical beauty when it is not accompanied with self-control and righteousness.

(2-22) Proverbs 13:10. “By Pride Cometh Contention”

Elder Marvin J. Ashton cautioned:

“When one considers the bad feeling and the unpleasantness caused by contention, it is well to ask, ‘Why do I participate?’ If we are really honest with ourselves, our answers may be something like: ‘When I argue and am disagreeable, I do not have to change myself. It gives me a chance to get even.’ ‘I am unhappy and I want others to be miserable too.’ ‘I can feel self-righteous. In this way I get my ego built up.’ ‘I don’t want others to forget how much I know!’

“Whatever the real reason, it is important to recognize that we choose our behavior. At the root of this issue is the age-old problem of pride. ‘Only by pride cometh contention.’ (Prov. 13:10.)

“If Satan can succeed in creating in us habits of arguing, quarreling, and contention, it is easier then for him to bind us with the heavier sins which can destroy our eternal lives. A contentious spirit can affect almost any phase of our lives. An angry letter written in haste can haunt us—sometimes for years. A few ill-advised words spoken in hate can destroy a marriage or a personal friendship, or impede community progress.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, pp. 11–12; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 9.)

(2-23) Proverbs 13:20. The Value of Association

Here again a profound truth is caught in simple language. The people one chooses to associate with in life can have a profound effect on what one turns out to be.

(2-24) Proverbs 13:24. Spare the Rod

Brigham Young lived in an era when parents, especially fathers, were often severe and punished their children frequently. His advice is remarkably modern, but it does not advocate the permissive philosophy by which so many parents today rear their offspring: “Instead of using the rod, I will teach my children by example and by precept. I will teach them every opportunity I have to cherish faith, to exercise patience, to be full of long-suffering and kindness. It is not by the whip or the rod that we can make obedient children; but it is by faith and by prayer, and by setting a good example before them.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 11:117.)

In an age when child abuse is becoming all too common, the admonition of Brigham Young’s counselor, George A. Smith, still rings true: “My opinion is that the use of the rod is very frequently the result of a want of understanding on the part of a spoiled parent . . . though of course the use of the rod in some cases might be necessary; but I have seen children abused when they ought not to have been, because King Solomon is believed to have made that remark, which, if he did, in nine cases out of ten referred to mental rather than physical correction.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 14:374.)

In Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–43 the Lord makes it clear how He expects His Saints to accomplish their disciplining, not only in the Church, as this passage is often interpreted, but also in their homes.

(2-25) Proverbs 14:23. When All Is Said and Done

Penury means severe poverty. The idea of this verse is that an idle tongue brings no profit either to the individual or to others. Many have talked about their schemes for getting rich, and yet they have remained poor because only their tongues were active.

(2-26) Proverbs 15:1. Soft Answers in the Home

President Brigham Young spoke of maintaining self-control in one’s speech and actions: “In all our daily pursuits in life, of whatever nature and kind, Latter-day Saints, and especially those who hold important positions in the kingdom of God, should maintain a uniform and even temper, both when at home and when abroad. They should not suffer reverses and unpleasant circumstances to sour their natures and render them fretful and unsocial at home, speaking words full of bitterness and biting acrimony to their wives and children, creating gloom and sorrow in their habitations, making themselves feared rather than beloved by their families. Anger should never be permitted to rise in our bosoms, and words suggested by angry feelings should never be permitted to pass our lips. ‘A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.’ ‘Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous;’ but ‘the discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.’” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 11:136; see also Proverbs 19:11; 27:4.)

Elder Marvin J. Ashton gave additional counsel about controlling one’s tongue:

“Too often we use communication periods as occasions to tell, dictate, plead, or threaten. Nowhere in the broadest sense should communication in the family be used to impose, command, or embarrass.

“. . . In family discussions, differences should not be ignored, but should be weighed and evaluated calmly. One’s point or opinion usually is not as important as a healthy, continuing relationship. Courtesy and respect in listening and responding during discussions are basic in proper dialogue. . . . How important it is to know how to disagree with another’s point of view without being disagreeable. How important it is to have discussion periods ahead of decisions. Jones Stephens wrote, ‘I have learned that the head does not hear anything until the heart has listened, and that what the heart knows today the head will understand tomorrow.’” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1976, p. 79; or *Ensign*, May 1976, p. 52.)

(2-27) Proverbs 15:31–32. “Reproof Getteth Understanding”

Neal A. Maxwell, then Commissioner of Church Education, commented:

“Our life style must make allowance for that need to deal with reality in our own lives. In Proverbs we read: [Proverbs 15:31–32].

“The disciple of Christ needs to expect the ‘reproof of life’—and suffering—for suffering is that sweat that comes from working out our salvation. Suffering is on the agenda for each of us.” (*Freedom: a “Hard Doctrine,”* Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 12 Apr. 1972, p. 4.)



A “hoary head” is a head of white hair.

(2-28) Proverbs 16:8. Wealth and Righteousness

Volumes have been written about the dangers and temptations of wealth, but this simple statement summarizes the whole issue of wealth and righteousness.

(2-29) Proverbs 16:31. What Is a “Hoary Head”?

Hoary means “white”; thus, this phrase could be translated as “the gray hair of old age” (Proverbs 16:31a).

(2-30) Proverbs 16:32. Becoming Master of Oneself

President David O. McKay often spoke to the youth of the Church about self-control and self-mastery:

“So the whole lesson is one of subduing, not just physical matter, that you might realize the ideal, but subduing your own passions and appetites, and conquering them. Some of you say we hear too much about keeping the Word of Wisdom. Why, it is one of the best lessons for the young in all this world, and for the old! You reach out to indulge in certain things. Resist, avoid creating an appetite for that which creates an appetite for itself. But beyond that, you develop the power to say, ‘No, thank you.’ And the strength that comes to the character more than compensates for any immediate pleasure. . . .

“I commend to you, young man and young woman, the virtue of self-mastery, if you would fulfill the true measure of your life in subduing, in order to realize the ideal, the spiritual development of your soul.” (In *Deseret News*, 6 Sept. 1952, p. 15.)

(2-31) Proverbs 17:9. Promoting Loving Relationships

The expression “covereth a transgression” in this context does not mean that one hides or rationalizes a sin but rather means “forgives a transgression.” “Seeketh love” is better understood as “promotes a loving relationship.” (Proverbs 17:9a, b.)

(2-32) Proverbs 17:22. Is There a Place for a Wholesome Sense of Humor?

President Hugh B. Brown said: “We have often urged our young people to carry their laughter over into their mature years. A wholesome sense of humor will be a safety valve that will enable you to apply the lighter touch to heavy problems and to learn some lessons in problem solving that ‘sweat and tears’ often fail to dissolve. [See Proverbs 17:22.]” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1968, p. 100.)

(2-33) Proverbs 18:22. Find a Good Wife

Joseph Smith Translation, Proverbs 18:22, reads, “Whoso findeth a *good* wife hath obtained favor of the Lord” (emphasis added).

(2-34) Proverbs 20:7. What Does It Mean to Walk in Integrity?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out that “the complete development of man’s moral character in conformity with principles of justice and uprightness is termed *integrity*. A man of integrity is sound, incorruptible, and particularly strict about fulfilling the trusts reposed in him by others. *The highest manifestation of integrity is exhibited by those who conform their conduct to the terms of those gospel covenants and promises which they have made.* Integrity goes hand in hand with uprightness and righteousness, and the Lord loves those who have integrity of heart. (D. & C. 124:15, 20.) ‘The integrity of the upright shall guide them’ (Prov. 11:3), and ‘The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.’ (Prov. 20:7.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 385.)

(2-35) Proverbs 21:3. Isn’t Sacrifice Acceptable to the Lord?

Sacrifice as used here refers to the Mosaic ordinance of sacrifice. Ancient Israel often would outwardly go through the acts of offering sacrifice without inwardly truly turning to God. Thus, the Lord often reminded them that inner righteousness is more pleasing to Him than outward conformity to ritual (compare 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11–15; Amos 5:21–26).

(2-36) Proverbs 21:4. Cultivating Wickedness

Two phrases in this verse need clarification: “An high look” means “haughty eyes,” and the “plowing of the wicked” means the “cultivating of wickedness” (Proverbs 21:4a, c).

(2-37) Proverbs 21:13. Practical Application of One’s Religion

The relationship between service to others and our own spiritual power is taught here and many other places in scripture (see Mosiah 2:17; Alma 34:28; Isaiah 1:16–20; James 1:27).

Of the obligation to serve others Elder Hugh B. Brown said:

“For years we have been teaching our theology, and successfully teaching it to the world. We must now make practical application of our religion; must again refer to and apply in our daily lives the words of the Master as recorded in holy writ. May I read some of them:

“‘Love one another.’

“‘By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.’ . . .

“‘Remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support, that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.’

“‘Inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me.’

“‘Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.’

“It seems to me that the application of the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the most important task before us today. As I listened to Elder McKay this afternoon, telling us of the millions of young people outside the churches whose hearts are not being touched by religious instruction, I thought, this Church must furnish leadership for the world, must show the way out of this serious economic situation by calling attention to the message of Jesus and by applying the principles taught by him.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1932, pp. 74–75.)

(2-38) Proverbs 21:30. Why Is There No “Counsel against the Lord”?

No acceptable wisdom, understanding, or counsel will turn a person away from God. So often the world seeks to offer counsel and advice that runs counter to God’s will, but such advice must always be rejected, for it cannot stand in the eternities.

(2-39) Proverbs 21:31. “Safety Is of the Lord”

Anciently the horse was used only in warfare and battle; it therefore became a symbol of war and conquest (see Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. “horse”). This proverb means that people tend to multiply horses, or seek to defend themselves against their enemies by preparing for war, when their ultimate safety lies in trust and faith in God. This lessons seems to be forgotten, for modern societies increase their weaponry and give no thought to the role God plays in their defense.

(2-40) Proverbs 22:6. What Is the Best Way to Train Children?

Bishop Victor L. Brown suggested that Proverbs 22:6 implies that parents must live the way they want their children to live:

“Josh Billings paraphrases this truth: ‘To bring up a child in the way he should go, travel that way yourself.’ . . .

“Throughout the Church I hear . . . ‘If we did not have problems with parents, we would not have them with the young people.’” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, p. 31.)

James G. Duffin, a former president of the Central States Mission, said: “There is a difference between teaching and training. Teaching is causing the child to

understand, training is causing the child to do. Every act performed is that much done towards fixing habits; repeated many times, the habit is established. If we train our children in the ways of the Lord, . . . every time they perform an act of obedience to the word and will of our Father in heaven their character becomes more firmly fixed in doing the things that God requires of them.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1909, p. 25.)

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, who was then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “It is so obvious that the great good and the terrible evil in the world today are the sweet and the bitter fruits of the rearing of yesterday’s children. As we train a new generation, so will the world be in a few years. If you are worried about the future, then look to the upbringing of your children. Wisely did the writer of Proverbs declare, [Proverbs 22:6].” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1978, p. 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, p. 18.)

(2-41) Proverbs 22:28. What Are Landmarks?

Landmarks were not merely places of interest or distinctive geographical features to the people of the Middle East. In a world that did not have fenced property, landmarks were property markers. Even today in the Middle East one can see piles of rocks designating the division between one man’s land and another’s. To move such landmarks was a very serious thing indeed, since it was the equivalent of stealing another’s property.

See also Proverbs 23:10.

(2-42) Proverbs 23:7. One’s Actions Follow One’s Thoughts

President Marion G. Romney emphasized this proverb in his sesquicentennial conference address:

“The great overall struggle in the world today is, as it has always been, for the souls of men. Every soul is personally engaged in the struggle, and he makes his fight with what is in his mind. In the final analysis the battleground is, for each individual, within himself. Inevitably he gravitates toward the subjects of his thoughts. Ages ago the wise man thus succinctly stated this great truth: ‘As he thinketh in his heart, so is he’ (Prov. 23:7).

“If we would escape the lusts of the flesh and build for ourselves and our children great and noble characters, we must keep in our minds and in their minds true and righteous principles for our thoughts and their thoughts to dwell upon.

“We must not permit our minds to become surfeited with the interests, things, and practices of the world about us. To do so is tantamount to adopting and going along with them. . . .

“If we would avoid adopting the evils of the world, we must pursue a course which will daily feed our minds with and call them back to the things of the Spirit.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1980, p. 88; or *Ensign*, May 1980, p. 66.)

(2-43) Proverbs 23:16. Why Is the Term *Reins* Used?

“In the ancient system of physiology the kidneys [reins] were believed to be the seat of desire and longing, which accounts for their often being coupled with the heart” (William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “reins”).



Nahal Zin, a scene of Israel's adversity

The word *reins* is used frequently in Psalms and in the famous passage in Job 19:27.

(2-44) Proverbs 24:10. There Is Value “in the Day of Adversity”

Elder ElRay L. Christiansen commented on this verse: “Because it is necessary for our development, the Lord permits the bitter to be mixed with the sweet. He knows that our individual faith must be tested in adversity as well as in serenity. Otherwise, that faith may not be sufficiently developed when a condition arises that can be met through faith alone.

“. . . Even in times of trouble and tribulation, the gospel of Christ offers encouragement and gives assurance.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1969, p. 39.)

(2-45) Proverbs 25:21–22. Heaping Coals of Fire on Another’s Head

Initially these verses sound as though a person is instructed to do the right thing for the wrong reason, that is, to forgive so that one’s enemy will receive a worse torment. Other scriptures, however, suggest a different interpretation: bringing someone to repentance and godly sorrow through sharpening conscience. (See Romans 12:19–20.)

“The burning of coals laid on the head must be a painful but wholesome consequence; it is a figure of self-accusing repentance . . . , [which is produced through] the showing of good to an enemy. . . . That God rewards such magnanimity may not be the special motive; but this view might contribute to it, for otherwise such promises of God [as Isaiah 58:8–12] were without moral right. The proverb also requires one to show himself gentle and liberal toward a needy enemy, and present a twofold reason for this: first, that thereby his injustice is brought home to his conscience; and, secondly, that thus God is well-pleased in such practical love toward an enemy, and will reward it;—by such conduct, apart from the performance of a law grounded in our moral nature, one advances the happiness of his neighbour and his own.” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 6:2:168.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ECCLESIASTES

(2-46) Ecclesiastes. The Message of the Preacher

Ecclesiastes is “a Greek translation of the Hebrew *Koheleth*, a word meaning ‘one who convenes an assembly,’ sometimes rendered Preacher. The book of Ecclesiastes consists of reflections on some of the deepest problems of life, as they present themselves to the thoughtful observer. The epilogue (Eccl. 12:9–14) sets forth the main conclusions at which the writer has arrived. The author describes himself as ‘son of David, king in Jerusalem’ (1:1).

“The book of Ecclesiastes seems permeated with a pessimistic flavor, but must be read in the light of one of its key phrases: ‘under the sun’ (1:9), meaning ‘from a worldly point of view.’ The term *vanity* also needs clarification, since as used in Ecclesiastes it means transitory, or fleeting. Thus the Preacher laments that as things appear from the point of view of the world, everything is temporary and soon gone—nothing is permanent. It is in this light also that the reader must understand 9:5 and 9:10, which declare that the dead ‘know not any thing,’ and there is no knowledge ‘in the grave.’ These should not be construed as theological pronouncements on the condition of the soul after death; rather, they are observations by the Preacher about how things appear to men on the earth ‘under the sun.’ The most spiritual part of the book appears in chapters 11 and 12, where it is concluded that the only activity of lasting and permanent value comes from obedience to God’s commandments, since all things will be examined in the judgment that God will render on man.” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Ecclesiastes.”)

(2-47) Ecclesiastes 3:1–11. Sequence and Order in One’s Life

These verses are among those most often quoted from Ecclesiastes. They suggest that there is an appropriate time for everything that occurs in human life. Elder Paul H. Dunn quoted Ecclesiastes 3:1 and commented:

“Our prophet, President Kimball, has counseled you, young people, particularly young men, as to that proper sequence. Would you note the sequence of events that will bring orderliness and happiness to your life. I quote from our prophet:

“‘One can have all the blessings if he is in control and takes the experiences in proper turn: first some limited social get-acquainted contacts, then his mission, then his courting, then his temple marriage and [now note] his schooling and his family, then his life’s work. In any other sequence he could run into difficulty.’ (Spencer W. Kimball, ‘The Marriage Decision,’ *Ensign*, Feb. 1975, p. 4.)” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 91; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 62.)

(2-48) Ecclesiastes 4:13. A Willingness to Continue to Grow

President Brigham Young quoted Ecclesiastes 4:13 and then discussed the importance of one’s continuing

to grow: "When I was baptized into this Church, it was in its infancy, although a considerable number had been baptized before me, and many of them were older when they were baptized than I was. They improved, their minds expanded, they received truth and intelligence, increased in the knowledge of the things of God, and bid fair to become full-grown men in Christ Jesus. But some of them, when they had gained a little spiritual strength and knowledge, apparently stopped in their growth. This was in the eastern country, and but a few years passed before the fruit-trees began to cease bearing fruit. . . . Like the fruit-trees, they have ceased to grow and increase and bear the fruits of the Spirit." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 7:335.)

(2-49) Ecclesiastes 5:1–17. Proverbs in Ecclesiastes

These verses are the most positive in Ecclesiastes. The counsel given here is in the form of brief proverbs or wise sayings.

(2-50) Ecclesiastes 5:12. The Importance of Loving to Work

Elder Adam S. Bennion said:

"You remember what the Lord has said: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.' (Gen. 3:19.) And there is this wonderful passage in John. When the Savior was criticized for something he did on the Sabbath, he answered his accusers by saying, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' (John 5:17.)

"And then that memorable passage from Ecclesiastes:

"The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: (I am glad I have not been rich—because this next line says) . . . but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.' (Ecclesiastes 5:12.)

"All my life I have enjoyed the blessed privilege of living with people who love to work. I rejoice in a helpmate who delights in keeping up our home. . . .

"Someone has said, 'Happy is the man who has work he loves to do,' but somebody else has added the basic fundamental thought, 'Happy is the man who loves the work he has to do.'" (In Conference Report, Apr. 1955, pp. 110–11.)

(2-51) Ecclesiastes 7:12. What Can One Take with Him?

In this verse the Preacher comes close to the truth expressed in Doctrine and Covenants 130:17–19.

(2-52) Ecclesiastes 7:13–29. Does Man Control His Destiny?

The theme here is resignation to the will of God. Become content by changing and controlling *yourself* and by refraining from doing wicked and foolish things. Part of wisdom lies in changing what can be changed and in accepting what cannot.

(2-53) Ecclesiastes 9:11. To Him Who Endures to the End

"The race is not to the swift, nor riches to men of wisdom. Do not fret, nor be so anxious about property, nor think that when you have gathered treasures, they alone will produce joy and comfort; for it is not so.

"The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of wisdom. The Lord gives the increase: he makes rich whom he pleases. You may inquire, 'Why not make us rich?' Perhaps, because we

would not know what to do with riches." (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:241.)

(2-54) Ecclesiastes 10. More Proverbs from the Preacher

This chapter is primarily a collection of proverbs. The unifying theme seems to be that without God life is vanity without purpose. Aside from their pessimistic outlook, these proverbs differ little from those in the book of Proverbs.

(2-55) Ecclesiastes 11. Must One Accept What Is?

The stress here is threefold: (1) each individual must take advantage of opportunities while he has them; (2) life is uncertain, and there is no guarantee that opportunities lost will ever return; and (3) one's future lies not in changing or in challenging but in accepting what is and making the most of it.

Jesus taught that we can control our destiny. We do have some influence on our circumstances as well as responsibility for how we respond to them. Our obligation is to do *all* we can and not just learn to be resigned to our lot.

(2-56) Ecclesiastes 11:1. The Law of the Harvest

We reap what we sow; we cast our bread on the waters and get a just return. Every good deed will have its reward, and every unworthy thought will register in some recess of the mind.

(2-57) Ecclesiastes 11:3. As the Tree Falls

Brigham Young interpreted this expression as follows, tying it to death and the Judgment: "Ere long we will have to lay down these tabernacles and go into the spirit world. And I do know that as we lie down, so judgment will find us, and that is scriptural; 'as the tree falls so it shall lie,' or, in other words, as death leaves us so judgment will find us." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 4:52–53.)

(2-58) Ecclesiastes 12. Life Does Have Meaning

This passage sounds negative, cynical, and without hope, but one must remember that the Preacher is speaking from the viewpoint of a man without God. From the standpoint of the natural man, it is difficult to argue against Ecclesiastes. When a person puts his trust in things under the sun (the things of the world), he finds no lasting spiritual benefits. Energy and labor expended, wisdom and knowledge acquired, fortune and prestige gained, goodness and virtue dispensed are empty without God and pointless in the eternal scheme of things without accompanying spiritual life. The purpose of Ecclesiastes is not to grind us down between futility and despair but to help us remember that there is meaning only through God and keeping His commandments. Otherwise all is vanity.

(2-59) Ecclesiastes 12:7. "The Spirit Shall Return unto God"

"Obviously we could not return to a place where we had never been, so we are talking about death as a process as miraculous as birth, by which we return to 'our Father who art in heaven'" (Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, p. 6; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, p. 4).

In a related passage of scripture, Doctrine and Covenants 88:15–16, the Lord states that the body and the spirit together make up the soul. The separation of the body and the spirit is called death; their reuniting is called resurrection.

(2-60) Ecclesiastes 12:13. “Fear God, and Keep His Commandments”

This one verse gives meaning to the entire book of Ecclesiastes. The Preacher finally sums up his whole philosophy and tells us to “fear God, and keep his commandments” (v. 13), to put first things first and all else will have meaning and not be just vanity. Life need not be empty or useless, spent in pursuing riches, fame, pleasure, or even wisdom.

Elder Henry D. Taylor, an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, said: “If we keep *all* of God’s commandments, we will enjoy a feeling of calmness, serenity, and strength. This will serve as a bulwark to protect us against the winds and storms created by the tensions and uncertainties of present chaotic world conditions. We need not wait until we get to heaven to obtain peace and happiness. We can have heaven on earth, here and now.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1961, p. 103.)

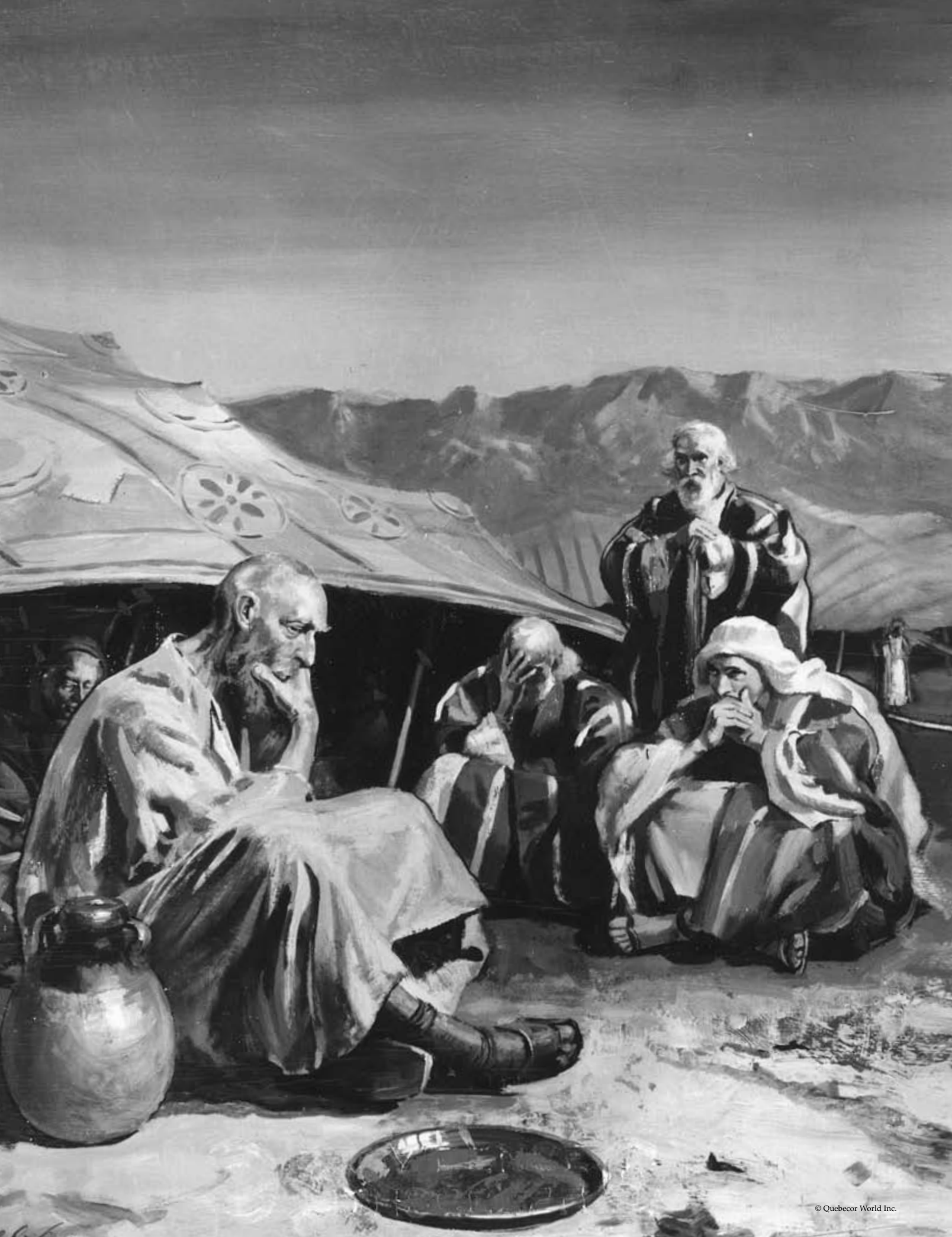
POINTS TO PONDER

(2-61) Using the Proverbs As a Guide for Self-Improvement

As you read the book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes, many gems of wisdom will attract your attention. Select the passages that are most important to you in your own pursuit of a more fulfilling life. Perhaps you need to work on one of the seven deadly sins, listed in Proverbs 6:16–19. Or maybe you need to improve in an aspect of your life such as the following:

1. Taking school and homework more seriously (see Proverbs 4:7).
2. Controlling your thoughts (see Proverbs 23:7).
3. Controlling your temper (see Proverbs 14:29; 25:28).
4. Developing more self-control (see Proverbs 16:32).
5. Accepting adversity with courage and hope (see Proverbs 24:10).
6. Keeping your word (see Ecclesiastes 5:4).
7. Putting wealth and comfort in their proper perspective (see Ecclesiastes 6:2; 9:11).

These are just a few suggestions; you select your own.



“Hast Thou Considered My Servant Job?”

(3-1) Introduction

“The daily newspaper screamed the headlines: ‘Plane Crash Kills 43. No Survivors of Mountain Tragedy,’ and thousands of voices joined in a chorus: ‘Why did the Lord let this terrible thing happen?’

“Two automobiles crashed when one went through a red light, and six people were killed. Why would God not prevent this?

“Why should the young mother die of cancer and leave her eight children motherless? Why did not the Lord heal her?

“A little child was drowned; another was run over. Why?

“A man died one day suddenly of a coronary occlusion as he climbed a stairway. His body was found slumped on the floor. His wife cried out in agony, ‘Why? Why would the Lord do this to me? Could he not have considered my three little children who still need a father?’

“A young man died in the mission field and people critically questioned: ‘Why did not the Lord protect this youth while he was doing proselyting work?’” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 95.)

Why do the righteous, those who love and serve God, suffer? In Job 1:8 the Lord called Job a “perfect and an upright man.” Why then did the Lord permit Satan to afflict His righteous servant?

Who is responsible for man’s troubles? Was it the Lord who directed the plane into the mountainside? Did God cause the highway collision? Was it He who prompted the young child to toddle into the canal or the man to suffer the heart attack? Responding to these questions, President Kimball said:

“Answer, if you can. I cannot, for though I know God has a major role in our lives, I do not know how much he causes to happen and how much he merely permits. Whatever the answer to this question, there is another I feel sure about.

“Could the Lord have prevented these tragedies? The answer is, Yes. The Lord is omnipotent, with all power to control our lives, save us pain, prevent all accidents, drive all planes and cars, feed us, protect us, save us from labor, effort, sickness, even from death, if he will. But he will not.” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 96.)

The book of Job is a beautiful literary masterpiece that deals with this very question: Why do the righteous suffer? Many lessons are to be learned from the book, but one distinct lesson emerges above all others: after his suffering was ended, Job discovered that the Lord had “blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12). See if you can discover through your reading just what blessings Job obtained as a result of his suffering. In what way was his “end” better than his “beginning”?

Instructions to Students

1. A study of Job presents a particular challenge in a limited work such as this manual. Typical commentaries on the book of Job run to several hundred pages. The book is long, and its poetic form is often difficult to follow. Reading 3-2 is an analysis of the book of Job that captures the essence of the message and the effect of the literary form. If you study this reading carefully, when you read the book of Job itself you will find it much easier to understand.

2. A short Notes and Commentary is included; however, Reading 3-2 is your primary reading assignment. Read both before reading Job.

3. Read the book of Job.

4. No Points to Ponder section is included in this chapter because of the length of your reading assignment.

(3-2) The Book of Job

At the Sixth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium held at Brigham Young University in January 1978, Keith H. Meservy, associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, delivered the following address, entitled “Job: ‘Yet Will I Trust in Him.’”

“What I say today can be regarded more as my reflections on the book of Job than any systematic analysis of its contents. It is a marvelous book and many superlative statements have been made about it. In particular, Victor Hugo notes, ‘The book of Job is perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the human mind’ (Henry H. Halley, *Pocket Bible Handbook*, Chicago, 1946, p. 232). Thomas Carlyle says, ‘I call this book apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written. Our first, oldest statement of the never ending problem—Man’s Destiny, and God’s ways with him in the earth. There is nothing written, I think of equal literary merit’ (ibid). An Old Testament scholar, H. H. Rowley, reflects, ‘The book of Job is the greatest work of genius in the Old Testament, and one of the world’s artistic masterpieces’ (H. H. Rowley, *The Growth of the Old Testament*, 1966, p. 143). . . .

“I’m impressed that the book of Job vividly illustrates a teaching from the *Lectures on Faith*, that if anyone is to endure in faithfulness in his life, he must know three things: that God exists, that he is perfect in his character and in his attributes, and that the course of life which one pursues is pleasing to the Lord. If any one of these elements is missing then the full basis for faith is missing. Job is regarded as a man of faith; let’s look for these elements in his life.

"The very first verse in the book described him as a man who was 'perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed [or turned away from] evil' (1:1). Significantly, the Lord acknowledged in identical phraseology the goodness of this man (1:8). This matter-of-fact acceptance of Job's goodness by the writer and especially the Lord is paramount to any satisfactory understanding of the question underlying this book—why a righteous man suffers. This very goodness, however, became an issue with the Adversary (Hebrew: *satan*; adversary, here: *hassatan* = the Adversary). He cynically stated that Job's good behavior and reverence had been heavily underwritten by the Lord when he blessed Job with such a prosperous and rewarding life—who wouldn't serve God under such circumstances?

"He who poses such questions seems never to learn. On another occasion, he would take this same Lord, the Word now made flesh, to the top of a high mountain and offer to buy his allegiance, in a way reminiscent of the way he thought the Word had bought the allegiance of Job—by showing him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, and then promising him who had no place even to lay his head, that, 'all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me' (Matt. 4:8-9). How frustrated Satan must be to realize that for such occasions he never has the true coin. Ironically, he who said, 'Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve' (vs. 10), placed Job in the hands of this same Adversary with the words, 'All that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand' (Job 1:12).

"In one day, Job was impoverished—all the bases of his wealth—oxen, asses, servants, sheep, camels, even his posterity, were obliterated. Job's submissive response to such a negating blow was as complete as Jesus', 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: Blessed be the name of the Lord' (1:21). 'In all this,' says the record, 'Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly' (1:22).

"Satan had erred in concluding that goods, wealth and even posterity, were the essence of Job's life, since the meaning of life for him transcended the loss of all of these things. . . .

"With impeccable faith he had kept his hand on the plow and maintained his integrity (2:3).

"Satan, seeking deeper reasons for Job's fidelity, concluded that Job would ultimately turn from the Lord if he could be hurt enough. 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.' The Lord replied simply, 'He is in thine hand; but save his life' (2:4-6). With devilish power Satan then inflicted Job with sore boils, making him so miserable that his wife urged him to curse God and die. Heroically, Job replied simply, 'What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' Our author succinctly concluded, 'In all this did not Job sin with his lips' (2:10). Thus, Satan's contention was demonstrably wrong, Job's faith had not and did not fail and the Lord was vindicated.

"As becomes apparent, however, Job's struggle was not over. His test, as severe as it was, was not merely

to be impoverished, left without offspring, and afflicted with pain for a day and then, having passed the test, find release. Time's leavening must sharpen his pain, deepen his disappointment and intensify his discouragement, to see if heightened tension would break his spirit and drive him from the Lord. Job had well sustained the initial shock but when successive waves engulfed the total reality of his daily life, would he still endure? This question neither he nor the devil could answer initially. Thus, time was assigned to chew away at Job's inner strength until he became miserable—miserable in spirit and body, so miserable in fact, that death appeared in his mind as a coveted, comforting, liberating friend. Who can imagine the state of his mind at this point? Perhaps some of us, maybe none of us. One thing, however, is clear. If we are to empathize at all with his feelings, we must see his life from his own perspective. Job permitted us this by opening his heart and vividly contrasting his present misery with his former blessed state.

"The author himself supplied the note that formerly Job had been one of the greatest of all men of the east. He then showed Job looking back nostalgically through his grief to those days when God matter-of-factly preserved him, when his candle shined on Job's head and when by his light he walked through the darkness. At that time, all men, young, aged, princes, nobles alike paid deference to Job. Highly regarded at all levels of society, his counsel was often sought and never superseded. Beloved by all, he was a boon to anyone in need. In such circumstances, Job took great comfort in feeling that he was as secure as a root in a well-watered soil. His days ahead would multiply like sand and he would die securely in his nest with his glory round about him, dwelling as a chief among his people. [Note Job's words in 29:2-11, 18-20.]

"Then the change. We have noted already the loss of wealth, health, and posterity. But his hurts continued to rise in successive waves till death seemed to be a deliverer from a pain-engulfed life. What were these hurtful waves?

"First: We must recognize without knowing exactly what it was that he suffered from physically. From the symptoms, some have said that it appears that he had elephantiasis. Sore boils, one of the symptoms of this disease, had attacked Job's body, forming large pustules which itched so greatly that a piece of pottery was used to scrape them. Job's face was so disfigured that his friends could not recognize him. Worms or maggots were bred in the sores (7:5). His breath became so foul and his body emitted such an odor, that even his friends abhorred him (19:17ff), and he sought refuge outside the city on the refuse heap where outcasts and lepers lived. Pain was his constant companion (30:17, 30) as were also terrifying nightmares (7:14).' (*The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, p. 641, note.) . . .

"Second: whereas, formerly old, young, princes and nobles alike honored Job, he now felt abused by those whom society itself rejects; who live on the outskirts of town, among the bushes, along the ditchbanks, or in caves.

"Job says of them: 'They that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock . . . They were driven forth from men, (they cried after

them as a thief) . . . they were children of fools, yea children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now I am their song, yea, I am their byword. They abhor me, they flee far from me and spare not to spit in my face. Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me. They have also let loose the bridle before me. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the days of their destruction. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity . . .’ (30:1, 5, 8–13). . . .

“The loss of his prosperity, property and wealth with its related loss of security was one thing; and loss of health and strength with pain and misery as daily attendants, was another, but for some unexplained reason, at this critical juncture in his life Job suffered a loss that, in its way, may have been as significant as any of these others. He lost the support that loyal friends and loving kinsfolk might have given had they but rallied around him in this trying moment of his life. But, oddly enough, this was not to be. Thus, in his deepest need, Job stood awesomely alone, isolated from any who might have commiserated with him in this trying time. And, here again, he held the Lord responsible for having effected this rupture between him and his friends.

“He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children’s sake of mine own body. Yea young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends: for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God?’ (19:13–22).

“Even Job’s wife became hopeless and, failing to comfort him, helpless, challenging him rather to ‘curse God and die.’ Under these circumstances, ‘when other helpers fail and comforts flee,’ many in their deepest need and most trying time have looked to the ‘Help of the helpless’ to abide with them, needing his presence; what else but his grace can foil the tempter’s power? Job, too. Hadn’t God’s candle always before shined upon his head whenever he walked through the darkness? Hadn’t he always been a party to the secrets of the Lord? (21:3–5). Surely Job could turn again to the Lord in this time of distress. . . .

“ . . . But the heavens remained still silent. And for a good reason too, as we know, silence itself had become part of the test. But what a problem this posed for Job. Deep, depressing darkness cowed him by its awful blackness and terrified him by its pervasiveness. Listen to his anguished plea with the Lord for soul-relief, relief that included an answer to his persistent but continually unanswered question: Why? Why? Why?

“ . . . ‘Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?’ (13:20–24, emphasis added.) ‘Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths’ (19:6–8,

emphasis added). ‘O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor!’ (16:21). ‘Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him’ (23:3–13, emphasis added).

“Thus, Job, in turn deprived inexplicably in his own mind of his wealth, his family, and his health, living daily in much pain, deprived of the psychological and spiritual support of friends and loved ones who should have cared, ultimately finds himself deprived of the support of the Lord—the greatest of all comforters. No one seems to have asked Job which of these losses afflicted him the most; but, at least, initially, Job was able to say of the Lord that he had given, he had also taken away. One, therefore, suspects that in the long run his greatest loss and deepest need came when he finally realized that the Lord was not responding to his heart-felt cries. . . .

“These personal sentiments of Job expose somewhat his physical, psychological and spiritual suffering and prepare us to accept his feeling that under such circumstances death, by way of contrast, would be a great comfort. We note emphatically, however, that Job never appeared to have contemplated suicide. He just longed for death. In these circumstances, three comforters appeared on the scene. To their credit, out of deference to Job they remained silent until he had spoken. The first remarks they heard him make, showed how much and how earnestly he desired a death that constantly eluded his chastened aspirations. [See Job 6:8–11.] . . .

“Job, partially unburdened, was addressed by the first of the comforters, who presented to Job what now became his ultimate affliction—the uncomf of comforting men to whom he finally said, ‘Miserable comforters are ye all.’ He had attempted to express to them how deep his anguish was, they, uncomprehending, rejected the cry of his soul and drew conclusions about his ultimate need, inferring in the process that he had forsaken the Lord and, consequently, suffered divine affliction. They prescribed repentance if ever he hoped to regain divine favor again. Their imputation of sin to him when he knew that he was sinless, angered him. Blindly they spoke not to his need but to their own. When he affirmed his integrity, they charged him with self-righteousness, and increasingly attempted to shake him loose from what they regarded as a self-complacency born of his insuperable self-righteousness. This mutual misunderstanding led ultimately to the frustration of both Job and his comforters.

“The first imputation of sin was made by Eliphaz, who began generally enough but ended up finally charging Job with specific sins, sins that anyone who really knew his character could not and would not believe.



Animals are forms of Eastern wealth.



“By noting that Job himself had been the kind of person who has always ‘strengthened the weak hands . . . and upholden him that was falling and strengthened the feeble knees,’ (4:3-4) they felt encouraged to offer Job the kind of help that they felt he had formerly given to others. In Eliphaz’ mind this meant facing Job up to his real need—an honest assessment of his situation. Said Eliphaz, ‘Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness reap the same, By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed (4:7-9).’ No question in his mind, Job appeared to have been cut off, to have felt the blast of God, and the breath of his nostrils. The implication was all too clear to Job.

“Granted the validity of the ‘law of the harvest’ or the principle of cause and effect, but for them to reason from the effects to the cause and conclude that only a life out of harmony with the Lord could produce the kind of effects that Job was getting is something that we, the readers, the Lord, Satan, and Job all know was not true. And this invalid judgment made their counsel irrelevant. But this was not the only problem their counsel possessed for Job. His double loss by their kind of comfort was to be deprived of the much-needed support they could have given him if they had understood his true position, and also to be forced to listen to an insinuating, demoralizing kind of criticism that must have undermined his personal reserve, and devastated a man whose days already were spent without hope. Eliphaz’ concluding counsel to Job was for him to humble himself, commit his life to God and despise not his chastening, and then the Lord would heal him and bind up his wounds. Galling balm indeed!

“Job attempted communication on another level, hoping to gain some empathy by telling them how hurtful his hurts really were: ‘Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea’ (6:2-3). He asked of them something which he had been asking of the Lord. If they really wanted to serve his needs they must help him see clearly what he must do in order to obtain divine favor again. ‘Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forcible are right words? But what doth your arguing reprove?’ (6:24-25). Job knew they had not yet perceived the source of his problem but honestly invited their clearer perception of his predicament.

“After Bildad’s insinuation (8:2-6) and Job’s extended speech (chs. 9-10), Zophar stepped into the discussion, wondering if such a long speech could vindicate anyone. Actually, he suspected that Job was rationalizing and charged him, in addition, with lying and mocking. ‘Should thy lies make men hold their peace? And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine (God’s) eyes. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee: and that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth’ (11:3-6). As a friend, it seemed that Zophar willingly twisted the blade that Eliphaz had deftly driven into Job’s tender heart. ‘Prepare thine heart,’ said he, pray to God, and ‘if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away’ (11:13-20).

“Time will not allow us to discuss the rest of the speeches. Job insisted that as a man of integrity he was following the correct course for him. If he were to do as they suggested, and go either right or left from where he was, he would be deviating from the truth. Having asked both the Lord and his fellows for better direction, he had learned that the Lord had said nothing, and the comforters, though saying much, had misjudged his situation, and consequently said nothing relevant.

“Some infer from the positive nature of Job’s statements that he was an arrogant, self-righteous person, yet, our data suggests just the opposite. He was a man whose right relationship with the Lord led him to speak with great confidence. There are some marvelous passages in the book that vividly reflect his sense of integrity. For example: ‘As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgments; and the Almighty who hath vexed my soul; All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live’ (27:2–6, cf. ch. 31).

“Job’s statements about himself indicate an important reason why he continued to trust the Lord. He knew that the course of life he was pursuing was pleasing to the Lord. He also knew that he had maintained this course under considerable stress, which he also regarded as being a test from the Lord. Thus, Job, as a God-fearing man, maintained his integrity not only to God, but also to himself, knowing that the two of them were in complete harmony. At the same time, his continuing trust in the Lord under such intense stress says volumes about the quality of the knowledge he had about the nature and character of the Lord whom he served. And that, of course, was at the heart of his test—why should he continue to serve the Lord when life and its meaning seemed so adverse to his (Job’s) own nature and character? The Adversary himself had concluded that intolerable circumstances such as these would drive the last feelings of loyalty out of the heart of the most ardent follower of the Lord. He did not, however, know how well Job knew the Lord and that the better anyone knows the Lord the more worthy of trust he appears. This experience, then, with Job must have shattered and discouraged him in his adversary role. And Job, almost as if he knew what had been in the Adversary’s mind, cried out to his comforters in such words of integrity and faith that under the circumstances it would be hard, if not impossible, to parallel, and provided, in doing so, the ultimate answer to the Adversary.

“Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* but I will maintain mine own ways before him. *He also shall be my salvation:* for a hypocrite shall not come before him. Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears. Behold now, I have ordered my cause; *I know that I shall be justified*’ (13:13–18, emphasis added). This is not an arrogant, proud voice, but the voice of a divinely assured son of God, who knows the source of his strength and integrity.

“In the fiery furnace, Job had shown not only the Adversary but also himself that the correct knowledge about God and a right relationship with him were of more value than anything he had obtained out of life—including length of days, offspring, friends, and loved ones, even wealth and health. Job’s simple but profound, ‘though he slay me, yet will I trust in him’ becomes then an absolute refutation of every argument of the adversary about why men serve the Lord and shows that the devil either lied or was deluded when he said otherwise. Thus, it is in this, the thirteenth chapter where Job demonstrates how profound his knowledge and faith in God is, and not the nineteenth or forty-second, that for me the high point of the book of Job is reached.

“In this light President McKay has said that he has always ‘thought that the purpose of the book of Job was to emphasize the fact that the testimony of the spirit—the testimony of the Gospel, is beyond the power of Satan’s temptation or any physical influence’ (Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple Annex in 1963, *Deseret News*). The book of Job therefore becomes a great testimonial to us of this great truth. Thus, the three things that any person must know if he is to have faith in the Lord are all reflected in Job’s life. His marvelous testimony, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ (19:25), indicates how well he knew of the Lord’s existence. Statements like the one in ch. 13, ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,’ indicated how well he knew the Being in whom he trusted. And finally, the knowledge that the course of life that he was pursuing was pleasing unto the Lord, all gave him the strength to endure in faithfulness when adversity came into his life. His life, then vividly illustrates that such faith comes when one knows that God exists, that he is perfect in his character and attributes, and that the course of life one pursues is pleasing to the Lord. . . .

“. . . Obviously, more was involved in this personal encounter than first appears to the reader. There was more going on here than the Lord showing the Adversary why men serve him. One must infer that the experience was ultimately most meaningful to Job rather than to the Lord or Satan. . . .

“Elsewhere, we note that the Lord did stand by Job and Job knew it. So it may well be that as with the rich young man who came to Jesus asking, ‘what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’, that Job, too, had one thing that he lacked and that the Lord ‘beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest . . .’ (Mark 10:17–21), and the only thing that Job lacked was the perfection of his faith, as the following extract from the *Lectures on Faith* may suggest. For the perfection of his faith could only come when he had sacrificed his all and knew that he had sacrificed his all because the Lord had commanded it—after all, he did know that the Lord was responsible for his predicament. And a sacrifice by its very nature is a test of obedience and obedience is a sign of faith. Keep Job in mind while reading the following text:

“An actual knowledge to any person, that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life. It was this that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods,

knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more enduring substance.' (Hebrews x. 34). . . .

"Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

"Those, then, who make the sacrifice, will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God: and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .' (*Lectures on Faith*, N. B. Lundwall, Salt Lake City, Utah, n.d., pp. 57–59).

"The story of Job demonstrates the truth of this concept. We come then to the end of the book where we find the Lord through vivid figures of speech attempting to unsettle Job for presuming to question the Lord's dealings with him (chs. 38–39). Job is then challenged to explain why he did this. 'Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it' (40:2). Job acknowledged that he had spoken once, but, for reasons apparent later (see below), he promised not to speak twice (40:3–5). The Lord then asked 'Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?' (40:8). What soul-searching questions! Further vivid figures of the Lord's power and wisdom follow in chapters 40–41, leading Job to confess that he had uttered things that he did not understand (42:3). Job had learned anew not to counsel the Lord but to 'take counsel from his hand' (Jacob 4:10). . . .

"This is something that Job understood (ch. 9), but now in some way inexplicable to us he had come to understand something more about the Lord through a 'seeing' experience than he had then understood when he had only 'heard' of him. Said he, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (42:5–6).

"The trial being over, this blessing had come to Job, he now perceived the imperceptible. The implication is that Job now accepted all that had happened to him without further questioning of the divine providence. It is almost as though Job ended up by saying, 'All is well! All is well!' His most recent personal encounter with the Lord, whatever it consisted of, had taught him this.

"It is difficult to live with tension, but mortality—where we see through the glass darkly—is filled with

it. There are always ultimate answers to what may appear to be meaninglessness or inexplicability in our lives, though these are not immediately apparent to us, the Lord however, has promised to supply them—eventually (D&C 121:28–32; 101:27–35). Any individual who insists that a good religious belief must explain all of life's contingencies if it is to be believable and acceptable, should re-read Job or take counsel from Elder Harold B. Lee who affirmed:

"It is not the function of religion to answer all questions about God's moral government of the universe, but to give courage (through faith) to go on in the face of questions he never finds the answer to in his present status. Therefore, take heed of yourselves, and as a wise world thinker once said, "If the time comes when you feel you can no longer hold to your faith, then hold to it anyway. You cannot go into tomorrow's uncertainty and dangers without faith" (*Church News*, source not quoted)." (Keith H. Meservy, "Job: 'Yet Will I Trust in Him,'" pp. 139–53.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JOB

(3-3) Job. How Is the Book of Job Organized?

Many Bible scholars divide the book of Job into three parts: the prologue, the poem, and the epilogue. Chapters 1 and 2 are the prologue, which sets the stage and introduces the plot. Chapters 3 through 42:6 are the poem, which is written in a Hebrew poetic form (even though the language of the King James Version is very poetic in these chapters, it does not quite capture the poetic quality and form of the original Hebrew). The poem includes the speeches of Job's three friends, Job's replies to them, and the discourses of the young man, Elihu, who thinks he can do a better job of solving the riddle of Job's suffering than did Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The last eleven verses of Job are the epilogue, which simply reports the final blessing and benediction of the Lord. It, like the prologue, is written in prose.

(3-4) Job 1:1. Was Job a Real Person?

Scholars have not been as concerned with who Job was as they have been with whether or not he was a real person. Adam Clarke wrote of Job's identity and existence: "I shall not trouble my readers with the arguments which have been used by learned men, *pro* and *con*, relative to the particulars already mentioned: were I to do this, I must transcribe a vast mass of matter, which, though it might display great learning in the authors, would most certainly afford little edification to the great bulk of my readers. My own opinion on those points they may naturally wish to know; and to that opinion they have a right: it is such as I dare avow, and such as I feel no disposition to conceal. I believe Job to have been a *real person*, and his history to be a *statement of facts*." (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 3:5.)

Meservy noted: "Although some scholars have felt that the book is not a true story about a real man, I think the majority of the scholars do. Granted, it is a literary work with a prologue (chs. 1–2) and an

epilogue (ch. 42) that were composed in narrative form and a body of the work (3–41) that was composed in Hebrew poetry, but to say that it is a literary composition is not to deny its basis in fact, any more than to say that a book, play, or even a musical based on Joseph Smith's life is not true because it is an artistic or literary work. Ezekiel and James, for example, regarded him as historical and referred to Job among the great individuals known for their faith and prayer power (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; James 5:11). This is significant. There are other reasons for regarding Job as an historical person but, to me, the most decisive criterion in this regard, is the fact that when Joseph Smith and his people were in great distress, and Joseph Smith went to the Lord and said, 'Oh God, where art thou? Where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place.' The Lord responded to his appeal for help by saying, 'my son, peace be to thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high . . . *Thou art not yet as Job*; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgressions, *as they did Job*' (D&C 121:7–10, emphasis added). Now, if Job were not real and his suffering, therefore, were merely the figment of some author's imagination, and Joseph Smith on the other hand was very real, and his suffering and that of his people were not imaginary, then for the Lord to chide him because his circumstances were not as bad as Job's were, would provide an intolerable comparison, since one cannot compare real with unreal things. On the other hand, since the Lord did make the comparison, it must be a real one. I would, therefore, conclude on this basis alone, that Job was a very real person. The Brethren, also, when they have referred to Job, have regarded him as a real person, for example, John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses* 7:197–198; 18:309–310; 20:305–306; 22:319–320; Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses* 18:30; Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* 19:315." ("Job: 'Yet Will I Trust in Him,'" pp. 154–55.)

(3-5) Job 1:7–12; 2:1–6. Did God Converse with Satan?

Some have questioned whether God converses with the devil and his spirit-followers as described here. These verses may be a poetic way of setting the stage for what follows in Job's life—his afflictions, temptations, loss of worldly goods—rather than a reporting of an actual conversation. The Lord does not bargain with Satan or agree to his evil deeds. However, Satan is permitted by the Lord to afflict and torment man until Lucifer's allotted time on earth is done. Thus, Job's trials would be consistent with the concept that Satan was allowed by God to bring the afflictions upon Job, not because of a bargain God made with Satan, but because it fit God's purposes for Job.

Meservy suggested that the appearance of Satan to the "sons of God," however, can be explained literally: "Is the portrayal of the devil in chs. 1–2 a true one? I believe so. We are told there that Satan came among the sons of God? Who are these sons? Usually this term means in the scriptures those who have covenanted to serve the Lord and are willing to take his name upon them by baptism and are born again, and are then led by the Spirit of God. These are his sons and these are they who cry 'Abba Father.' (Moses 6:65–68, 7:1; Mosiah 5:7–10, 15:10–12; D&C 11:30, 39:4–6,

76:23–24, 51–60; Romans 8, esp. vv. 14–17). Our author says, 'there was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them' (Job 1:6). This would suggest that Satan came among the faithful when they met to carry out their religious devotions. At the time the Lord chose to single out one of them in a remark to Satan." ("Job: 'Yet Will I Trust in Thee,'" p. 155.)

(3-6) Job 13:7–28. Trust in God

Job, while he did not understand why God permitted his affliction, would not judge the Lord nor lose his faith in Him. "Let me alone," he said to his friends, "let come on me what will" (v. 13). God was his salvation, and Job trusted in Him alone. Job saw his afflictions in perspective. As President Spencer W. Kimball said: "If we looked at mortality as the whole of existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life would be calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the premortal past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective." (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 97.)

Job's friends challenged God's wisdom, and they saw Job's suffering as a punishment sent from God. But Job had a greater understanding. He knew that God was there, although his prayers for relief were not answered as he might wish. Should his suffering really have been the result of personal sin, he begged the Lord to cause him to know so that he could repent (v. 23).

But suffering is not always the result of sin. Suffering has a larger purpose, part of which is educative. President Kimball said:

"Is there not wisdom in his giving us trials that we might rise above them, responsibilities that we might achieve, work to harden our muscles, sorrows to try our souls? Are we not exposed to temptations to test our strength, sickness that we might learn patience, death that we might be immortalized and glorified?"

"If all the sick for whom we pray were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the gospel, free agency, would be ended. No man would have to live by faith.

"If joy and peace and rewards were instantaneously given the doer of good, there could be no evil—all would do good but not because of the rightness of doing good. There would be no test of strength, no development of character, no growth of powers, no free agency, only satanic controls.

"Should all prayers be immediately answered according to our selfish desires and our limited understanding, then there would be little or no suffering, sorrow, disappointment, or even death, and if these were not, there would also be no joy, success, resurrection, nor eternal life and godhood." (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 97.)

(3-7) Job 19:26. "Yet in My Flesh Shall I See God"

In the King James Version, this verse affirms Job's faith in a physical resurrection. In many other versions of the Bible, however, this verse does not affirm such a belief; in fact, in these versions Job says he will see God but *not* in his flesh. How is it possible that two

completely contradictory translations could come from the same text? Meservy explained:

"We might note parenthetically that the great testimony of Job in 19:26 has been interpreted in two ways: 'Yet in my flesh shall I see God' (King James Version) and 'Then without my flesh shall I see God.' (Jewish Publication Society Version, 1917). The first of these implies the literal resurrection, the other does not. The Hebrew text says, 'from my flesh,' and this can be interpreted in either sense. The same ambiguity applies to English usage. If I say, 'from the house I saw him coming,' I could have been inside the house or just outside the house when I saw him coming. Thus, one's theology determines how one translates this passage.

"Latter-day Saints do not depend upon this passage to establish their belief in a literal resurrection, but point to it as one more glorious affirmation of it." ("Job: 'Yet Will I Trust in Him,'" p. 158.)

(3-8) Job 29:16–17. A Truly Righteous Man

Perhaps this is the secret of Job's perfection: he did not help only those who asked for his help; he sought out people to give help to.

As a king Job was obligated to defend those who relied on him for defense. For example, when Job found someone who had been plundered by robbers, he hunted down the thieves and used force, if necessary, to recover the stolen goods and restore them to their owner.

Job was not a Robin Hood, plundering one segment of society to provide for another. The only rich man he plundered was himself, and he did that freely. Commenting on Job's righteousness, Clarke wrote:

"As *supreme magistrate* he *chose out their way*, adjusted their differences, and *sat chief*, presiding in all their civil assemblies.

"As *captain general* he *dwelt as a king in the midst of his troops*, preserving order and discipline, and seeing that his fellow soldiers were provided with requisites for their warfare, and the necessaries of life.

"As a *man* he did not think himself superior to the meanest offices in domestic life, to relieve or support

his fellow creatures; he went about *comforting the mourners*—visiting the sick and afflicted, and ministering to their wants, and seeing that the *wounded* were properly attended. Noble Job! Look at him, ye *nobles* of the earth, ye lieutenants of counties, ye generals of armies, and ye lords of provinces. Look at JOB! Imitate his active benevolence, and be healthy and happy. Be as guardian angels in your particular districts, blessing all by your example and your bounty. Send your *hunting horses* to the plough, your *game cocks* to the *dunghill*; and at last live like *men* and *Christians*." (*Commentary*, 3:132.)

This was not the Job of the ash heap and the boils; this was the great man of the East whom God called perfect (see Job 1:8).

(3-9) Job 42:10, 13. Why Didn't the Lord Double the Number of Job's Children?

Job 42:10 states that "the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." Then, after listing double the number of livestock, the writer added: "He had *also* seven sons and three daughters" (v. 13; emphasis added). Originally Job had seven sons and three daughters. A doubling of his former blessings might suggest that he would then receive fourteen more sons and six more daughters, but instead he had just the original number restored to him. How could that be viewed as a doubling? C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch gave an answer that should have more meaning to Latter-day Saints than to anyone in the gentile world:

"The numbers of the stock of cattle [see Job 1:3] now appear doubled, but it is different with the children.

"Therefore, instead of [doubling] the seven sons and three daughters which he had, he receives just the same again, which is also so far a doubling, as deceased children also, according to the Old Testament view, are not absolutely lost [see 2 Samuel 12:23]. The author of this book, in everything to the most minute thing consistent, here gives us to understand that with men who die and depart from us the relation is different from that with things which we have lost." (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 4:2:390.)



The Divided Kingdoms

(A-1) Introduction

Before Israel had even entered the promised land, Moses prophetically counseled them about establishing kings to rule over them. The instructions were clear: if the people ever chose to have a king, they must select someone who met certain criteria.

A king had to be—

1. One chosen by the Lord.
2. A member of the house of Israel and not a Gentile.
3. One who did not seek to “multiply horses”

(a Hebrew idiom meaning to make extensive preparations for aggressive warfare).

4. One who would not lead Israel back to Egypt (back to their worldly ways).

5. One who would not multiply wives and wealth unto himself.

6. One who followed the law of God in ruling the people.

7. One who kept the statutes of God (see Deuteronomy 17:14–20; Mosiah 23:8; 29:13).

In the days of the prophet Samuel, the people rejected the rule of the judges and sought for a king to be their ruler. They forgot, however, what the Lord had directed them centuries before. They wanted a king such as other nations had so “that [Israel] also may be like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:20). Samuel warned them of the consequences of having a king such as this. He warned of military and civil service to the monarch and of the burden of taxation. (See 1 Samuel 8:9–18; *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], p. 271; Mosiah 29:21–23.)

Nevertheless, Israel rejected the Lord as their rightful king (see 1 Samuel 8:7); so the Lord directed His prophet to provide them a king.

Saul was chosen as the first king, and under his leadership the foundations of the kingdom were laid. The land was united and greatly strengthened under the kingship of David. Finally, under Solomon, Israel reached its greatest glory and its greatest expansion. The first three kings of Israel achieved many significant things, but their worldly government cultivated the seeds of the destruction that was to come upon the nation. (See chapter 1 of this manual, “Solomon: Man of Wisdom, Man of Foolishness.”)

After the death of Solomon, a schism over taxation divided the nation into two kingdoms. Rehoboam, Solomon’s son and anointed successor, ruled over the Southern Kingdom, which was composed of the territory belonging to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The house of David continued to govern this nation until the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. A newly proclaimed king, Jeroboam, ruled over the Northern Kingdom, called the kingdom of Israel, which was composed of the territory of the remaining ten tribes. Jeroboam was followed by a series of kings for the next two hundred years. In both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms, the criteria established by the Lord was largely ignored, and both Israel and Judah reaped the sad results.

(A-2) Overview of the Kingdom of Israel (Northern Kingdom)

Jeroboam, an Ephraimite who had been a military leader in the army of Israel during Solomon’s reign, was rewarded for his accomplishments with a building project in the city of David. He was made an administrator over all the house of Joseph, that is, over the territorial districts of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, two of the most powerful tribes in Israel (see 1 Kings 11:26–28). Later, Ahijah, a prophet of that day, revealed to Jeroboam that he, Jeroboam, would become the ruler of the northern ten tribes (see 1 Kings 11:29–39).

Solomon, fearful of Jeroboam, sought his life. Jeroboam fled to Egypt, where he lived in exile until after Solomon’s death (see 1 Kings 11:40; 12:2–3). The people of the north called Jeroboam out of Egypt to lead their confrontation with Rehoboam, Solomon’s son (see 1 Kings 12).

As part of this rebellion, the northern people seceded from Judah and made Jeroboam their king. They became known as the kingdom of Israel, or the Northern Kingdom. This kingdom was often referred to as Ephraim, particularly by the prophets, because the tribe of Ephraim was a dominant power from the days of Joshua to the time of Jeroboam (see Numbers 13:3, 8; 14:6).

The capital of the Northern Kingdom was established first in Shechem and later in Samaria, both of which cities were located in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim. Sometimes the names of these cities were used to mean the whole of the Northern Kingdom. (See Isaiah 7:1–9; Jeremiah 7:15; 31:9; Ezekiel 37:16–19; Hosea 4:17.)

With the power of kingship, Jeroboam established a state religion of idolatrous worship (see 1 Kings 12:25–33). The new nation never repented of this wickedness, which contributed to its downfall.

Twenty monarchs ruled the Northern Kingdom from its beginning until its destruction by the Assyrians. Five different family dynasties were set up in the Northern Kingdom, but all were short-lived, and all were ended by assassination or violence. Seven monarchs were murdered, and one committed suicide.

The scriptural record characterizes every ruler of the northern tribes as evil or wicked. Such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea ministered in the Northern Kingdom during this period, calling on the kings and the people to repent. At the same time, the prophets of Judah, including Isaiah and Micah, also warned the people of the Northern Kingdom of their coming destruction if they did not repent.

The following list of the kings of Israel gives notes on their reigns and the prophets who were contemporary with them. The dates used are those generally accepted. They were adapted from Edwin R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*. Other chronologies may vary slightly from the one used here. The chronologies of the kings of both kingdoms and the correspondence

between the reigns of the monarchs and the ministries of the prophets is shown in Maps.

Dynasty of Jeroboam

Jeroboam I (931–909 B.C.). See 1 Kings 12:25–14:20. Introduced worship of idols. Corrupted the priestly offices for his new religion. The curse of idolatry remained with the Northern Kingdom until its fall (see 2 Kings 17:21–22).

Before Solomon's death, Ahijah, the prophet from Shiloh, prophesied the coming division of the kingdom, stating that the Lord would give ten of the tribes to Jeroboam to rule over (see 1 Kings 11:28–40). Later, when Jeroboam became king, Ahijah prophesied that the king's house would become extinct because Jeroboam encouraged idolatry (see 1 Kings 14:6–16).

Nadab (909–908 B.C.). See 1 Kings 15:25–31. Son of Jeroboam I. Assassinated by Baasha in a military revolt during an engagement with the Philistines.

Dynasty of Baasha

Baasha (908–886 B.C.). See 1 Kings 15:32–16:7. Executed all the descendants of Jeroboam. Defeated by Asa, king of Judah, and by the Syrians.

The prophets Havani and Jehu prophesied during his reign.

Elah (886–885 B.C.). See 1 Kings 16:8–14. Son of Baasha. Assassinated by Zimri, one of his high military officers, who assumed the throne.

Zimri (885 B.C.). See 1 Kings 16:15–20. Ruled only seven days. Executed all the descendants of Baasha. Besieged by Omri, chief officer of the military. Committed suicide to avoid being captured alive.

Tibni (885 B.C.). See 1 Kings 16:21–22. Led part of the people against Omri. Was defeated by Omri, who gained control of the entire Northern Kingdom.

Dynasty of Omri

Omri (885–874 B.C.). See 1 Kings 16:23–28. Moved the capital to Samaria. Conquered the land of Moab and placed it under tribute.

Ahab (874–853 B.C.). See 1 Kings 16:29–22:40. Son of Omri. Married the Zidonian princess Jezebel and worshiped the idols of pagan neighbors. Joined as an ally with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, against the Syrians. Rejected the prophet Elijah. (During Ahab's reign Elijah had the contest with the priests of Baal.) Finally entered an alliance with Syria against the invading Assyrians. Returned in league with Judah to fight Syria, who had rebelled against Israel. Was killed just as the battle was lost.

Ahaziah (853–852 B.C.). See 1 Kings 22:51 through 2 Kings 1:18. Son of Ahab. Opposed the revolt of Moab against Israel. Injured in a fall at the palace and sought blessing and direction of idol god.

The prophet Elijah's prophecy of Ahaziah's death was fulfilled. There were, evidently, numerous other prophets in the Northern Kingdom at the time. Jahaziel and Eliezer are two who are named (see 2 Chronicles 20:14, 37).

Joram/Jehoram (852–841 B.C.). See 2 Kings 3:1–8:15. Brother of Ahaziah. Forbade the worship of foreign gods but retained the idol worship instituted by Jeroboam. Joined in an alliance with Judah against Moab. Successfully held off Syrian attacks on the

people of Israel. Was killed by Jehu in a bloody purge of the Omri dynasty.

Elisha received the mantle of the prophetic ministry from Elijah during this time (see 2 Kings 2:9–15).

Dynasty of Jehu

Jehu (841–814 B.C.). See 2 Kings 9:1–10:36. Anointed king over Israel by a young prophet who acted under the direction of Elisha. Killed King Joram and mortally wounded King Ahaziah of Judah, Israel's ally. Destroyed the descendants of Ahab and the remnants of foreign idol worship. Since there is no record of his violent death, it is assumed he was one of the few to die of natural causes.

Jehoahaz (814–798 B.C.). See 2 Kings 13:1–9. Son of Jehu. Surrendered the kingdom of Israel to the Syrian conquerors and paid tribute to them. Saw much of the nation's military power destroyed.

Elisha's ministry of about fifty years, begun in Joram's reign, continued through the reign of Jehoahaz's son Jehoash. Some scholars believe Joel's ministry was also about this time.

Jehoash (798–782 B.C.). See 2 Kings 13:10–25. Son of Jehoahaz. Continued paying tribute to Syria. Freed Israel from tributary status and defeated the Syrians three times when a change of leadership in Syria and conquest there by the Assyrians brought war again between Syria and Israel.

Jeroboam II (792–753 B.C.). See 2 Kings 14:23–29. Son of Jehoash. Maintained Israel's independence from Syrian control. Took part of the kingdom of Judah.

The ministry of Amos, who called on the kingdom of Israel to repent or face destruction, began about this time.

Zachariah (753 B.C.). See 2 Kings 15:8–12. Son of Jeroboam II. Was the last king of the lengthy dynasty of Jehu. Assassinated by his successor after only six months on the throne.

The ministry of Hosea began about this time and continued until the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C.

Shallum (752 B.C.). See 2 Kings 15:13–15. Assassinated by Menahem, his successor, after only one month as king.

Dynasty of Menahem

Menahem (752–742 B.C.). See 2 Kings 15:16–22. Brutally murdered the pregnant women in the cities that refused to support him as king. Controlled by the Assyrians under Pul (Tiglath-pileser IV), who placed Israel under heavy tribute.

Pekahiah (742–740 B.C.). See 2 Kings 15:23–26. Son of Menahem. Was assassinated by Pekah, a military leader. About this time Isaiah began his ministry in the kingdom of Judah, although much of what he said was directed at Israel as well.

Pekah (740–732 B.C.). See 2 Kings 15:27–31. Formed an alliance with Syria against Assyria. Threatened and, with Syria, finally attacked Judah but with limited success. Attacked by the Assyrians. Lost all of Galilee, whose inhabitants were exiled to Assyria. Was assassinated by Hoshea, his successor.

Hoshea (732–722 B.C.). See 2 Kings 17:1–23. Surrendered to the Assyrians and agreed to pay heavy tribute. Sought the aid of Egypt against the Assyrians

to relieve the heavy burden. This intrigue resulted in a three year siege of the Northern Kingdom and the collapse of Israel. The Assyrians sent into exile most of the people of Israel.

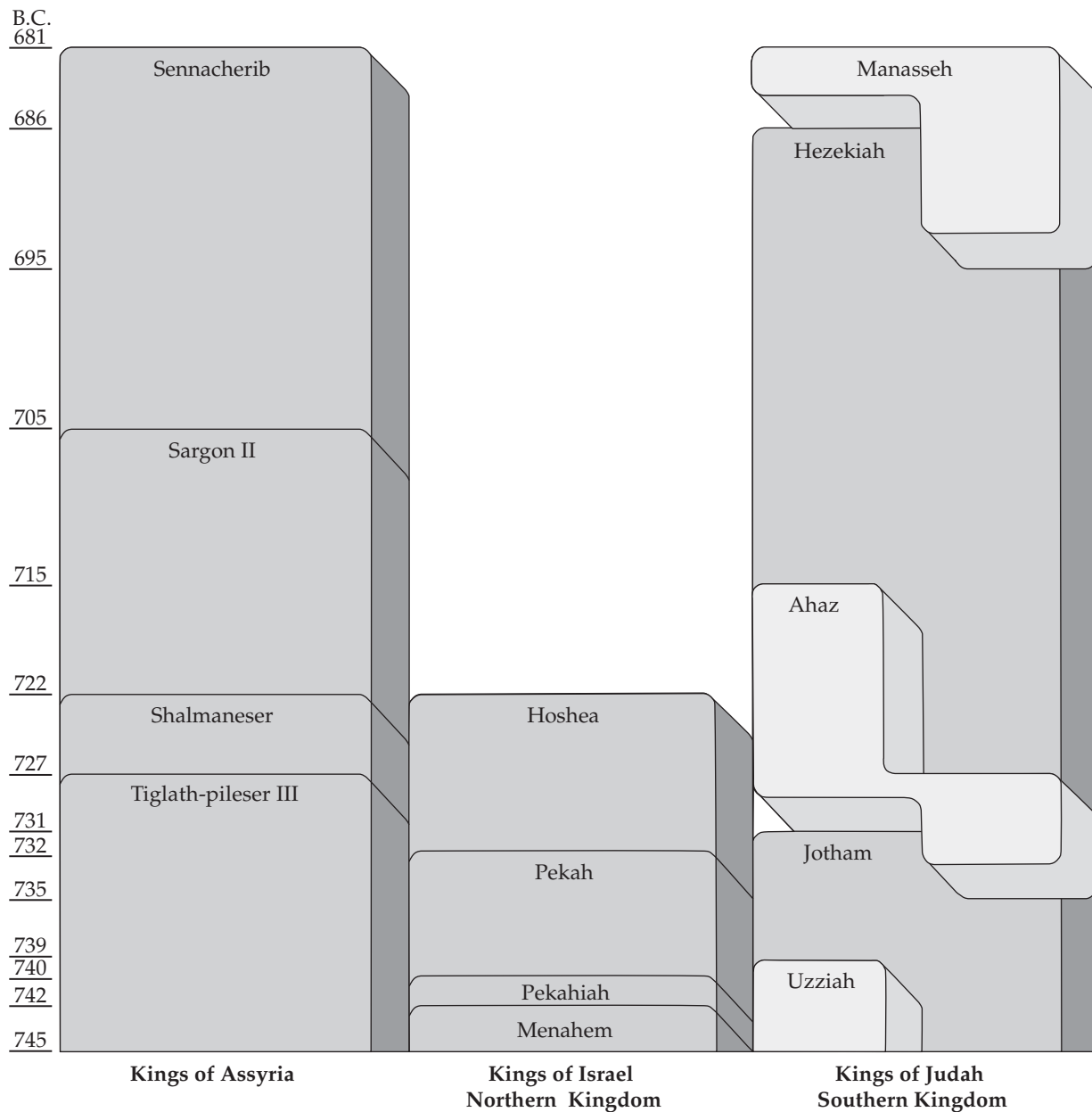
The captivity of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom eventually ended in their escape into the north countries and their becoming known as the lost tribes (see Enrichment D).

(A-3) Overview of the Kingdom of Judah (Southern Kingdom)

When Rehoboam was anointed king to succeed his father Solomon (see 1 Kings 11:43), a political crisis was developing because of severe economic problems

caused by excessive government building, particularly for the military but also for the royal household.

Rehoboam had to go to Shechem, the power center of the north, to attempt to obtain the support of the northern tribes. The leaders of the people sought for assurance that relief from heavy taxation would be forthcoming. Being ill-advised by inexperienced, power-seeking aides, King Rehoboam refused any relief and even threatened further increases. (See 1 Kings 12:1–11.) The northern tribes then refused to uphold him as king. They revolted against the attempted enforcement of the king’s decrees and formed their own nation with Jeroboam as their new king. (See 1 Kings 12:12–20.)



The contemporary kingdoms of Israel, Judah, and Assyria

The tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest and weakest tribe, as well as the closest territorial neighbor to the capital, Jerusalem, supported Rehoboam and together formed the kingdom of Judah (see 1 Kings 12:21–24; 2 Chronicles 11:1–4, 12, 23). Through the years that followed, many members of other tribes migrated to the Southern Kingdom and became a part of the nation of Judah. Specific mention is made of Levi (see 2 Chronicles 11:13–17), Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon (see 2 Chronicles 15:9).

It had been prophetically declared that Judah would remain under the control of the house of David (see 1 Kings 11:13, 32). The prophecy was fulfilled, for David's royal line retained the throne throughout Judah's existence as a nation. One attempt to move the kingship to another family through the actions of the wife of one of the kings was thwarted, and the family rule was preserved. (The genealogy of the kings of Judah is shown in the chart at the end of this enrichment section.)

Of the twenty rulers who reigned over Judah from the death of Solomon to the fall of Jerusalem and the Jews' captivity and exile at the hands of the Babylonians, twelve are characterized in the scriptural record as evil or wicked. Only four advanced their nation economically and religiously. As in the north, numerous prophets were called to cry repentance to Judah, including Micaiah, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Lehi, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The Kings of Judah

Rehoboam (931–913 B.C.). See 1 Kings 12:1–24; 14:21–31; 2 Chronicles 9:31–12:16. Permitted idolatrous practices to be established in the land. Was defeated by Shishak (Sheshonk I of the Twenty-second Dynasty of the Pharaohs of Egypt), who pillaged the temple and palaces of Judah. Fought with Israel throughout his reign.

Abijam/Abijah (913–910 B.C.). See 1 Kings 15:1–8; 2 Chronicles 13:1–22. Son of Rehoboam. Warred against Israel. Defeated a number of cities of the Northern Kingdom and brought them under the control of Judah.

Asa (911–869 B.C.). See 1 Kings 15:9–24; 2 Chronicles 14:1–16:14. Son of Abijam. Began religious reform in the nation with the encouragement of Ahijah the prophet. Destroyed the idols of the people of Judah and banned idolatrous worship. Was attacked by Baasha of Israel but defeated him. Withstood the attack of an Ethiopian force. Allied with Syria late in his reign against further attacks from Israel. Because of his sickness, three years before his death he appointed his son Jehoshaphat to reign jointly with him.

Jehoshaphat (870–848 B.C.). See 1 Kings 22:41–50; 2 Chronicles 17:1–20:37. Son of Asa. Ruled jointly with his father for three years before becoming king. Strengthened military fortifications in the kingdom and promoted further religious reform. Established instructional programs directed by the priesthood. Received tribute from the Philistines and Arabians as a guarantee of peace because of Judah's great military presence as a nation. Joined in an alliance with King Ahab of Israel against the Syrians. King Ahab was killed in the war, but the Syrians were defeated. The marriage of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah promoted idolatrous worship and eventually threatened the continuation of David's line on the

throne of Judah. Established a system of religious and civil courts. Miraculously withstood an attack from the Ammonites and their allies. Continued the alliance with Israel in an attempt to jointly establish ships for trade, but the venture failed.

Elijah's ministry, though primarily in the Northern Kingdom, took place during Jehoshaphat's reign.

Jehoram (848–841 B.C.). See 2 Kings 8:16–24; 2 Chronicles 21. Firstborn of Jehoshaphat. Became king and ruled jointly during his father's last years as king. Killed his brothers to obtain their wealth and secure the throne after he became the sole ruler. Allowed his idolatrous wife to promote the evil religious practices of Israel in Judah. Withstood a rebellion by the Edomites, who had been a tributary state since the days of David and Solomon. Prevented an Edomite attack on Judah but could not regain control of Edom. Attacked by the Philistines and Arabians, who sacked the capital and destroyed the king's house and family. His people refused him a royal burial.

Ahaziah (841 B.C.). See 2 Kings 8:25–29; 9:27–29; 2 Chronicles 22:1–9. Son of Jehoram. Influenced by his mother, Athaliah, daughter of Ahab of Israel, to follow the idol worship of the north. Allied with Jehoram, his cousin, the king of Israel, against the Syrians. Visited Jehoram of Israel at his palace in Samaria when Jehoram was wounded in the war with Syria. Killed while in Samaria during the coup executed by Jehu, a military leader in Israel who had been anointed king by Elisha the prophet. Jehoram of Israel was assassinated in the same coup.

Athaliah (841–835 B.C.). See 2 Kings 11; 2 Chronicles 22:10–23:21. Mother of Ahaziah and daughter of Ahab of Israel. Sought to establish the house of Ahab (of the Northern Kingdom) on the throne of Judah. Ordered her own grandchildren killed to seize the throne for herself. A righteous priest rescued the youngest heir, however, and hid him in the temple. After a number of years this religious leader organized a revolt. Queen Athaliah was put to death, and her grandson Joash was upheld as king of Judah.

Joash/Jehoash (835–796 B.C.). See 2 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 24. Son of Ahaziah. Supported the priesthood and renewed the worship of Jehovah. Repaired the temple. Turned to idolatrous worship after the death of the leading priest, who had saved his life and his throne. Murdered his cousin Zechariah, who was a prophet raised up by God to call the people to repentance (see 2 Chronicles 22:10–11; 24:20–21). Was severely wounded in an attack on Judah by the Syrians. Gave tribute from the treasures and sacred furnishings of the temple to the Syrians to secure the safety of his people. Was assassinated by his own servants for his wicked deeds, especially those against the priestly family that had preserved his life.

Amaziah (796–767 B.C.). See 2 Kings 14:1–22; 2 Chronicles 25. Son of Joash. Prepared his people and led them victoriously against their long-time enemies, the Edomites, who had been weakened by Assyrian attacks. Reestablished the worship of idols among the people of Judah. Challenged the kingdom of Israel for power and was defeated. As had been prophesied, Jerusalem's walls were partially destroyed and the temple ransacked. Because of that destruction, an insurrection arose against Amaziah. Fled to Lachish for safety but was discovered and put to death.

Azariah/Uzziah (767–740 B.C.). See 2 Kings 15:1–7; 2 Chronicles 26. Son of Amaziah. Became king at the age of sixteen and reigned for a total of fifty-two years, jointly occupying the throne with his father for over twenty years. Strengthened the nation of Judah. Sought to obey God in his early years but could not purge the land of idolatry. Destroyed the Philistine strongholds and controlled the Philistines and the Arabians. Received tribute from the country of Ammon, which recognized Judah's strength. Built up the defenses of Jerusalem and established a large military force. Unlawfully entered the sanctuary of the temple to officiate in priestly rites and was afflicted of the Lord with leprosy for his presumptuous act. Lived in isolation until his death. Ruled jointly with his son Jotham for the last ten years of his life.

Jotham (740–732 B.C.). See 2 Kings 15:32–38; 2 Chronicles 27. Son of Azariah. Continued to strengthen the fortifications of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. Constructed an addition to the temple complex. Put down a rebellion of the Ammonites when they attempted to free themselves from being a tribute state. Ruled in righteousness all his days, but idolatry continued among the people.

Ahaz (732–715 B.C.). See 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28. Son of Jotham. Ruled jointly with his father for four years. Encouraged Judah to engage in idolatrous worship after the death of his father. Even offered human sacrifice by burning his own children. Warned by the prophet Isaiah of the consequences of doing this evil deed, but refused to follow Isaiah's counsel. Defeated by the alliance of Israel under King Pekah and Syria. Thousands of his people were taken captive into the Northern Kingdom, though they were later released at the request of the prophet Oded. Attacked by the Edomites and Philistines, who gained control of some villages. Finally sought aid from Assyria. Became an Assyrian vassal, paying high tribute. Sacrificed to the Assyrian gods, desecrated the temple in Jerusalem, and gave of its sacred treasures to the Assyrians. Established places of idol worship throughout Judah. Was refused a royal burial by the people at the time of his death.

The prophet Micah's ministry continued through Ahaz's reign and into the reign of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.). See 2 Kings 18:1–20:21; 2 Chronicles 29:1–32:33. Instituted religious reforms and restored the temple to the worship of Jehovah. Destroyed the brazen serpent Moses had made because the people misused it as an object to be worshiped. Besieged in the fourteenth year of his reign by the Assyrian emperor Sennacherib, the successor of Sargon II. Repaired Jerusalem's defenses and constructed a water tunnel for the security of the city. Sought help from the Lord on this occasion, and Judah was miraculously delivered from the invading Assyrians as Isaiah had predicted. Became very sick, but his pleading with the Lord brought him a blessing through Isaiah that lengthened his days of kingship. Ruled in goodness until his death.

Manasseh (686–642 B.C.). See 2 Kings 21:1–18; 2 Chronicles 33:1–20. Son of Hezekiah. Ruled jointly with his father for eleven years because of his father's

illness and to prepare himself to govern the people. Continued Judah's tributary status with Assyria. Rebuilt all the idolatrous places his father had destroyed. Placed idols in the temple in Jerusalem and offered his children in human sacrifice. Was responsible for the shedding of much innocent blood.

Numerous prophets labored with this wicked king to no avail, and he killed several of them. Tradition says he martyred Isaiah. The Assyrians took Manasseh hostage for a time. Upon his return he restored the temple and repaired the city walls.

Amon (642–640 B.C.). See 2 Kings 21:19–26; 2 Chronicles 33:21–24. Son of Manasseh. Turned to all the wicked practices of his father and was assassinated by his own servants.

It was probably during this time that Nahum prophesied.

Josiah (640–609 B.C.). See 2 Kings 22–23:30; 2 Chronicles 33:25–35:27. Son of Amon. Was upheld by the people as king at the age of eight years. Turned his heart continually to the Lord as he grew. Purged the land of idolatrous practices and sanctuaries. Renovated and restored the temple. Discovered sacred records in the temple during its renovation. Established religious reform and administered by covenant to the people.

Although outward changes came to the kingdom, it was prophesied that Judah would be spared until after Josiah's day. Assyria fell to Babylonia, and Judah was freed from tribute. The Egyptians, however, were allied with Babylonia and marched through Judah to assist with the conquest. Josiah attempted to stop the Egyptians but was defeated in the process and died of wounds received in the battle at Megiddo. Judah then became a vassal of Egypt.

Zephaniah, and probably Nahum, prophesied during the early years of Josiah's reign. Lehi was living in the land of Jerusalem about that time. Jeremiah's ministry began in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (see Jeremiah 1:1–2), and Habakkuk seems to have prophesied shortly after Josiah's reign ended.

Jehoahaz (609 B.C.). See 2 Kings 23:31–33; 2 Chronicles 36:1–4. Son of Josiah. Reigned only three months. Removed from office and exiled to Egypt where he later died. His half brother was made the new ruler.

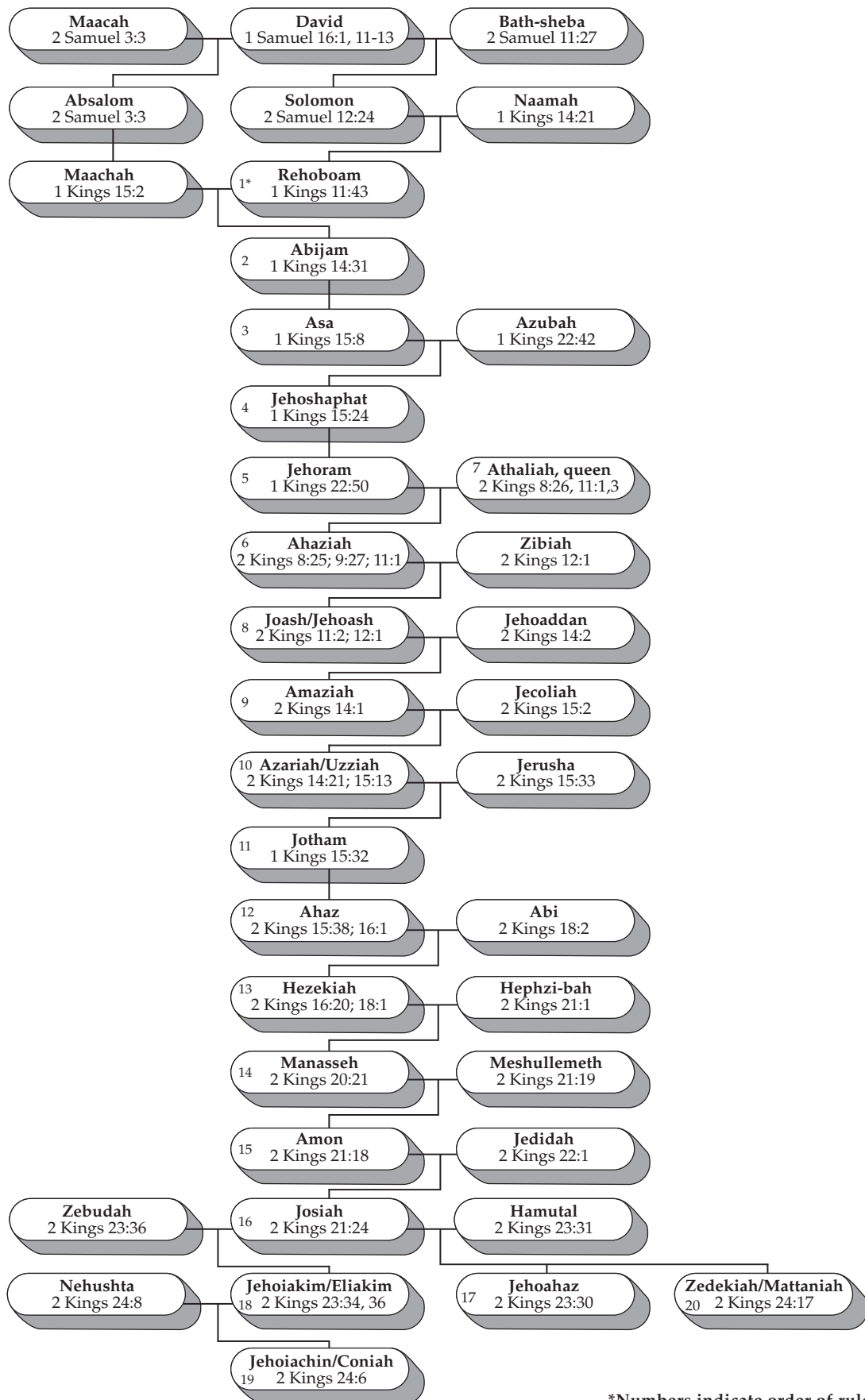
Eliakim/Jehoiakim (609–597 B.C.). See 2 Kings 23:34–24:7; 2 Chronicles 36:5–8. Son of Josiah. Chosen by the Egyptians to replace his half brother as king. Was forced to change his name to Jehoiakim and pay tribute to Egypt. Taxed the people very heavily to fulfill this obligation. Was attacked by the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. Was as wicked as Manasseh, his great-grandfather, and was responsible for the shedding of much innocent blood. Became a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. when the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians. Gave the vessels from the temple as tribute to the conquering Babylonians, and sent a group of royal and noble families as exiles to the master nation. (Daniel was among that group.) Rebelled against Babylonia after three years of vassalage, and was taken captive by the Babylonians. Apparently killed while on his way to Babylon (see reading block 19–16).

Jehoiachin (597 B.C.). See 2 Kings 24:8–17; 2 Chronicles 36:9–10. Son of Eliakim/Jehoiakim. Continued to resist the Babylonians but surrendered within months of his ascension. Went to Babylon as a hostage together with political and religious leaders, skilled craftsmen, and educated people, as well as the treasure of the temple. Among those exiled were many of the Levites. Ezekiel was a part of this group. This was the first major deportation of Judah into Babylon.

Zedekiah/Mattaniah (597–587 B.C.). See 2 Kings 24:18 through 25:26; 2 Chronicles 36:11–21. Brother of Jehoahaz and half brother of Eliakim/Jehoiakim. Established as king by the Babylonians, who changed his name to Zedekiah. Showed loyalty at first to Babylonia, but later rebelled at the encouragement of those who preferred an alliance with Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar finally sent his forces against Judah, destroying the temples, palaces, and city proper of Jerusalem. Most of the people were then exiled to Babylon, and the kingdom of Judah became only a memory. During the first year of Zedekiah's reign Lehi prophesied and was then told to flee from Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:4, 2:2). During the terrible times at the end of his reign, Zedekiah imprisoned Jeremiah for prophesying of the impending destruction of Judah.

The fall of Judah and the exile in Babylon began another era in the history of the Lord's people. For a more complete historical view of this captivity, see Enrichment G. The period of exile and the experiences of Judah during this period of time are treated in Enrichment H.



*Numbers indicate order of rule.

The Twelve Districts of Solomon in the Kingdom of Israel

- Boundary of tax districts
- - - Places fortified by Solomon



A Kingdom Divided against Itself

(4-1) Introduction

The Lord has said, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matthew 12:25). A great lesson to be learned in life is to live in harmony with others. Where there is disharmony, unhappiness and tragedy result. On the other hand, where there is harmony, happiness and progress follow. Not only is this true in nations or kingdoms, but it is also true in personal and family relationships. Harmonious relationships can be developed and enhanced by understanding and applying insights from the scriptures.

As you complete your study of this chapter, notice how the kings of Israel and Judah present both good and bad examples of the application of these principles.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 1 Kings 12–16. See also 2 Chronicles 10–16.

2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 1 KINGS 12–16

(4-2) 1 Kings 12:1. Who Was Rehoboam?

Rehoboam was the son and successor of King Solomon (see 1 Kings 11:43). The Bible does not mention any other sons or daughters of Solomon. Since Rehoboam’s mother, Naamah, was an Ammonite (see 1 Kings 14:21), he was only half Israelite. But his mother’s ancestry was Semitic since the Ammonites were descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew.

(4-3) 1 Kings 12:1. Why Did Israel Gather at Shechem to Support Rehoboam Instead of Gathering at Jerusalem?

From the early years after the settlement of Israel in Canaan, there had been jealousy between the two most powerful tribes, Ephraim and Judah. Solomon’s son Rehoboam was the rightful successor to the throne, but northern Israel did not support him. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch explained why:

“Apart from the fact that the tribes had no right to choose at their pleasure a different king from the one who was the lawful heir to the throne of David, the very circumstance that the tribes who were discontented with Solomon’s government did not come to



Excavated ruins at ancient Shechem

Jerusalem to do homage to Rehoboam, but chose Sichem [Shechem] as the place of meeting, and had also sent for Jeroboam out of Egypt, showed clearly enough that it was their intention to sever themselves from the royal house of David. . . .

“Rehoboam went to Shechem, because all Israel had come thither to make him king. ‘All Israel,’ according to what follows [compare 1 Kings 12:20–21], was the ten tribes beside Judah and Benjamin. The right of making king the prince whom God has chosen, *i.e.* of anointing him and doing homage to him . . . , was an old traditional right in Israel, and the tribes had exercised it not only in the case of Saul and David [see 1 Samuel 11:15; 2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3], but in that of Solomon also [see 1 Chronicles 29:22]. The ten tribes of Israel made use of this right on Rehoboam’s ascent of the throne; but instead of coming to Jerusalem, the residence of the king and capital of the kingdom, as they ought to have done, and doing homage there to the legitimate successor of Solomon, they had gone to Sichem, the present Nablus [see Genesis 12:6; 33:18], the place where the ancient national gatherings were held in the tribe of Ephraim [see Joshua 24:1]. . . . On the choice of Sichem as the place for doing homage Kimchi has quite correctly observed, that ‘they sought an opportunity for transferring the government to Jeroboam, and therefore were unwilling to come to Jerusalem, but came to Sichem, which belonged to Ephraim, whilst Jeroboam was an Ephraimite.’ If there could be any further doubt on the matter, it would be removed by the fact that they had sent for Jeroboam the son of Nebat to come from Egypt, whither he had fled from Solomon [see 1 Kings 11:40], and attend this meeting, and that Jeroboam took the lead in the meeting, and no doubt suggested to those assembled the demand which they should lay before Rehoboam.” (Commentary on the Old Testament, 3:1:191–93.)

This national meeting in which Rehoboam sought a vote of confidence was an important event. Life in Israel was never to be the same thereafter.

(4-4) 1 Kings 12:2–3. Who was Jeroboam and What Important Part Did He Play in the Division of Israel?

Jeroboam was the son of Nebat (see 1 Kings 12:15), an Ephraimite. He was one of Solomon's twelve superintendents and had jurisdiction over all the taxes and labors exacted from the house of Joseph (see 1 Kings 11:28). The prophet Ahijah had prophesied that Jeroboam would someday take over much of the Israelite nation. To illustrate his prophecy, Ahijah tore a cloak in twelve pieces, gave ten to Jeroboam, and said: "Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (but he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)" (1 Kings 11:31–32.) Thus, he prophetically outlined events which would soon transpire.

(4-5) 1 Kings 12:4. Why Did Israel Want to Lighten the Yoke Imposed by Solomon?

All of Samuel's prophecies about Israel's having a king were fulfilled in Solomon's reign. Israel desired relief from the burdens of Solomon's extravagance, which had brought upon them exorbitant taxes and conscript labor. The yoke mentioned here was symbolic of that burden.

One scholar noted that "Solomon's kingdom barely outlived him. At his death his son and heir, Rehoboam, sought to ascend the throne of Israel and Judah. There was no difficulty in the south. The elders of Judah were no doubt pleased to anoint another native son to continue the rule which had favored Judah in so many ways. In the north, in Israel, it was a different story altogether. Before there was to be an acclamation of any son of Solomon, there must be some plain talk about certain policies of state which the men of the northern hills and valleys thought discriminatory if not unbearable. Forced labor gangs for royal building projects simply must not continue. Heavy and inequitable taxation favoring Judah would have to be modified. The new king would either have to find other ways to carry out his personal and imperial ambitions or else temper his desires. In any case, the northern tribes were clearly unwilling to bear the brunt of the monarchical burden. Underlying these real grievances was the reviving strength of the tribal elders. Solomon had not completely destroyed their power after all." (Harry Thomas Frank, *Discovering the Biblical World*, p. 99.)

(4-6) 1 Kings 12:4–14. Is It Folly to Reject the Counsel of the Aged?

The episode recorded in these verses demonstrates the value of age when wise counsel is needed. Because of their experience, older people are generally wiser than younger people. But because of their great energy and ability to adapt, youth can be very effective leaders. It is often best to allow the wisdom of the aged to guide the energy of youth. (Concerning the wisdom of the counsel given to Rehoboam by the old men,

compare 1 Kings 12:7; Matthew 20:25–28; 23:11–12; Mosiah 2:9–18.)

The reference to scorpions (see 1 Kings 12:14) seems to be an allusion to scourges or whips made of several thongs of leather which had metal barbs embedded in the ends (see William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "scorpion"). Rehoboam was simply announcing that he would deal even more sternly with the tribes of Israel than Solomon had.

(4-7) 1 Kings 12:16. What Does the Phrase "What Portion Have We in David? . . . See to Thine Own House, David" Mean?

Those assembled made it clear that they no longer considered themselves to be part of the house of David (Judah). They rebelled against the dominion of Rehoboam and moved to establish their own kingdom. "To your tents" is an idiom meaning "Let's go home!" (D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 337; see also 1 Kings 12:19; 2 Samuel 20:1–2; 2 Chronicles 10:16). The northern tribes withdrew their allegiance from Rehoboam and the house of David and said in essence, "David, you take care of your own house. We will no longer be associated nor have an inheritance with you" (see Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:436).

(4-8) 1 Kings 12:18. What Was the Significance of the Stoning of Adoram?

Rehoboam must not have thought the people were serious about their rebellion, for he sent Adoram to them. Since Adoram "was the person who was superintendent over the *tribute*, he was probably sent to collect the ordinary taxes; but the people, indignant at the *master* who had given them such a brutish answer [to their request for relief from burdens], stoned the *servant* to death. The sending of Adoram to collect the taxes, when the public mind was in such a state of fermentation [particularly after they had disavowed any allegiance to Rehoboam], was another proof of Rehoboam's folly and incapacity to govern." (Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:436.)

(4-9) 1 Kings 12:17. Who Were the "Children of Israel Which Dwelt in the Cities of Judah"?

"These 'sons of Israel' are members of the ten tribes who had settled in Judah in the course of ages [compare 1 Kings 12:23]; and the Simeonites especially are included, since they were obliged to remain in the kingdom of Judah from the very situation of their tribe-territory, and might very well be reckoned among the Israelites who dwelt in the cities of Judah, inasmuch as at first the whole of their territory was allotted to the tribe of Judah, from which they afterwards received a portion [see Joshua 19:1]." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:196.)

First Kings 12:17 has particular interest for students of the Book of Mormon. This passage helps to explain why such men as Lehi and Nephi, who were descendants of Manasseh (see Alma 10:3), and the family of Ishmael, who were descendants of Ephraim (see 1 Nephi 7:2; Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:184), were living in the land of Jerusalem several generations after Rehoboam. Laban, a record-keeper

Kings of Judah		Kings of Israel		Scripture Accounts
Rehoboam	930–913 B.C.			1 Kings 12:1–24; 14:21–31 2 Chronicles 9:31–12:16
		Jeroboam I	930–909 B.C.	1 Kings 12:25–14:20
Abijam	913–910 B.C.			1 Kings 15:1–8 2 Chronicles 13
Asa	910–869 B.C.			1 Kings 15:9–24 2 Chronicles 14:1–16:14
		Nadab	909–908 B.C.	1 Kings 15:25–31
		Baasha	908–886 B.C.	1 Kings 15:32–16:7
		Elah	886–885 B.C.	1 Kings 16:8–14
		Zimri	885 B.C.	1 Kings 16:15–20
		Tibni	885–880 B.C.	1 Kings 16:21–22
		Omri	885–874 B.C.	1 Kings 16:23–28
		Ahab	874–853 B.C.	1 Kings 16:29–22:40
Jehoshaphat*	872–848 B.C.			1 Kings 22:41–50 2 Chronicles 17:1–20:37
		Ahaziah	853–852 B.C.	1 Kings 22:51–2 Kings 1
		Joram/Jehoram	852–841 B.C.	2 Kings 3:1–8:15
Jehoram*	853–841 B.C.			2 Kings 8:16–8:24 2 Chronicles 21
Ahaziah	841 B.C.			2 Kings 8:25–29; 9:27–29
		Jehu	841–814 B.C.	2 Kings 9:1–10:36
Athaliah	841–835 B.C.			2 Kings 11 2 Chronicles 22:10–23:21
Joash/Jehoash	835–796 B.C.			2 Kings 12 2 Chronicles 24
		Jehoahaz	814–798 B.C.	2 Kings 13:1–9
		Jehoash	798–782 B.C.	2 Kings 13:10–25
Amaziah	796–767 B.C.			2 Kings 14:1–22 2 Chronicles 25
		Jeroboam II	793–753 B.C.	2 Kings 14:23–29
Azariah/Uzziah*	792–740 B.C.			2 Kings 15:1–7 2 Chronicles 26
		Zachariah	753 B.C.	2 Kings 15:8–12
		Shallum	751 B.C.	2 Kings 15:13–15
		Menahem	752–742 B.C.	2 Kings 15:16–22
		Pekahiah	742–740 B.C.	2 Kings 15:23–26
		Pekah	752–740 B.C.	2 Kings 15:27–31
Jotham*	750–732 B.C.			2 Kings 15:32–38 2 Chronicles 27:1–9
Ahaz*	735–715 B.C.			2 Kings 16 2 Chronicles 28
		Hoshea	732–722 B.C.	2 Kings 17:1–23
Hezekiah	715–686 B.C.			2 Kings 18:1–20:21 2 Chronicles 29:1–32:33
Manasseh*	697–642 B.C.			2 Kings 21:1–18 2 Chronicles 33:1–20
Amon	642–640 B.C.			2 Kings 21:19–26 2 Chronicles 33:21–24
Josiah	640–609 B.C.			2 Kings 22:1–23:30 2 Chronicles 33:25–35:27
Jehoahaz	609 B.C.			2 Kings 23:31–34 2 Chronicles 36:1–4
Jehoiakim/Eliakim	609–598 B.C.			2 Kings 23:34–24:7 2 Chronicles 36:5–8
Jehoiachin	598–597 B.C.			2 Kings 24:8–17; 25:27–30 2 Chronicles 36:9–10
Zedekiah/Mattaniah	597–586 B.C.			2 Kings 24:18–25:27 2 Chronicles 36:11–21

The dating in this chart represents a consensus of commonly held views of scholars. The dates are best taken as approximate and may differ slightly from those in other chronologies.

*Joint rule

for the tribe of Joseph, also lived in Jerusalem at the time of Lehi and Ishmael (see 1 Nephi 3:2–4). This matter is explained more fully in 2 Chronicles 11:13–17 and 15:9 than in 1 Kings.

(4-10) 1 Kings 12:20. Was the Tribe of Judah Left by Itself?

The statement “there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only” is true only in very general terms. The members of the tribe of Benjamin, long associated with the tribe of Judah, and the Levites already living in and near Jerusalem and serving in the temple must also be included with Judah (see 1 Kings 12:21). Also, once Jeroboam established idolatry, many Levites and no doubt righteous individuals from all of the northern tribes migrated to the kingdom of Judah.

(4-11) 1 Kings 12:22–24

Although the people of Judah were not a righteous people (see 1 Kings 11:33), they were willing, in this case, to listen to the counsel of the Lord’s prophet (see also 2 Chronicles 11:1–12).

(4-12) 1 Kings 12:25–32. Why Did Jeroboam Lead His People into Idolatry?

With the kingdom divided, the ten tribes could not conveniently worship in the temple at Jerusalem because Judah controlled the city. Jeroboam, concerned with keeping Israel under his control, devised a new scheme for worship that would cause his people to worship away from Jerusalem. He built two golden calves in northern cities and invited his people to worship them. Adam Clarke said that Jeroboam “invented a political religion, instituted feasts in his own times different from those appointed by the Lord, gave the people certain objects of devotion, and pretended to think it would be both inconvenient and oppressive to them to have to go up to Jerusalem to worship. This was not the last time that religion was made a state engine to serve political purposes.” (*Commentary*, 2:437.)

Even though he made golden calves, “that Jeroboam had in his mind not merely the Egyptian *Apis*-worship generally, but more especially the image-worship which Aaron introduced for the people at Sinai, is evident from the words borrowed from [Exodus 32:4], with which he studiously endeavoured to recommend his new form of worship to the people: ‘Behold, this is thy God, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ . . . What Jeroboam meant to say . . . was, ‘this is no new religion, but this was the form of worship which our fathers used in the desert, with Aaron himself leading the way.’ . . . And whilst the verbal allusion to that event at Sinai plainly shows that . . . Jehovah was worshipped under the image of the calves or young oxen; the choice of the places in which the golden calves were set up also shows that Jeroboam desired to adhere as closely as possible to ancient traditions. He did not select his own place of residence, but Bethel and Dan. *Bethel*, on the southern border of his kingdom, which properly belonged to the tribe of Benjamin [see Joshua 18:13, 22], the present *Beitin*, had already been consecrated as a divine seat by the vision of Jehovah which the patriarch Jacob received there in a dream [see Genesis 28:11, 19], and Jacob gave it the name of

Bethel, house of God, and afterwards built an altar there to the Lord [see Genesis 35:7]. . . . *Dan*, in the northern part of the kingdom, . . . was also consecrated as a place of worship by the image-worship established there by the Danites, at which even a grandson of Moses had officiated; and regard may also have been had to the convenience of the people, namely, that the tribes living in the north would not have to go a long distance to perform their worship.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:198–99.)

In ordaining a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, Jeroboam subverted the great feast of Tabernacles (which was held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month). He held a similar feast but at the same time undermined the ordinance. (See Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:437–38.)

Jeroboam cast off the Levite priests (see 2 Chronicles 11:14; 13:19) and ordained “priests of the lowest of the people” (1 Kings 12:31), allowing any to be appointed if they would just consecrate themselves by offering “a young bullock and seven rams” (2 Chronicles 13:9). He also assumed priestly functions himself (see 1 Kings 12:33). His rejection of the Levites resulted in their evacuation from his kingdom and uniting themselves with the kingdom of Rehoboam in Jerusalem (see 2 Chronicles 11:13–16).

(4-13) 1 Kings 13:3, 5. What Was the Significance of Pouring the Ashes Out?

“The pouring out of the sacrificial ashes in consequence of the breaking up of the altar was a penal sign, which indicated, along with the destruction of the altar, the desecration of the sacrificial service performed upon it” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:204).

The fulfillment of 1 Kings 13:1–10 is recorded in 2 Kings 23:15–20.

(4-14) 1 Kings 13:11–34. Do Prophets Ever Lie or Disobey the Lord?

True prophets obey the word of God; false prophets do not. In this story are two prophets, one pictured as lying and the other pictured as disobeying God’s instructions. Ellis T. Rasmussen wrote: “There are some problems in this story of the man of God who came from Judah to warn the king of northern Israel and lost his life in the mission. Some help is available in the [Joseph Smith Translation] of verse 18, which indicates that the old prophet said, ‘Bring him back . . . that I may prove him; and he lied not unto him.’ Also there is a change in verse 26, in which the last part reads: ‘. . . therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto me.’ These make the account more understandable and more acceptable. The young prophet should have obeyed God.” (*An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings*, 2:4; emphasis added.)

(4-15) 1 Kings 13:22. “Thy Carcase Shall Not Come unto the Sepulchre of Thy Fathers”

This passage means that the “man of God that came from Judah” (1 Kings 13:21) would meet an untimely death and not be buried in his homeland. The ancient Hebrews believed it a great tragedy not to be buried properly.

(4-16) 1 Kings 14:1–3. Why Did Jeroboam Send His Wife to the Prophet Ahijah Instead of Going Himself?

Perhaps Jeroboam felt that the prophet of the Lord would listen or yield more to a mother’s enticings than to a father’s. Certainly he knew that he was not worthy to ask for any blessings from the Lord. This incident teaches the great lesson that one should live so that in a crisis he can call upon the Lord with confidence and faith. Jeroboam could not do so, and so he sent his wife instead. He also caused her to be disguised so that she might not be recognized as his wife. He had her take a gift to the prophet, as was considered proper in such instances, but the gift was the kind that a common citizen’s wife would take, thus adding to the deception.

(4-17) 1 Kings 14:4. What Does It Mean That Ahijah “Could Not See; for His Eyes Were Set”?

Ahijah was blind, or at least his eyes had become so weak with his old age that he could hardly see. The phrase “his eyes were set” indicates that he could not properly focus and follow images.

(4-18) 1 Kings 14:5–6. Those Who Have the Spirit of Revelation Cannot Be Deceived

This fallen world is rampant with deception and dishonesty. Though men often deceive one another, the Lord’s anointed can draw upon the gift of revelation and thereby see into the hearts of others or have things made known to them which cannot be obtained through

the natural senses (see Jacob 2:5; Job 42:1; 1 Kings 8:39; Hebrews 4:12–13; D&C 6:16; 33:1).

(4-19) 1 Kings 14:8. Why Was David Referred to As an Example of Righteousness When He Had Committed Very Serious Sins?

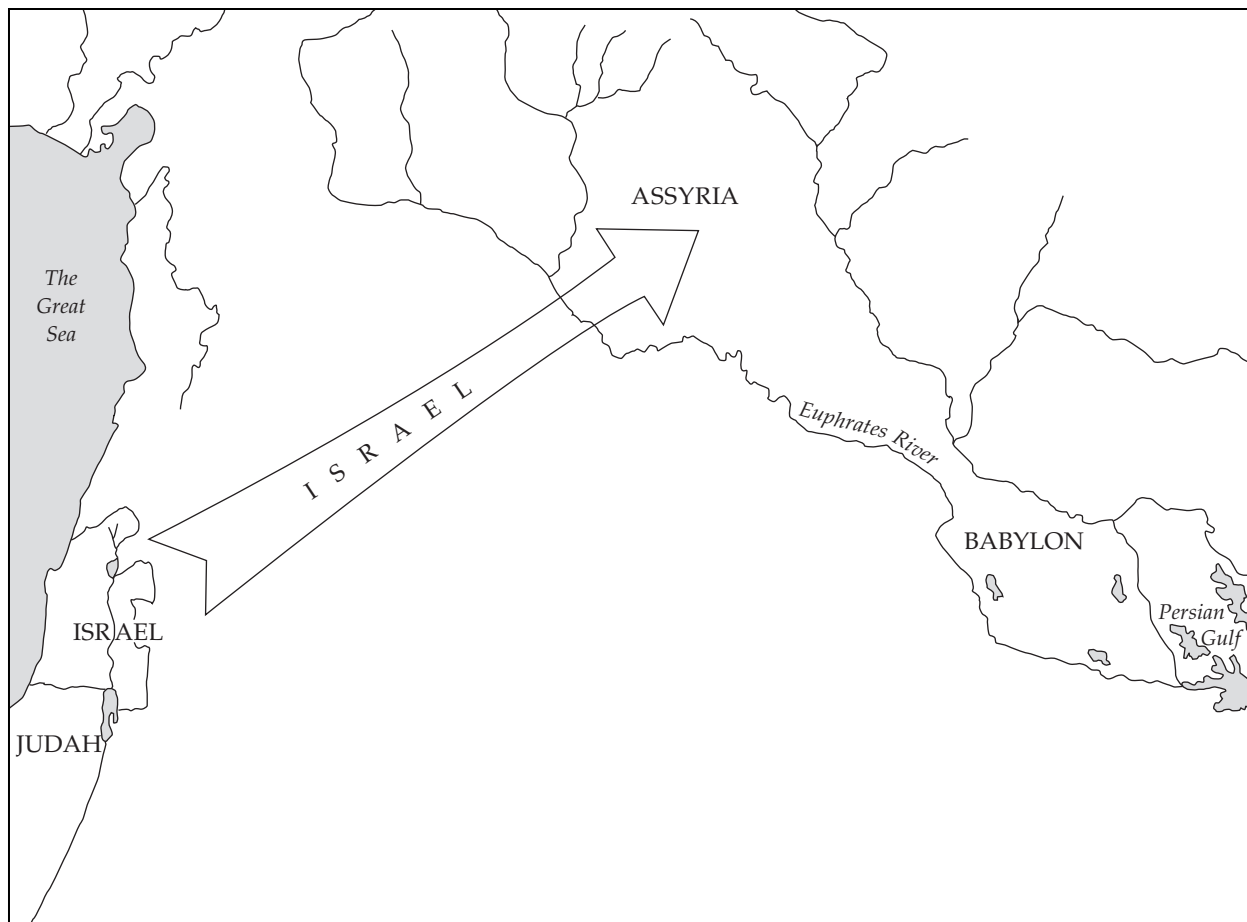
There is an error in this verse. In the Joseph Smith Translation the verse reads as follows: “And rent the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it thee, because he kept not my commandments. But thou hast not been as my servant David, *when he followed me with all his heart only to do right in mine eyes.*” (Emphasis added; see also JST, 1 Kings 11:33, 38; 15:3, 5, 11.)

(4-20) 1 Kings 14:9. “Hast Cast Me Behind Thy Back”

“The expression, to cast God behind the back, which only occurs here and in [Ezekiel 23:35], denotes the most scornful contempt of God, the strict opposite of ‘keeping God before the eyes and in the heart’” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:210–11).

(4-21) 1 Kings 14:10. Isn’t This Phrase Inappropriate for the Bible? Why Was It Used, and What Does It Mean?

Though this phrase is offensive to modern readers, it was not so when the King James Version was translated, nor was it in ancient times. The Hebrew idiom originally meant “every male.” The phrase “is only met within passages which speak of the



Israel was taken captive into Assyria.

destruction of a family or household to the very last man [see also 1 Kings 14:10; 16:11; 21:21; 2 Kings 9:8]" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:242). The same idea occurs in modern revelation without the offensive expression in Doctrine and Covenants 121:15.

(4-22) 1 Kings 14:10–13. Ahijah's Prophecy about Jeroboam's Posterity

The prophet indicated that all of Jeroboam's posterity would be slain and none would receive a proper burial except his son "because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord" (1 Kings 14:13). Among the Hebrews, to be unburied is the worst thing that can happen to a dead person (see Philip Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, p. 531; Notes and Commentary on 1 Kings 13:22).

(4-23) 1 Kings 14:15. What Did the Lord Mean When He Said He Would "Root Up Israel out of This Good Land . . . and Shall Scatter Them beyond the River"?

This passage refers to the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel: "After many minor losses in war the kingdom of Israel met an overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Assyrians, in or about the year 721 B.C. We read that Shalmanezar IV, king of Assyria, besieged Samaria, the third and last capital of the kingdom, and that after three years the city was taken by Sargon, Shalmanezar's successor. The people of Israel were carried captive into Assyria and distributed among the cities of the Medes. Thus was the dread prediction of Ahijah to the wife of Jeroboam fulfilled. Israel was scattered beyond the river, probably the Euphrates, and from the time of this event the Ten Tribes are lost to history." (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, pp. 322–23.)

(4-24) 1 Kings 14:19. The Other Account of Jeroboam's Acts

Second Chronicles 13:1–20 records some of the "rest of the acts of Jeroboam." Reference is made in 1 Kings 14:19 and other places to "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" (or Judah; see 1 Kings 14:29). These references are not to the present books of Chronicles but to official records kept by the kings, which were used as source books by the author or authors of the present books of Kings. These records are lost to us.

(4-25) 1 Kings 14:22–24. What Were the Abominable Practices of Judah?

After the Israelites settled in the land of Canaan, they began to adopt many of the practices and religious rites of the corrupt heathen nations that surrounded them. For example, they followed many of the aspects of Baalism. The sun god Baal, the supreme god of the Phoenicians, was a fertility god. Those who worshiped Baal felt that such worship would ensure the generative and reproductive power of the soil and their animals as well as themselves. Settled in Canaan, Israel became a more sedentary, agricultural people, whereas before they had been more nomadic. Their dependence upon the productivity of the soil enticed them to turn to the worship of Baal. In such worship, with its emphasis on fertility, such practices as ritual prostitution of both sexes became rampant. Those who engaged in such practices were referred to by the Lord as *sodomites*. Other terms, such as *high places*, *images* (idols), *groves*,

high hills, *green trees*, were all associated with the false and reprehensible forms of worship that often led Israel far from the Lord and that Judah, too, practiced under Rehoboam and at other times: "Among early nations it was the custom to erect altars on hilltops (Gen. 12:7–8; 22:2–4; 31:54). After the settlement in Canaan heathen altars were found set up on various hills and were ordered to be destroyed (Num. 33:52; Deut. 12:2–3). Altars to Jehovah were built at several high places (Judg. 6:25–26; 1 Sam. 9:12–25; 10:5, 13; 1 Chr. 21:26; 1 Kgs. 3:2–4; 18:30). Such altars became local centers of the worship of Jehovah. When idolatry came in, many of these altars were desecrated and used for heathen worship." (Bible Dictionary, s.v. "high places.")

Concerning the sanctuaries wherein worship of Baal took place, one author explained: "Each place has its own Baal, who is worshipped at the local sanctuary. The sanctuary is at an elevated spot outside the town or village, either on a natural eminence or on a mound artificially made for the purpose; these are the 'high places' of the Old Testament; originally Canaanite places of worship, they drew to themselves also the worship of Israel. The apparatus of worship at these shrines is of a very simple nature. An upright stone represents the god. . . . He was supposed to come to the stone when meeting with his worshippers; and in the earliest times of Semitic religion this stone served the purpose of an altar: the gifts, which were not originally burned, were laid upon it, or the blood of the victim was applied to it. But besides the altar and the upright stone of *massebah* the Canaanite shrine had another piece of furniture. A massive tree-trunk, fixed in the ground and with some of its branches perhaps still remaining, represented the female deity who is the invariable companion of the Baal. This is the Ashera of Canaan, a word which in the Authorized Version is translated 'grove,' after an error of the Vulgate, but which in the Revised Version is rightly left untranslated. [Judges 3:7; 6:25, 2 Kings 23:6.] The word Ashera is in such passages the designation of the tree which stood to represent the goddess." (Allan Menzies, *History of Religion*, 172; see also *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 245–48, 255.)

(4-26) 1 Kings 14:22. What Does the Scripture Mean When It Says God Was Jealous? Why Was He Jealous?

The word *jealousy* used here means much the same as it did in Exodus 20:5. The Hebrew root *kanah* denotes "ardour, zeal, jealousy" (William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 888). The implication is that the Lord possesses sensitive and deep feelings about false and degrading forms of worship (see Exodus 20:5b). The reason seems clear: the only power to save mankind from sin lies with God. Any false worship, therefore, cuts the sinner off from that power. Since God loves His children and wishes only their best eternal welfare, He is jealous (that is, feels very strongly) about any vain or false worship they perform.

The Lord was jealous of the sins of Judah because by these sins they, like Israel, were being turned from Him to a course that would deprive them of the salvation that only He could offer.

(4-27) 1 Kings 14:25. Who Was Shishak?

The king of Egypt referred to here as Shishak was most probably the “Libyan prince who founded Egypt’s XXIInd Dynasty as the Pharaoh Sheshong I. He reigned for 21 years c. 945–924 B.C. He harboured Jeroboam as a fugitive from Solomon, after Ahijah’s prophecy of Jeroboam’s future kingship [see 1 Kings 11:29–40]. Late in his reign, Shishak invaded Palestine in the fifth year of Rehoboam, 925 B.C. He subdued Judah, taking the treasures of Jerusalem as tribute [see 1 Kings 14:25–26; 2 Chronicles 12:2–12], and also asserted his dominion over Israel, as is evidenced by a broken stele of his from Megiddo. At the temple of Amun in Thebes, Shishak left a triumphal relief-scene, naming many Palestinian towns.” (J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Shishak”; see also 2 Chronicles 12:5–12 for a detailed account of Shishak’s invasion.)

(4-28) 1 Kings 14:31. “Rehoboam Slept with His Fathers”

The phrase “slept with his fathers” is a euphemism that means that someone has died and his spirit has passed on to join the other departed spirits. The phrase is also used to indicate burial in the family tomb. (See Guthrie and Motyer, *Commentary*, p. 326).

(4-29) 1 Kings 15:4. What Does It Mean That “for David’s Sake” God Gave Abijam a “Lamp in Jerusalem”?

Abijam was unrighteous, as his father had been. “But for David’s sake,” for the sake of the promises made about the house of David and to preserve the royal lineage through which the Messiah would come (see Isaiah 9:6–7; Luke 1:32; Acts 13:22–23), the Lord did not reject Abijam, who was David’s great-grandson, but allowed the throne to pass to him and then to his son (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:217). The word *lamp* refers to the idea of a light or a candle that continues to burn rather than being put out. Symbolically, then, Abijam’s line, or light, was allowed to continue rather than being extinguished. (Concerning Christ as the Son of David, see Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 188–95).

For an account of Abijam’s reign, see 2 Chronicles 13 (where he is called Abijah). Although he was not a righteous man, neither was he completely unrighteous, for he called Jeroboam and his army to repentance (see 2 Chronicles 13:4–12), and his army prevailed over Jeroboam’s “because they relied upon the Lord” (v. 18).

(4-30) 1 Kings 15:5. Did David Always Do Right Except in the Case of Uriah?

See Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Kings 15:5, for a clarified translation of this verse. The statements throughout the Bible that credit David with being perfect, except for the one episode with Bath-sheba, are correct in that David was no idolator, nor did idolatry prosper while David was king. Idolatry and its accompanying vices were the greatest sin of Israel and the one least excused by the Lord. Although David succumbed to personal temptation and brought spiritual tragedy upon himself, he was faithful to the Lord in the sense that he did not tolerate idolatry in Israel.

(4-31) 1 Kings 15:9. Asa’s Reign

For a detailed account of Asa’s reign, see 2 Chronicles 14–16. (Concerning very large numbers, such as in 2 Chronicles 14:9, see *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel*, pp. 193–95.)

(4-32) 1 Kings 15:9–10. Was Maachah Asa’s Mother?

Since Abijam’s mother was Maachah and Asa was a son of Abijam, it is highly likely that the word *mother* as used here was intended to be *grandmother*. She was still queen because she was still alive during Asa’s reign.

(4-33) 1 Kings 15:11–13. What Project Did Asa Undertake after the Death of His Father Abijah?

Asa came to the throne of Judah after his father’s death. He had seen the tragic consequences of sin and had also seen his father start a reform from these sinful practices. Asa launched an all-out campaign to complete the job his father had begun. He had idolatrous altars and images torn down. He also began to eliminate the male and female prostitutes who attended the pagan temples, groves, altars, and shrines. The reforms soon brought peace among the people, which made them more happy and content. He realized that the pagan peoples might again try to impose their false religious practices on his people, so he also used this interval of peace to build up his territorial defenses (see 2 Chronicles 14:7).

Asa’s actions towards his mother are important (see 1 Kings 15:13), for, although family ties are of great importance, allegiance to God is more so (see Matthew 10:34–35; Luke 12:51–53).



Nebi Samwil may be ancient Ramah.

(4-34) 1 Kings 15:17. What Was Ramah?

Adam Clarke explained: “As the word signifies a *high place*, what is here termed *Ramah* was probably a *hill*, (commanding a *defile* through which lay the principal road to Jerusalem,) which Baasha fortified in order to prevent all intercourse with the kingdom of Judah, lest his subjects should cleave to the house of David. Ramah was about *two leagues* [six miles] northward of Jerusalem.” (*Commentary*, 2:446–47.)

(4-35) 1 Kings 15:18–22. Was Asa’s League with Ben-hadad a Wise Move?

The alliance with Ben-hadad, king of Syria, displeased the Lord (see 2 Chronicles 16:1–9). Asa trusted and used an enemy—Ben-hadad—instead of a friend—the Lord—who had already both shown Asa and told him that he needed no other friends (see 2 Chronicles 15:2–4).

(4-36) 1 Kings 15:23–24. The Final Years of Asa’s Life

First Kings 15:23 says that Asa “was diseased in his feet” during “his old age.” 2 Chronicles 16:12 says the disease began in the thirty-ninth year of Asa’s reign and became “exceeding great.” Asa relied solely upon physicians rather than turning to the Lord for help. He seems to have moved further from the Lord as he grew older (see 2 Chronicles 16:10). He died in the forty-first year of his reign, and the people “made a very great burning [of sacrifices] for him” (2 Chronicles 16:13–14).

(4-37) 1 Kings 15:28. Who Did Baasha Slay?

The antecedent of *him* in verse 28 is Nadab. Baasha slew Nadab, not Asa.

(4-38) 1 Kings 16:1–2. Did God Raise Up a Wicked Man to Be King over Israel?

Concerning the Lord’s message to Baasha, “I . . . made thee prince over my people Israel” (1 Kings 16:2), Clarke commented: “That is, in the course of my providence, I *suffered* thee to become king; for it is impossible that God should make a rebel, a traitor, and a murderer, king over *his* people, or over any people. God is ever represented in Scripture as *doing* those things which, in the course of his providence, he *permits* to be done.” (Commentary, 2:448.)

(4-39) 1 Kings 16:2–13. Prophecy Concerning Baasha’s Posterity

Jehu prophesied that Baasha’s posterity would be totally cut off—a consequence considered by Hebrews to be one of the greatest evils that could come upon a person. Zimri fulfilled this prophecy (see 1 Kings 16:11–13), but even though Zimri “did as had been prophesied and wiped out the house of Baasha, it is not to be supposed that he was ordained of the Lord to do so. Prophets can prophesy what men will bring upon themselves without necessitating the Lord’s predestining and controlling them to make it so.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2:5.)

(4-40) 1 Kings 16:11. Why Were Baasha’s Friends and Kinsfolk Killed?

In slaying the friends and kinsfolk of Baasha, Zimri “endeavoured to exterminate his race, and blot out his memory; and the Jews say, when such a matter is determined, they not only destroy the house of the person himself, *but the five neighbouring houses*, that the memory of such a person may perish from the earth” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:449).

(4-41) 1 Kings 16:21–23. What Is Known about Omri’s Reign as King over Israel?

Rasmussen wrote of Omri: “Non-Biblical sources tell more about his eleven years of reign than does the Bible.

In addition to his procuring Samaria and building it into a well-fortified capital city for northern Israel, the stone inscription of Mesha, King of Moab, admits that he [Omri] conquered Moab and exacted tribute all his days. And later inscriptions, such as the annals of Shalmaneser III, designated Israel as the ‘land of the house of Omri,’ and its kings were called in that text ‘sons of Omri’ even after his dynasty had been long replaced by another ruling family. Ben Hadad of Syria said his father took certain cities from Omri and forced him to allow free trade in Samaria. Omri made an alliance with Ethbaal, King of Tyre (Phoenicia), and took the Phoenician princess Jezebel for his son Ahab to marry. That alliance had deep and serious results in the religion and politics of Israel for forty-five years, and also in Judah some fifty years later.” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2:5–6.)

(4-42) 1 Kings 16:24. Of What Significance Was the “Hill Samaria Shemer”?

Josephus wrote that the city built on this hill was called “by the Greeks Samaria; but he [Omri] himself called it Semareon, from Semer, who sold him the mountain whereon he built it” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 8, chap. 12, par. 5). Today the ruins of the city are called both Samaria and Sebastia, a name given to the city by Herod. The city, located six miles northwest of Shechem, remained the capital of the ten tribes until they were carried away captive. It was rebuilt into a city of great magnificence by Herod but was destroyed by the Romans in the First Jewish Revolt about A.D. 68 or 69.



Samaria, or Sebastia, in the land of Manasseh

(4-43) 1 Kings 16:29–30. Who Were Ahab and Jezebel?

Ahab, son of Omri, was even more evil than his father, who had “[done] worse than all that were before him” (1 Kings 16:25). The scripture states that Ahab “did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him” (1 Kings 16:30). Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of King Ethbaal of Phoenicia, who practiced idolatry of a most depraved kind. Ahab built a house of Baal in the capital city of Samaria and placed an altar to the Phoenician sun god inside it (see 1 Kings 16:32). He then made a grove in which the people could indulge themselves in immoral practices around a symbol dedicated to the fertility goddess Ashtaroth. Four hundred priests, who ate at Jezebel’s table at state expense, assisted her in the extravagant and unholy religion she had brought into Israel.

(4-44) 1 Kings 16:31. How Offensive to the Lord Was Ahab's Marriage to Jezebel?

Clarke summed up this marriage, as well as Jezebel's life, in these words:

"This was the head and chief of his offending; he took to wife, not only a *heathen*, but one whose hostility to the true religion was well known, and carried to the utmost extent. 1. She was the idolatrous daughter of an idolatrous king; 2. She practised it openly; 3. She not only countenanced it in others, but protected it, and gave its partisans honours and rewards; 4. She used every means to persecute the true religion; 5. She was hideously cruel, and put to death the prophets and priests of God; 6. And all this she did with the most zealous perseverance and relentless cruelty.

"Notwithstanding Ahab had built a temple, and made an altar for Baal, and set up the worship of *Asherah*, the Sidonian *Venus*, . . . yet so well known was the hostility of Jezebel to all good, that his marrying her was esteemed the highest pitch of vice, and an act the most provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the kingdom." (*Commentary*, 2:450-51.)

(4-45) 1 Kings 16:34. "Laid the Foundation . . . in . . . His Firstborn, and Set Up the Gates . . . in His Youngest Son"

The prophecy by Joshua in Joshua 6:26 concerning Jericho referred not just to building houses there but to restoring the city as a fortification (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:1:73).

Clarke outlined three opinions about the correct interpretation of Joshua's prophecy:

"1. It is thought that when he [Hiel] laid the foundation of the city, his eldest son, the hope of his family, died by the hand and judgment of God, and that all his children died in succession; so that when the doors were ready to be hung, his youngest and last child died, and thus, instead of securing himself a name, his whole family became extinct.

"2. These expressions signify only *great delay* in the building; that he who should undertake it should *spend nearly his whole life* in it; all the time in which he was capable of procreating children; in a word, that if a man laid the foundation when his first-born came into the world, his youngest and last son should be born before the walls should be in readiness to admit the gates to be set up in them; and that the expression is of the proverbial kind, intimating *greatly protracted labour*, occasioned by *multitudinous hinderances and delays*.

"3. That he who rebuilt this city should, in laying the foundation, *slay or sacrifice* his first-born, in order to consecrate it, and secure the assistance of the objects of his idolatrous worship; and should slay his youngest at the completion of the work, as a gratitude-offering for the assistance received. This latter opinion seems to be countenanced by the *Chaldee*, which represents Hiel as *slaying* his first-born Abiram, and his youngest son *Segub*.

" . . . None of these versions [Chaldee, Vulgate, Septuagint, Syriac, or Arabic], the Chaldee excepted, intimates that the children were either *slain* or *died*; which circumstance seems to strengthen the opinion, that the passage is to be understood of *delays* and *hinderances*." (*Commentary*, 2:451.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(4-46) The Price of Contention

As you read the story of the tragedy that befell the house of Israel following the death of Solomon, did you feel sorrow for those who suffered and died during this period of time? What went wrong? How could they have averted the troubles that befell them? Your answers may give a pattern to follow in living your own life without such troubles. Give some real thought to the questions of how you can control disobedience and rebellion in your life. What results do you expect? Is it true of families as it is of nations that elimination of wickedness and selfishness will also produce harmony and unity? Why do you feel as you do? On a separate sheet of paper write your answers to these questions.

The Lord admonished the Israelites to maintain proper relationships, especially within their families and religious groups. He said, "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren" (2 Chronicles 11:4). He also told them that as long as they followed His advice they would prosper; but if they forsook Him, He would forsake them (see 2 Chronicles 15:2). The Israelites disregarded His admonition, and soon disputations, violence, and hatred broke out. The scriptures, in describing this situation, record: "And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries" (2 Chronicles 15:5). Thus, the kings of Judah and Israel failed to give their subjects the legal basis of peace. The spirit of contention is of the devil (see 3 Nephi 11:29). Do you have any need for improvement in this area? How would more harmonious relationships with your parents, brothers or sisters, and other people in your life affect your happiness and theirs? Write your answers on paper.

President David O. McKay said of unity: "In branches and wards, there is no virtue more conducive to progress and spirituality than the presence of this principle [unity]. When jealousy, backbiting, evil-speaking supplant confidence, self-subjection, unity, and harmony, the progress of the organization is stifled." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1939, p. 102.)

(4-47) The Importance of Unity

If you hope to fulfill your potential as a child of God, you must learn to work with others toward an established goal. You need to give help and accept help. This principle is true in society, in the Church, and, especially, in the home. President McKay said: "I can imagine few if any things more objectionable in the home than the absence of unity and harmony. On the other hand, I know that a home in which unity, mutual helpfulness, and love abide is just a bit of heaven on earth. I surmise that nearly all of you can testify to the sweetness of life in homes in which these virtues predominate. Most gratefully and humbly, I cherish the remembrance that never once as a lad in the home of my youth did I see one instance of discord between father and mother, and that goodwill and mutual understanding have been the uniting bond that has held together a fortunate group of brothers and sisters. Unity, harmony, goodwill are virtues to be fostered and cherished in every home." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1939, p. 102.)

(4-48) The Dangers of Double-Mindedness

The Apostle James wrote: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. . . . Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (James 1:8; 4:8.) These statements teach the necessity of avoiding hypocrisy and of always being true to the principles by which we claim to live.

Most of the kings of Israel and Judah were double-minded in the scriptural sense recorded by James. This double-mindedness created instability in their own lives as well as in the lives of all Israel. Elder Bruce R. McConkie tersely but fully described a double-minded man in these words: "A fickle, wavering man, as contrasted with one who is constant and firm, who always sustains the cause of righteousness. A member of the Church who tries both to forsake and to follow the world and who does not serve the Lord with an eye single to his glory." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:248.)

Elder Alvin R. Dyer said: "Many centuries ago Jesus made clear the fact that 'man cannot serve two masters'; he will either love one and despise the other or hate the one and love the other. (See Matt. 6:24.) The Apostle James emphasized the importance of constantly choosing right over wrong. For those who attempt an allegiance to both, there will come instability. One psychologist calls such an individual a neurotic freak." (*The Nobility of Teaching*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 20 Jan. 1970, p. 3.)

To be double-minded in the classical, scriptural sense is to be astride the high, sharp fence that separates allegiance to the kingdom of God from allegiance to the world. On one side of the fence are Jehovah and Zion; on the other side are idols and Babylon.

Review the lives of the kings you have read about in this chapter of the Old Testament. Were any of them completely on the Lord's side of the fence—not even peeking enviously through a knothole? Or did they try to maintain a position on both sides—an absolute impossibility?

What made the case of these kings even worse was that accepting the throne of either Israel or Judah meant accepting a position of agency or trust. The earthly king should always have been the embodiment of the Heavenly King, the only true king in Israel. The earthly king should have accepted the responsibility of leading the people to obey the Heavenly King and of punishing all who disobeyed Him. But apostasy set in; kings were no longer chosen by revelation and anointed by prophets. Therefore, it is not surprising that the rulers of both kingdoms so often led their people in a way directly opposed to the ways of God. Consider the following record.

The King and the Record

Rehoboam (Judah) Forsook the law of the Lord

Jeroboam (Israel) Set up idols and false priesthood

Nadab (Israel) Followed Jeroboam's pattern

Abijam (Judah) "Walked in all the sins of his father"

Baasha (Israel) Followed the pattern of Jeroboam

Jehoshaphat (Judah) Did not take down high places, but was otherwise right

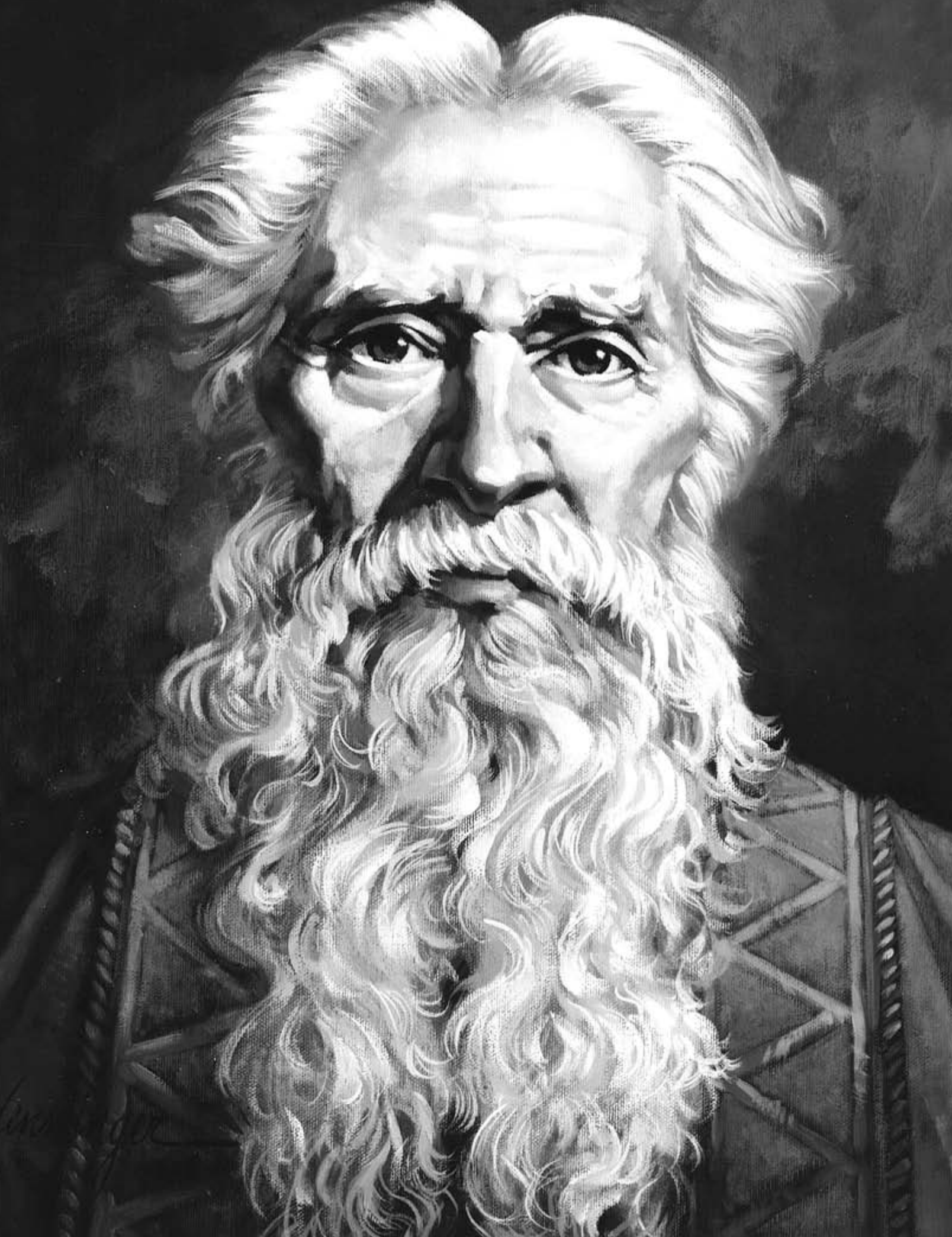
Elah (Israel) Was a drunkard—"made Israel to sin"

Zimri (Israel) Was a murderer, idolater (reigned seven days)

Omri (Israel) Was a worse idolater than all before him

Ahab (Israel) Was even worse than Omri; married Jezebel

What was the one cause of downfall? Was it not double-mindedness that led to disobedience? Did not Israel trust more in the world and work harder to obtain its rewards than they trusted in the Lord and worked to obtain His rewards?



Prophets and Seers in Ancient Times

B

(B-1) What Was a Prophet among the Hebrews?

God raised up prophets in ancient Israel for the same reasons He raises up prophets today. They are to teach the people the laws of God and how to live them, call the people to repentance when necessary, and bear witness of Jesus Christ. The work of all true prophets of all ages is to act as God's messenger and make known God's will.

Elder John A. Widtsoe explained that "a prophet is a teacher. That is the essential meaning of the word. He teaches the body of truth, the gospel, revealed by the Lord to man; and under inspiration explains it to the understanding of the people. He is an expounder of truth. Moreover, he shows that the way to human happiness is through obedience to God's law. He calls to repentance those who wander away from the truth. He becomes a warrior for the consummation of the Lord's purposes with respect to the human family. The purpose of his life is to uphold the Lord's plan of salvation. All this he does by close communion with the Lord, until he is 'full of power by the spirit of the Lord.' (Micah 3:8; see also D. & C. 20:26; 34:10; 43:16) . . .

"In the course of time the word 'prophet' has come to mean, perhaps chiefly, a man who receives revelations, and directions from the Lord. The principal business of a prophet has mistakenly been thought to foretell coming events, to utter prophecies, which is only one of the several prophetic functions.

"In the sense that a prophet is a man who receives revelations from the Lord, the titles 'seer and revelator' merely amplify the larger and inclusive meaning of the title 'prophet.' . . .

"A prophet also receives revelations from the Lord. These may be explanations of truths already received, or new truths not formerly possessed by man. Such revelations are always confined to the official position held. The lower will not receive revelations for the higher office." (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, pp. 257-58.)

What qualifies a man to be a prophet? Elder A. Theodore Tuttle answered that question by saying:

"Foremost, God must choose him as his prophet! This is entirely different than for man to choose God. The Savior, speaking to his apostles, said, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. . . .' (John 15:16.)

"We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof." (Article of Faith 5.)

"A prophet, then, is the authorized representative of the Lord. While the world may not recognize him, *the important requirement is that God speaks through him.*" (In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 11; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 18; emphasis added.)

(B-2) What Is a Seer?

"A seer is one who sees with spiritual eyes. He perceives the meaning of that which seems obscure to

others; therefore he is an interpreter and clarifier of eternal truth. He foresees the future from the past and the present. This he does by the power of the Lord operating through him directly, or indirectly with the aid of divine instruments such as the Urim and Thummim. In short, he is one who sees, who walks in the Lord's light with open eyes. (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:15-17)" (*Widtsoe, Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 258.)

As Ammon said, "A seer is a revelator and a prophet also" (Mosiah 8:16). When necessary he can use the Urim and Thummim, or holy interpreters (see Mosiah 8:13; 28:13-16; 1 Samuel 9:9; 2 Samuel 24:11; 2 Kings 17:13; 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 33:19; Isaiah 29:10; 30:10; JST, John 1:42; 2 Nephi 3:6-14; D&C 21:1; 107:92; 134:94, 125; 127:12; 135:3; Moses 6:36, 38.)

(B-3) The Role of a Prophet

Although the prophets doubtless thought much about the future, most of their work among their contemporaries was certainly of a practical and current nature. They were teachers, statesmen, and guides of the people. They were expounders of truth. They showed that the way to human happiness is obedience to God's will. They called to repentance those who wandered away from the truth. They upheld the Lord's plan of salvation. It was and is their right and responsibility to counsel the Saints in all ages.

The prophets were spokesmen of God, yet they were not impersonal machines that simply repeated His messages. They were great individuals, colorful in their personalities and expressions. They saw things through their own eyes according to their circumstances. They spoke in the language and understanding of the people of their day.

Individual prophets were raised up at particular times to fill a special need. Obviously the Lord's hand was in their call. For example, Amos was called at a time when affluence and religious formalism combined to produce a high tide of social decadence and permissiveness. He responded in a style and with a message fitting the times. Hosea addressed the people of an era in which established social forms were dissolving. Ezekiel, fearless in his cry for right, declared, "Then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them" (Ezekiel 33:33), speaking of the time when predicted calamities would befall the people. His were cries of warning while he was in exile with his people. Isaiah preached to a people who, by rejecting his message, would pass the point of no return and condemn themselves. Jeremiah lived amid the final agonies of Jerusalem. He warned a king who chose to ignore the warning and suffered the consequences. Elder Mark E. Petersen said of the importance of the role of prophets:

"The whole program of the Lord's dealings with his people centered about them. So well established was this procedure that one of them said, 'Surely the Lord

God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.' (Amos 3:7.)

"The entire pattern of the Bible, as shown in both Old and New Testaments, reflects this important fact.

"Whenever God had a people on earth whom he recognized as his own, he provided constant guidance for them, and this guidance was by divine revelation given through living prophets." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, p. 82.)

Sometimes there was more than one prophet in Israel, and sometimes there were many prophets. Lehi and Jeremiah were contemporaries (see 1 Nephi 5:13; 7:14), as were many others. Isaiah and Micah are thought to have lived at the same time, addressing different audiences. The question of which prophet had ecclesiastical authority over the others (if one did) cannot be answered because there is insufficient information about their times. Latter-day Saints are more aware of the role of a presiding prophet because the expanded nature of the Church today requires it and because the Lord has directed that there be a presiding prophet today. Elder John A. Widtsoe explained: "When others besides the President of the Church hold the title 'prophet, seer, and revelator,' it follows that the 'power and authority' thus represented are called into action only by appointment from the President of the Church. For example, a man may be ordained a High Priest, an office in which the right of presidency is inherent, but he presides only when called to do so. It is even so with the exercise of authority under these sacred titles." (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 257.)

The prophets portrayed God in such a way as to make Him comprehensible to the weak understanding of His people. The Lord was therefore shown as possessing attributes much in common with man. He was described as being a jealous God and as being very concerned about the reverence due Him. He desired to be a personal God, to reveal Himself to His people (see Exodus 19:10–11). But the people became frightened and refused to let Him come directly into their lives (see Exodus 20:18–19).

It must be remembered in studying the lives and messages of the prophets that their day and time were not exactly like man's today. There were no television sets, no automobiles, no jet aircraft. Generally the prophets were confined to a rather small geographical area. They acted within their culture, just as do the prophets of today. (For more detail on the role of a prophet see Exodus 4:12, 16, 30; Numbers 12:6; 2 Kings 17:13; Jeremiah 1:7; Ezekiel 2:7; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 1:1; Mosiah 8:15; Helaman 5:18; D&C 1:38; 20:26; 21:5; 84:36.)

(B-4) The Spirit of Prophecy: A Gift for the Righteous

In a broad sense, every Saint should be a prophet. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

"Prophets are simply members of a true Church who have testimonies of the truth and divinity of the work. They are the saints of God who have learned by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"A heavenly visitant, upon whom the Lord had placed his name, told the Beloved Revelator: 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' (Rev. 19:10.) That is, every person who receives revelation so that he knows, independent of any other source, of the



Elder John A. Widtsoe

divine Sonship of the Savior, has, by definition and in the very nature of things, the spirit of prophecy and is a prophet. Thus Moses exclaimed, 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!' (Num. 11:29.) And thus Paul counseled all the saints, 'Covet to prophesy,' and promised the faithful among them, 'Ye may all prophesy.' (1 Cor. 14:31–39.)

"A testimony comes by revelation from the Holy Ghost, whose mission it is to bear 'record of the Father and the Son.' (Moses 1:24.) Of Christ, Moroni says: 'Ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost.' (Moro. 10:7.) Prophecy comes from the same source and by the same power. In Peter's language, 'Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'" (2 Pet. 1:21.)

"When a person abides the law which enables him to gain a revealed knowledge of the divine Sonship of our Lord, he thereby abides the law which empowers him, as occasion may require, to prophesy. In Nephite history we find an account of a people who gained testimonies and as a consequence had also the gift of prophecy. After expounding the plan of salvation, as such operates through the atoning blood of Christ, King Benjamin desired 'to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them.' Their answer: 'We believe all the words which thou

hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent.' That is, they had gained testimonies. Then they said, 'We, ourselves, also through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.' (Mosiah 5:1-3.) That is, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; both testimony and prophecy come by the power of the Holy Ghost; and any person who receives the revelation that Jesus is the Lord is a prophet and can, as occasion requires and when guided by the Spirit, 'prophesy of all things.'" (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 23-24.)

(B-5) The Call and Training of the Prophets

Elder John A. Widtsoe gave this important insight about prophets as men:

"Men are called to the prophetic office because of their humility and their willingness to be in the hands of the Lord as clay in the hands of the potter. Yet a man called to the prophetic office is almost without exception of high native endowment, often with large experience in life, and possessed of wisdom and sound judgment. That is, the prophet, though but a man, is an able man, rising in ability above the multitude. An examination of sacred history from Adam to the present will show that able men, in the words of Jethro, men 'such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness' (Exodus 18:21), have been called to the prophetic office. The unofficial views and expressions of such a man with respect to any vital subject, should command respectful attention. Wise men seek the counsel of those wiser or abler than themselves. . . .

"How may the rank and file of the Church recognize the prophetic voice, whether official or unofficial, when it speaks? The answer is simple enough. A person who is in harmony in his life, in thought and practice, with the gospel and its requirements, who loves truth so well that he is willing to surrender to it, will recognize a message from the Lord." (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, pp. 237-38.)

Elder Widtsoe also explained that "the teacher must learn before he can teach. Therefore, in ancient and modern times there have been schools of the prophets, in which the mysteries of the kingdom have been taught to men who would go out to teach the gospel and to fight the battles of the Lord." (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 257.)

The disciples of the prophets were called sons, just as teachers were sometimes called fathers (see 2 Kings 2:12; 6:21). These "sons of the prophets" formed a peculiar group. Possibly they assisted the prophets in their duties, and in time succeeded them. These "sons of the prophets" were trained teachers of religion. Some of them were married and probably lived in houses of their own. Others were unmarried and occupied a building in common, eating at a common table.

It is supposed that the schools of the prophets were founded by the prophet Samuel. A description of him instructing them is found in 1 Samuel 19:19-20. But just how long the schools of the prophets lasted in Old Testament times is not known. They seem to have flourished in the times of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. Eventually they degenerated into an unscrupulous guild that divined for money and power. (See C. F. Keil

and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2:2:199-206.)

(B-6) False Prophets

All prophets are not of God. There are false prophets who call people away after other gods (see Deuteronomy 13). The wicked prophets of Baal were prominent in Israel during the reign of Ahab. They officiated in the perverted Canaanite religion and won great favor in the eyes of Ahab's wife, Jezebel. The Lord's true prophets had to compete with these and other false prophets for the people's attention, and in the case of Elijah, supernatural demonstration was necessary to convince the people that the prophets of Baal were unreliable. Probably all of the true prophets had to contend constantly with false prophets (see Jeremiah 23:13-17).

A classic example of a confrontation between false prophets and a true prophet is found in 1 Kings 22. The kings of Judah and Israel had joined forces to fight the Syrians, and Ahab suggested to Jehoshaphat that they go together and take the city of Ramoth. Jehoshaphat asked for the opinion of the prophets. All of Ahab's prophets counseled them to go to battle. Jehoshaphat pressed Ahab, saying, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?" (v. 7), and he was told there was one, Micaiah. But Ahab hated him because, he said, "He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (v. 8). Micaiah was called, but Ahab's servant instructed him, "The words of the prophets [of Baal] declare good unto the king with one mouth; let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good" (v. 13). And Micaiah said, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (v. 14). Though it put his own life in jeopardy, he spoke the truth. The false prophets said whatever would please the king and help them maintain their favored status in the court.

President Spencer W. Kimball said this of the true prophet:

"What the world needs is a prophet-leader who gives example—clean, full of faith, godlike in his attitudes with an untarnished name, a beloved husband, a true father.

"A prophet needs to be more than a priest or a minister or an elder. His voice becomes the voice of God to reveal new programs, new truths, new solutions. I make no claim of infallibility for him, but he does need to be recognized of God, an authoritative person. He is no pretender as numerous are who presumptuously assume position without appointment and authority that is not given. He must speak like his Lord: ' . . . as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' (Matt. 7:29.)

"He must be bold enough to speak truth even against popular clamor for lessening restrictions. He must be certain of his divine appointment, of his celestial ordination, and his authority to call to service, to ordain, to pass keys which fit eternal locks." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, p. 120.)

For a more complete understanding of the wide-spread existence of false prophets in Old Testament times, read Deuteronomy 18:20; Isaiah 9:15-16; 28:7; Jeremiah 2:8; 5:31; 23:9, 11, 16; 27:15; 28:15; Lamentations 2:14; Ezekiel 22:25; Micah 3:5, 11; Zechariah 10:2.

(B-7) True Prophets Are Messengers of Hope

Much prophecy comes because of the panoramic view prophets have of events from the beginning to the end. Although they saw the calamities of their day and the subsequent punishments God would administer to Israel, the Old Testament prophets also saw in the future a day of gladness and rejoicing. They recognized that national salvation would not come during their time but that it would occur at some future date, and they gave a glimpse of that hopeful sight.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said of the actions and purposes of prophets:

“In this day we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and gain salvation, and the prophets and apostles of our day reveal him to the world and serve as the legal administrators to perform the ordinances of salvation in his name so that such ordinances will be binding on earth and sealed everlastingly in the heavens. So likewise was it in days of old. Salvation was in Christ then as it is now, and the prophets of those days taught the same doctrines we teach today.

“At the very beginning of his ministry, the prophet Nephi recorded his purpose and summarized his divine commission by saying, ‘For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.’ (1 Ne. 6:4.) King Benjamin (reciting the words spoken to him by an angel) affirmed and expanded the same concept in these words: ‘Salvation cometh . . . through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceeding great joy, even as though he had already come among them.’ (Mosiah 3:12–13.)

“Alma’s son Corianton, rebellious and carnally inclined, was unable to understand ‘concerning the coming of Christ.’ His father said to him, ‘I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject. Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand.’ And this was Alma’s reasoning:

“‘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.) . . .

“‘These glad tidings’—that salvation was in Christ and came by obedience to his holy gospel—were declared unto those in the so-called pre-Christian era so ‘that salvation might come unto them,’ and also

‘that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming.’ (Alma 39:16.)

“That relatively few who lived when he came, or who have thereafter dwelt on this benighted globe, were in fact prepared to receive him as Savior, Lord, and King is the saddest commentary found in all the history of his dealings with men. However, many of the prophecies (together with much of the doctrine interwoven as an essential part thereof) are still extant, and, the Lord guiding, many sincere souls will yet be brought to a knowledge of the truth through a Spirit-led study of them.” (*Promised Messiah*, pp. 29–30.)

Later in the same work, Elder McConkie continued:

“Such sectarian scholars as happen to believe in Messianic prophecies suppose that these divine statements are few in number and came from a comparatively few seer souls. The fact is, these prophecies are in number as the sands upon the seashore, and those who spoke them are sufficient in number to people cities, populate nations, and cover continents. All of the prophets, all of the ancient preachers of righteousness, all of the citizens of Zion, all of the saints of old, all of those from Adam to John who had the gift of the Holy Ghost—all of these bore testimonies in Messianic terms. They all had a Spirit-borne hope in Christ who was to come, and fortunately some few of them were called to be prophets to the people and have had portions of their words preserved for us.” (p. 77.)

To the Jews in His own day the Savior said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). Others saw it and prophesied concerning it (see Jacob 4:4–5; Acts 3:21–24; Helaman 8:16–18).

(B-8) Conclusion

Elder John A. Widtsoe summarized the role of prophets in these words:

“A prophet is a teacher of known truth; a seer is a perceiver of hidden truth, a revelator is a bearer of new truth. In the widest sense, the one most commonly used, the title, prophet, includes the other titles and makes of the prophet, a teacher, perceiver, and bearer of truth.

“One who bears the title of prophet, and they who sustain him as such, are first of all believers in God, and in a divine plan of salvation for the human family; and, secondly, they commit themselves to the task of bringing to pass the purposes of the Almighty. They believe that the children of men are capable of receiving and obeying truth. Were it not so, the title ‘prophet, seer, and revelator’ would be empty, hollow words. As it is, they are clarion calls of the Church of Christ to a world walking in the dim shadows of misunderstanding.” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, pp. 258–59.)



Elijah and the Sealing Power of the Holy Priesthood

(5-1) Introduction

What would you think about a man who had the power to raise the dead, call down fire from heaven, cause the heavens to withhold rain, and render a barrel of flour inexhaustible?

Elijah was such a man, a man of power, a man of miracles, a prophet so worthy that he was translated and taken from the earth in a chariot of fire.

Small wonder that Elijah became one of the great heroes in Israel's history. Small wonder, too, that in Jewish households a place is set for him at every Passover feast in anticipation of his return as predicted by the prophet Malachi (see Malachi 4:5–6).

This assignment deals with the reasons Elijah is one of the greatest prophets of all time and why he was rejected by the people of his own day.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 1 Kings 17 through 2 Kings 2.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 1 KINGS 17–2 KINGS 2

(5-2) 1 Kings 17:1. What Is a Tishbite?

Elijah is here called “the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead.” Some scholars say that Elijah came from Tishbeh, in upper Galilee (see C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:1:234). Adam Clarke suggested a different place. Elijah came, he said, from Gilead beyond the Jordan in the land given to the tribe of Gad (see *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:452). Whichever is correct, it is clear that the title *Tishbite* refers to the place from which Elijah came.

(5-3) 1 Kings 17:1. Elijah Sealed the Heavens against Rain by Priesthood Power

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith found a special significance in verse 1:

“The first appearance of Elijah we read of is in the 17th chapter of 1st Kings, when he came before the king and said, ‘As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.’

“There is something very significant in that edict. I want you to get it. Follow me again closely: ‘As the

Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, *but according to my word.*’ The reason I put emphasis upon this is to impress you with the sealing power by which Elijah was able to close the heavens, that there should be no rain or dew until he spoke.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:102.)

(5-4) 1 Kings 17:3. Where Is the Brook Cherith?

“We do not know which of the Jordan tributaries the brook Cherith might have been, but apparently it was an obscure and isolated place where Elijah could hide safely without being accidentally discovered by soldiers, shepherds or passersby. It was also a desolate place where no animal life existed, therefore Elijah was completely dependent upon the Lord for his sustenance.” (W. Cleon Skousen, *The Fourth Thousand Years*, p. 336.)

(5-5) 1 Kings 17:4, 6. Who Fed Elijah?

Some scholars insist that the word *raven* is a mis-translation and that merchants or traders is the correct rendering. Other scholars disagree. They insist that the Hebrew word is properly translated just as it stands. The fact that Elijah was in hiding makes it unlikely that merchants or traders would come to him twice a day, and the tone of the writer suggests that it was miraculous care rather than a normal interaction between Elijah and other men.

(5-6) 1 Kings 17:9. The Widow of Zarephath

Zarephath was on the coast of the Mediterranean between Tyre and Sidon, in what is now Lebanon and was then Phoenicia, outside the boundaries of Israel. The poor widow had only a little flour with which to make a patty to fry. Her barrel would have been an earthen jar and her cruse a clay bottle. Wooden barrels are not suitable for storing flour in the Middle East because they do not protect the flour from insects.

Elijah's request for the widow to prepare his food was not a selfish request but rather a test of her faith. Because she passed the test, Elijah's promise that her barrel of flour and cruse of oil would not fail for the duration of the famine was fulfilled. This widow not only provided for her own needs in a time of great distress but provided for others an example of great faith. In an attempt to open the eyes of his prejudiced countrymen, Jesus spoke of this Sidonian woman who obeyed God's command and physically sustained His prophet. “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Serepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow” (Luke 4:25–26).

(5-7) 1 Kings 17:17–24. Elijah Raised the Dead

This is the fourth miracle mentioned in this chapter which Elijah performed by means of his priesthood power. First he brought famine by his word (see v. 1), then he was fed by ravens (see v. 6), then he caused the widow's food supply to miraculously continue (see vv. 13–16). Then he worked another mighty miracle through the power of God. The widow's cry (see v. 18) was more a plea for help than a criticism. In essence she was saying, "I thought sheltering a prophet would bring blessings and protection; instead, tragedy has struck my home."

(5-8) 1 Kings 18:1–16. Elijah Was Sent to Meet Ahab

Obadiah was the king's chamberlain, or governor of his house. As such it was his responsibility to arrange the king's appointments. That is why Elijah told Obadiah to set up an interview between the prophet and King Ahab. The fact that a king and his chief steward had to look for water and grass by themselves shows that the famine had become acute (see vv. 5–6).

Ahab knew that Elijah had brought this distress, so he searched for him. Apparently Ahab had considerable power and authority among surrounding nations, for he was able to exact promises for them that they were not concealing Elijah or that they knew of his whereabouts (see v. 10). Sometimes, however, someone would see the prophet. But when he reported seeing Elijah, the prophet had disappeared by the time Ahab got there. Ahab then killed the person who said he had seen Elijah. Obadiah's fear that Elijah would disappear again was caused by his awareness that Ahab would not hesitate to have him executed if he failed to deliver Elijah (see vv. 12–16). Elijah promised Obadiah that he would appear before Ahab (see v. 15).

Whether this Obadiah, who "feared the Lord greatly" (v. 3), is the author of the Old Testament book of the same name is not known, but it is doubtful.

(5-9) 1 Kings 18:17–18. Who Has Troubled Israel?

These verses have inspired many sermons, for the wicked usually blame someone else for their misfortunes. Elijah had no power by himself to bring on the famine. He was only the agent of the Lord. Ahab and his policies were the true cause of Israel's distress, but the king refused to accept that responsibility.

(5-10) 1 Kings 18:19. Mount Carmel

Mount Carmel is a mountain ridge several miles long that runs from southeast to northwest. Its southeastern slopes are very near the northwestern corner of the great Jezreel Valley, and its northwest edge juts into the Mediterranean on the northern coasts of modern Israel. (See "Old Testament Canaan" in Maps.) Rising abruptly to about eighteen hundred feet above sea level, it is an impressive prominence and became synonymous with beauty. It is referred to figuratively in the Doctrine and Covenants. (See D&C 128:19.)

(5-11) 1 Kings 18:21. "How Long Halt Ye between Two Opinions?"

Clarke offered the following comment on Israel's indecision: "Literally, [the phrase means] 'How long hop ye about upon two boughs?' This is a metaphor



Mount Carmel

taken from birds hopping about from bough to bough, not knowing on which to settle. Perhaps the idea of *limping* through *lameness* should not be overlooked. They were *halt*, they could not walk uprightly; they dreaded Jehovah, and therefore could not totally abandon him; they feared the king and queen, and therefore thought they *must* embrace the religion of the state. Their conscience forbade them to do the former; their fear of man persuaded them to do the latter; but in neither were they heartily engaged; and at this juncture their minds seemed in equipoise, and they were waiting for a favourable opportunity to make their decision. Such an opportunity now, through the mercy of God, presented itself." (Commentary, 2:457.)

(5-12) 1 Kings 18:22–24. The Challenge

The contest that Elijah proposed should have appealed to the prophets of Baal, since their god, the "Sun-god," could surely send down fire if anyone could. Added to the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal were four hundred priests of his female counterpart, Ashtoreth, or Venus, whom Jezebel worshiped. Elijah commented on the number of prophets of Baal in contrast to the number of prophets of the Lord (see v. 22).

(5-13) 1 Kings 18:25–29. How Long Did the Priests of Baal Call upon Their God? Why?

Elijah's mocking words recorded in verse 27 furnished cause for a renewed frenzy among Baal's prophets. Elijah was really saying, "Cry louder; if he is a god, he can surely hear you. But then, perhaps, he's away on a trip, or he's out hunting (pursuing game), or maybe he's asleep." Such taunting kept the priests of Baal in action all day long. Clarke commented: "From morning even until noon. It seems that the priests of Baal employed the whole day in their desperate rites. The time is divided into two periods: 1. *From morning until noon*; this was employed in preparing and offering the sacrifice, and in earnest supplication for the celestial fire. Still there was no answer, and at *noon* Elijah began to mock and ridicule them, and this excited them to commence anew. And, 2. They continued *from noon till the time of offering the evening sacrifice*, dancing up and down, cutting themselves with knives, mingling their

own blood with their sacrifice, praying, supplicating, and acting the most frantic manner." (*Commentary*, 2:457.)

(5-14) 1 Kings 18:28. Why Did the Priests of Baal Cut Themselves as They Called Out to Their God?

Apparently they thought this act of self-abasement would endear them to their god, get his attention, and prove their sincerity. One ancient author told of antics very similar to these that he observed in Gaza in Roman times:

"A trumpeter went before them who proclaimed their arrival in the villages, the farmyards, or the streets of towns, by flourishes on his instrument—a twisted horn. The begging Galli followed in fantastic array, after a leader: an ass in their midst, carrying their begging bag and a veiled image of the goddess. . . . They danced along the streets to the sound of wild music, holding huge swords and bills, with whips for scourging themselves, in their hands, and making a hideous noise with rattles, fifes, cymbals or kettle-drums. When they came to a farmyard they began their ravings. A wild howl opened the scene. They then flew wildly one past the other: their heads sunk low towards the earth, as they turned in circles: their loose hair dragging through the dust. Presently they began to bite their arms, and next to hack themselves with the two-edged swords they carried.' . . .

"Then began a new scene. 'One of them, the leader in this frenzy, commenced to prophesy, with sighs and groans, lamenting aloud his past sins, which he would now avenge by the chastisement of his flesh. He then took the knotted whip and lashed his back, cutting himself also with his sword till the blood ran down.'" (In Cunningham Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, 3:399–400.)

(5-15) 1 Kings 18:33–35. Why Did Elijah Have the Place of Sacrifice Drenched with Water?

The priests of Baal were so unscrupulous that they rigged their altars with fires beneath them to make the sacrifices appear to ignite spontaneously. One ancient writer said he "had seen under the altars of the heathens, holes dug in the earth with funnels proceeding from them, and communicating with openings on the tops of the altars. In the former the priests concealed fire, which, communicating through the funnels with the holes, set fire to the wood and consumed the sacrifice; and thus the simple people were led to believe that the sacrifice was consumed by a miraculous fire." (In Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:459.)

Elijah undoubtedly drenched the altar and sacrifice with water as much for the heathen priests as for the people. He wanted to convince them that there was no trickery and to show them that the power of the Lord was manifest. It was a bold and dramatic move that demonstrated his absolute confidence in the power of the true God.

(5-16) 1 Kings 18:38. What Was the Fire of the Lord?

"The fire proceeding from Jehovah, was not a natural flash of lightning, which could not produce any such effect, but miraculous fire falling from heaven, as in [1 Chronicles 21:26; 2 Chronicles 7:1] (see [Leviticus

9:24]), the supernatural origin of which was manifested in the fact, that it not only consumed the sacrifice with the pile of wood upon the altar, but also burned up . . . the stones of the altar and the earth that was thrown up to form the trench, and licked up the water in the trench. Through this miracle Jehovah not only accredited Elijah as His servant and prophet, but proved Himself to be the living God, whom Israel was to serve; so that all the people who were present fell down upon their faces in worship, as they had done once before, viz. at the consecration of the altar in [Leviticus 9:24], and confessed 'Jehovah is God.'" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:249.)

(5-17) 1 Kings 19:2–8. Elijah Fled Jezebel

These verses show how powerful and corrupt Jezebel was. Even after the miraculous fire from heaven, this woman was moved only to anger and swore she would take Elijah's life in revenge. Elijah fled, first into the territory of Judah (at Beersheba) and then to Mount Horeb (or Sinai) 150 miles further south.

Elijah was either fasting or receiving food provided by the Lord during this period. If Elijah truly went without food for forty days, as verse 8 suggests, then he had an experience similar to that of Moses (see Exodus 24:18; 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9–25) and the Savior (see Matthew 4:2). And like Moses at Sinai, Elijah there received revelations.

It must have been very lonely for Elijah during this period. Men were seeking his life, he felt himself to be the only faithful prophet left in Israel, and he was hiding in a cave. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "When he was there, the Lord called upon him and asked him what he was doing there; and in his sorrow, because of the hardness of the hearts of the people, he told the Lord the condition, that he alone remained, that they sought his life to take it away. But the Lord showed him that there were others who had remained true unto him, even 7,000." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:106.)

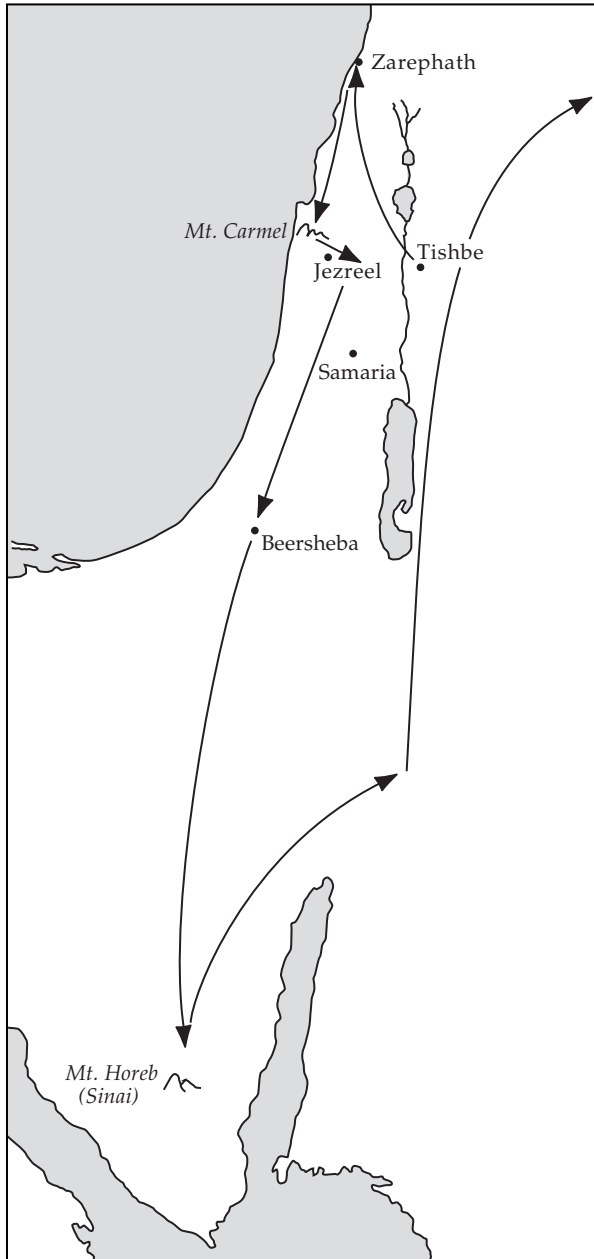
Those who listen for God's voice know that it is not in the power to break rocks and earth (see v. 11), nor in the fire, but in the "still small voice" that speaks to the heart of man. When Elijah heard the still small voice, he "went out" to converse with the Lord (v. 13). Encouraged, Elijah returned at the Lord's request and completed his assigned mission. The word *jealous* as used in verses 10 and 14 means diligent. The new prophet chosen to succeed Elijah was Elisha.

(5-18) 1 Kings 19:4–16. Where Did Elijah's Travels Take Him?

The accompanying map shows the journeys of Elijah from the time he left the Brook Cherith until he arrived at Damascus, Syria, where he anointed an earthly king in a foreign country. It provides a picture of how far-reaching his ministry was.

(5-19) 1 Kings 19:15. Jehovah, the God of Many Nations

This verse shows that God and Israel's prophets influenced nations other than Israel. Nothing more is known about the circumstance that made it possible for Elijah to anoint a king of Syria.



Elijah's journeys

(5-20) 1 Kings 19:17. Whom Did Elisha Slay?

There is no record of Elisha slaying anyone. This passage may mean that Elisha would prophesy the death of certain people. Of course, the Bible record as it is now is fragmentary at best, and the details of the incident referred to here may be lost.

(5-21) 1 Kings 19:19–21. Twelve Yoke of Oxen

Elisha must have been wealthy to have been plowing with twelve yokes of oxen, for each yoke pulled a plow and was driven by a servant. The feast of two oxen also indicates wealth. Eating the oxen and burning their equipment symbolically represents Elisha's rejection of worldly wealth as Elisha prepared to follow Elijah and to make the considerable material sacrifice involved in responding to the prophetic call.

(5-22) 1 Kings 19:19. What Was the Mantle of the Prophet That Was Placed on Elisha?

A mantle is a coat or similar covering. "When Elijah walked up to the plow where Elisha was standing the prophet simply removed his rough mantle and placed it across the shoulders of Elisha. The astonished Elisha seemed to have known exactly what this emblematic gesture meant. He was being designated for the prophetic calling and being chosen as the understudy and future successor of Elijah. No lengthy discussion or art of persuasion was employed to induce Elisha to accept the call. It was not needed. He was one of the choice 7,000 referred to by the Lord who had not bowed the knee to Baal but respected the Holy Priesthood of God and accepted with enthusiasm the discipline and obedience required by such a calling." (Skousen, *Fourth Thousand Years*, p. 359.)

Out of this simple act, the phrase "mantle of the prophet" has come to mean the calling and office of the prophet.

(5-23) 1 Kings 20:11. "Let Not Him That Girdeth on His Harness Boast"

This is like saying "Don't boast of the deed until it is done." The imagery comes from the harnessing of work animals. It would be easy for an ox to boast of how much he can plow while he is being harnessed in the morning, but the boast would be meaningful only after the work was done, that is, when the harness is taken off.

(5-24) 1 Kings 20, 22. Battles with Syria

These chapters detail two separate battles between Israel and Syria. Israel won the first battle but lost the second.

(5-25) 1 Kings 20:28. What Is Meant by the Phrase "the Lord Is God of the Hills, but He Is Not God of the Valleys"?

"There seems to be an allusion here to the opinion, prevalent among all heathen nations, that the different parts of the earth had different divinities. They had gods for the woods, for the mountains, for the seas, for the heavens, and for the lower regions. The Syrians seem to have received the impression that Jehovah was specially the God of the mountains; but he manifested to them that he ruled every-where." (James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 165.)

(5-26) 1 Kings 20:38–43. Ahab's Death Pronounced

In his encounter with the prophet of the Lord, Ahab unwittingly pronounced his own doom. The prophecy was fulfilled in the next battle with the Syrians (see 1 Kings 22:34–35). That was his reward for failing to slay Ben-hadad as the Lord had commanded.

(5-27) 1 Kings 21:2–24. Naboth's Vineyard

Ahab's offer to buy Naboth's vineyard may seem fair at first glance, but Naboth could not sell. His land had been inherited from his forefathers, and the law of Moses did not permit the sale of one's inheritance, except in cases of extreme destitution, and then it could be sold or mortgaged only until the time of jubilee, when it would be reclaimed. Ahab wished to



Tel Jezreel, Ahab's winter palace, overlooks the Jezreel Valley.

acquire the land permanently. Hence Naboth's reply: "The Lord forbid it me" (v. 3). Ahab's tantrum over being refused (see v. 4) gives an insight into the character of Ahab. The king owned ten-twelfths of the land of Israel already, but he was miserable because he could not get everything he wanted.

These verses also show how Ahab's wife, Jezebel, arranged her husband's affairs without hindrance of any sort (see v. 16). The phrase "sons of Belial," was a catch-all term that applied to almost any evil persons—liars, thieves, murderers. Notice how the punishment pronounced on Ahab and Jezebel matched their character (see vv. 19, 23).

(5-28) 1 Kings 21:27–29. Sins of the Fathers and the Sons

Because of Ahab's wicked life, the Lord prophesied that he would lose his posterity (see 1 Kings 21:21). Verses 27 through 29 show the relationship between repentance and the consequences of sin. Because Ahab repented, the "evil" was delayed until Ahab's son was king.

(5-29) 1 Kings 22:2–16. Ahab and Jehoshaphat

The friendship between Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, may have developed because Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, had married Ahab's daughter Athaliah. This friendship did not please the Lord, and Jehoshaphat was severely rebuked for encouraging it (see 2 Chronicles 19:1–3).

Ahab and Jehoshaphat were considering whether they should combine to fight against the Syrians. Ahab's false prophets, or counselors, said yes, but Micaiah, a prophet of God, said no. The words of Micaiah in verse 15, "Go and prosper," were said with great sarcasm. It is as though Micaiah said: "All your false prophets have predicted success. You want me to do the same, so I will: 'Go and prosper.'" This was said scornfully to let King Ahab know that it was contrary to Micaiah's true advice. Hence the King's response in verse 16.

(5-30) 1 Kings 22:23–24. Did the Lord Place a "Lying Spirit" in Ahab's Prophets?

The Lord does not place a lying spirit in anyone. As Clarke explained, the Hebrew expression means that the Lord "hath permitted or suffered a lying spirit to influence thy prophets. Is it requisite again to remind

the reader that the Scriptures repeatedly represent God as *doing* what, in the course of his providence, he only *permits* or *suffers* to be done? Nothing can be done in heaven, in earth, or hell, but either by his immediate *energy* or *permission*. This is the reason why the Scripture speaks as above." (*Commentary*, 2:476.)

(5-31) 1 Kings 22:34. What Are the "Joints of the Harness"?

An ancient warrior was covered with armor. To kill him, an arrow had to pass through the spaces where one piece of armor joined another.

(5-32) 2 Kings 1:1. Who Were the Moabites Who "Rebelled against Israel after the Death of Ahab"?

The Moabites occupied the territory east of the Dead Sea. They were the descendants of Lot (see Genesis 19:37.) Years earlier David had conquered them and their distant relatives the Ammonites, who were also descendants of Lot and who occupied a territory just north of Moab. The Moabites now saw an opportunity to break connection with the Israelites, and they were determined to make the most of it. Their king, a man named Mesha, was so proud of the Moabites' rebellion that he wrote about it on a large black stone that has been discovered by archeologists. More details of the rebellion are found on this stone than are recorded in the Bible. Mesha recorded on the stone the account of hundreds of cities being added to his kingdom and how he built reservoirs, aqueducts, and fortifications.

(5-33) 2 Kings 1:3. Who Is Baalzebub?

"This name for Satan signifies his position as the prince or chief of the devils. It is the same name (Baalzebub) as was given to an ancient heathen god. (2 Kings 1:3.) In their rebellion against light, the ancient Jews applied the name *Beelzebub* to Christ (Matt. 10:25), and also said that he cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub. (Matt. 12:22–30.)" (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 75.)

(5-34) 2 Kings 1:8. Elijah's Description

The statement that Elijah "was a hairy man" refers to the fact that the prophet was dressed in a rough garment, probably made of either goat's or camel's hair. Perhaps he actually wore an animal's skin with the hair still on it (see Hebrews 11:37).

(5-35) 2 Kings 1:9–14. Was It an Act of Cruelty to Destroy These Soldiers?

"Some have blamed the prophet for destroying these men, by bringing down fire from heaven upon them. But they do not consider that it was no more possible for *Elijah* to bring down fire from heaven, than for *them* to do it. *God alone* could send the fire; and as he is *just* and *good*, he would not have destroyed these men had there not been a *sufficient cause* to justify the act. It was not to *please Elijah*, or to *gratify any vindictive humour* in him, that God thus acted; but to show his own *power* and *justice*. No entreaty of Elijah could have induced God to have performed an act that was *wrong* in itself. Elijah, personally, had no concern in the business. God led him simply to *announce* on these occasions what he himself had determined to *do*. *If I be a man of God*, i. e., as surely as I am a man of God, *fire shall come down*

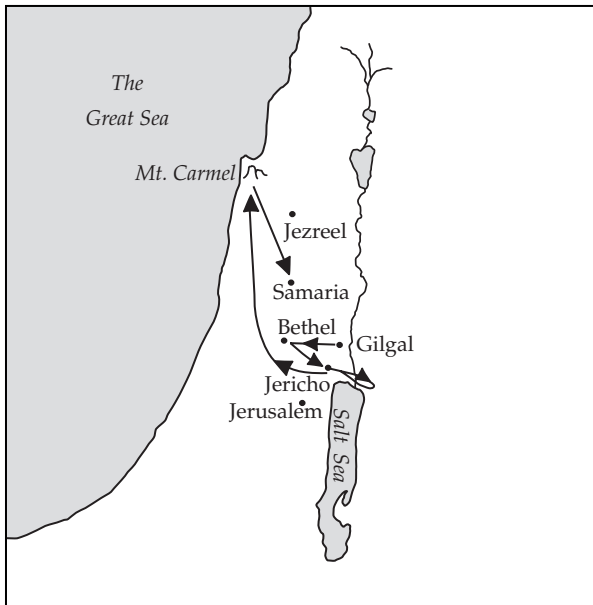
from heaven, and shall consume thee and thy fifty. This is the literal meaning of the original; and by it we see that Elijah's words were only *declarative*, and not *imprecatory*." (Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:482.)

(5-36) 2 Kings 1:17. Jehoram and Jehoram

There were two Jehorams who were contemporaries: Jehoram, son of Ahab, in the Northern Kingdom; and Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, in the Southern Kingdom.

(5-37) 2 Kings 2. Where Did the Journeys of Elijah and Elisha Take Them?

It is clear from this chapter that Elijah and Elisha moved about a great deal during this period. See the accompanying map for the course of their travels.



The journeys of Elijah and Elisha

(5-38) 2 Kings 2:8. Crossing the Jordan with Elijah

Here is yet another miracle performed by the priesthood Elijah held. He divided, or unsealed, the waters of the Jordan. He brought this same priesthood power, and the keys to exercise it, to Peter, James, and John on the mountain of transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–13; Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 158).

(5-39) 2 Kings 2:11. Was Elijah Really Taken into Heaven?

The term *heaven* has more than one meaning. Sometimes it is used to mean the sky; at other times it refers to the celestial glory. Elijah was taken from this earth as a translated being, but not into celestial glory. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

"Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God, and into an eternal fullness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness as those who are

resurrected from the dead. 'Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.' (See Hebrews 11:35.)

"Now it was evident that there was a better resurrection, or else God would not have revealed it unto Paul. Wherein then, can it be said a better resurrection. This distinction is made between the doctrine of the actual resurrection and translation: translation obtains deliverance from the tortures and sufferings of the body, but their existence will prolong as to the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great a rest and glory." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 170–71.)

(5-40) 2 Kings 2:14. Elijah's Mantle

Elijah's cloak, or mantle, was a symbol of his authority. Possession of it symbolized that Elijah's former authority now rested on Elisha. (See Notes and Commentary on 1 Kings 19:19.)

(5-41) 2 Kings 2:20. Does Salt Purify Water?

The use of salt makes this a greater miracle, since salt normally corrupts rather than purifies water.

(5-42) 2 Kings 2:23–24. Should Elisha Be Blamed for the Death of These "Children"?

In answering this question consider the following interpretations:

1. The word that in the King James Version is translated "little children" means young as compared to old, and can be translated not only as *child*, but as *young man*, meaning a servant or one fit to go out to battle.
2. In verse 24 the idea ends. This ending is indicated by a period after "and cursed them in the name of the Lord." The verse then states that two she bears came out of the woods. The assumption that Elisha directed the bears may not be justified. Clarke suggested: "But is it not possible that these *forty-two* were a set of unlucky young men, who had been employed in the *wood*, destroying the *whelps* of these same *she-bears*, who now pursued them, and tore them to pieces, for the injury they had done? We have already heard of the ferocity of a *bear robbed of her whelps*; see at the end of [2 Samuel chap. 17]. The mention of *she-bears* gives some colour to the above conjecture; and, probably, at the time when these young fellows insulted the prophet, the bears might be tracing the footsteps of the murderers of their young, and thus came upon them in the midst of their insults, God's providence ordering these occurrences so as to make this natural effect appear as a Divine cause. If the conjecture be correct, the bears were prepared by their loss to execute the curse of the prophet, and God's justice guided them to the spot to punish the iniquity that had been just committed." (*Commentary*, 2:486.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(5-43) The Living and the Dead Prophets

This section's reading concerned two prophets, Elijah and Micaiah, whose counsel Ahab disliked. Even though Jehoshaphat did not like the counsel he and Ahab received, Ahab still did not want to seek

advice from Micaiah, for Micaiah refused to flatter him (1 Kings 22). Because Ahab did not like what any of the prophets had to say about him, he persecuted them.

Now, however, Elijah is honored by people the world over, Jew, Christian, and Moslem, as one of history's greatest prophets.

Is it easier to believe a dead prophet because his counsel applies more directly to another time? Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

"It seems easy to believe in the prophets who have passed on and to suppose that we believe and follow the counsel they gave under different circumstances and to other people. But the great test that confronts us, as in every age when the Lord has a people on earth, is whether we will give heed to the words of his living oracles and follow the counsel and direction they give for our day and time.

'We be Abraham's children, the Jews said to Jove;
We shall follow our Father, inherit his trove.
But from Jesus our Lord, came the stinging rebuke:
Ye are children of him, whom ye list to obey;
Were ye Abraham's seed, ye would walk in his path,
And escape the strong chains of the father of wrath.

'We have Moses the seer, and the prophets of old;
All their words we shall treasure as silver and gold.
But from Jesus our Lord, came the sobering voice:
If to Moses ye turn, then give heed to his word;
Only then can ye hope for rewards of great worth,
For he spake of my coming and labors on earth.

'We have Peter and Paul, in their steps let us trod;
So religionists say, as they worship their God.
But speaks He who is Lord of the living and dead:
In the hands of those prophets, those teachers and
seers,
Who abide in your day have I given the keys;
Unto them ye must turn, the Eternal to please.'"

(In Conference Report, Apr. 1974, pp. 100–101; or *Ensign*, May 1974, pp. 71–72.)

Sometimes modern Saints fall into the same traps as did ancient Israel. Have you heard people extol the teachings of Joseph Smith but murmur and criticize current Church leaders for a statement or a stand they take that contradicts the individual's personal ideas or preference? Do we say we honor the prophets and

yet not follow their instructions from the last general conference? Some who read the Old Testament have a tendency to shake their heads sorrowfully over those proud and rebellious people. But the great value of our studying this work is that it provides a clear standard for measuring our own behavior.

(5-44) Who Was It That Troubled Israel?

Do you remember the exchange between Ahab and Elijah at the end of the three-year drought? Ahab asked the prophet, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" And Elijah replied, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:17–18).

By himself Elijah had no power to create a drought, call down fire from heaven, bring about the end of Ahab and his house, or punish or destroy Israel. He was only an instrument in the hands of the Lord. It was the wickedness of Israel that created the chaos and calamity. In some cases the Lord intervened to punish directly. In others He simply let the laws He gave the world (see D&C 88:42) run their course. Elijah knew what he prophesied only because he was the one chosen to reveal it. Who would think that idolatry could lead people to break as many other laws as it did in Elijah's day?

It is easy to look back and see how foolish Ahab, Jezebel, and the Israelites who halted between two opinions were. But what of today? Are men still inclined to vacillate between serving God and serving the devil? Do they still want to hear only good things about their evil choices? Do they still tend to place the blame for life's reversals on someone else? Or will they learn the eternal fact that men reap precisely what they sow? "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said that "the great need in the world today is not for the Lord to send a prophet to reveal his mind and will. He has done that; we have a prophet; we are guided by many men who have the spirit of inspiration. The great need today is for men to have a listening ear and to give heed to the words that fall from the lips of those who wear the prophetic mantle." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 104; or *Ensign*, May 1974, p. 73.)



The Messianic Hope in Ancient Israel

C

(C-1) The Jewish Nation Believed the Scriptural Promise of a Messiah

For centuries the prophets of Israel had foretold the coming of a Messiah. From Adam to Malachi, the prophets told the people of the day when the God of Israel would come to earth, take flesh upon Him, and become their Savior and Redeemer. Isaiah's prophecy represents the Messianic hope that existed among the covenant people: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:6-7.)

And yet when the long-awaited day arrived, most of the Jewish people failed to see that the prophecies were fulfilled and rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

The Apostle John wrote that Jesus was "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and yet, "the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:9-11.)

The English word *Messiah* comes from the Hebrew *Mashiach*, meaning "anointed." The Greek equivalent is *Christos*. Both words carry the idea of one who is anointed of God. The Hebrew word *Yeshua* (*Jesus* in Greek) means "Savior" or "deliverer." The two words combined denote one anointed of God to save or deliver His people.

Dozens of prophecies clearly signaled the coming of this Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled them all. Then why did so many of His own people reject Him? The answer to that question lies partly in an understanding of the Messianic hope of Israel.

(C-2) The Jewish Nation Looked beyond the Mark

When Jesus made His appearance on earth, the Jews were in bondage to the Romans. It was not the first time a foreign nation had controlled the Jewish land, nor would it be the last. But the Jews chafed under the Roman yoke and regarded their gentile overseers as hard taskmasters. During the years of bondage to the great empires, the idea of a deliverer began to take on political overtones. Many overlooked the spiritual significance of the coming Messiah because they longed for one with the power to throw off the hated enemies that ruled them.

The people came to see the Messiah not as one who would provide Atonement for their sins but as one who would deliver them from their enemies by physical

force. A Book of Mormon prophet explained: "But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall." (Jacob 4:14.)

They stumbled upon the very "stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation" (Jacob 4:15). The "mark" beyond which they looked was Christ. When He did not come in the manner they anticipated, they looked beyond Him for another who should come. Thus, "they still wait for the coming of the Messiah" (2 Nephi 6:13).

(C-3) The Messianic Hope Taught from the Beginning

The expectation of an Anointed Deliverer is called the messianic hope. This hope was very real for the ancient house of Israel and extended into the distant past, even into the premortal council in heaven. After explaining the need for a redeemer, Father in Heaven asked, "Whom shall I send?" (Abraham 3:27). Lucifer replied, "Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, . . . wherefore give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1). Jehovah replied, "Here am I, send me" (Abraham 3:27). "Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). Jehovah was chosen as Messiah, and Lucifer, with a third of the spirit children of God, rebelled against the Father's decision. As a result, Lucifer became the devil. He, with all his followers, was cast from heaven to the earth. (See Revelation 12:7-9.)

Adam was then placed on earth. After his fall from Eden, Adam was taught about the Messiah who would come to redeem "all mankind even as many as will" (Moses 5:6-9). Later, Enoch was shown in vision the mortal mission of the Son of God (see Moses 7:47), and Enoch rejoiced in these words: "Blessed is he through whose seed Messiah shall come; for he saith—I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven" (Moses 7:53).

(C-4) Jesus Would Be Like Moses

From Enoch to Abraham and from Abraham to Moses, the messianic hope was perpetuated. Moses taught his brethren: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Jesus identified Himself to the Nephites as the very prophet of whom Moses spoke. "Behold, I am he," he said, "of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you" (3 Nephi 20:23).

(C-5) The Messiah Would Sit on David's Throne

Like Moses, King David of Israel was a type, or symbol, of Christ. It was said that Messiah would sit on David's throne and judge the house of Israel (see Isaiah 9:7). Jeremiah wrote: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Jeremiah 23:5-6.)

(C-6) Why Did So Many Misinterpret Prophecy Regarding the Deliverer?

As the years passed and the messianic expectation remained unfulfilled, many interpreted the sayings and writings of the prophets erroneously. It is not surprising that they came to see only the political aspects of the Messiah, since there was a scriptural basis for such a belief. Several hundred years before the birth of Christ Zechariah wrote of a day when the Lord (Messiah) would fight against the Jewish enemies "as when he fought in the day of battle [anciently]" (Zechariah 14:3). Zechariah pictured Jerusalem being delivered in great power from all who had opposed her (see Zechariah 14:1-15). Isaiah spoke of the Messiah as having the government upon His shoulder (see Isaiah 9:6). That phrase certainly suggested a political kingdom. Numerous other prophets foretold His coming in power and glory.

When one studies the prophecies carefully, however, a dual picture of the Messiah emerges. One picture is that of the "suffering servant." Isaiah 53 is an outstanding example of the "suffering servant" kind of prophecy. It foretells the sufferings of the Messiah: He will be "a man of sorrows" (v. 3), one who stands "as a sheep before her shearers" (v. 7), one who takes our transgressions upon Himself. The other picture of the Messiah is that of the "King of Glory." Zechariah 14 and Isaiah 9 contain examples of the "King of Glory" prophecies, which paint a picture of deliverance, political power, and the destruction of the enemies of Israel.

Latter-day Saints, with the benefit of modern revelation and a perspective of history, easily understand this dualism. There are two comings of the Messiah. Christ came the first time as a mortal. He was born in a stable, lived in a town of little reputation, took no political role, and flatly rejected attempts to make Him a king. This coming was foretold in the "suffering servant" prophecies. His second coming will be in fulfillment of the "King of Glory" prophecies. He will put down all kingdoms and deliver Israel from the powers of Babylon.

David H. Yarn explained:

"From the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, with the exception of the short-lived and insecure Maccabean revolt, the Palestinian remnant of Israel was a subject people of the great powers. First they were victims of the Babylonian captivity; then they were ruled in turn by the Persians, the Greeks, the Ptolemies, and the Seleucids. And the efforts of the zealous Maccabeans to establish Judaic control was succeeded by subjection to the rising world power, Rome.

"As the centuries passed and the seemingly endless servitude to heathen powers continued, the Jews hungered for their liberation. It seems that the messianic vision of the prophets, which included the first coming of the Messiah, with his personal redeeming sacrifice, and his second coming to usher in the messianic age (millennial reign) in the last days, became fused in the minds of the people, or at least in the desires of the people.

"They remembered the prophets had promised one 'like unto Moses,' and a 'son of David,' who would be raised up as the Messiah to deliver them even as Moses and David had delivered them, but when the Lord came into the world they seem to have forgotten the personal aspects of the Redeemer's life and remembered only those parts of the prophecies which had to do with political matters, or the establishing of a permanent kingdom." ("The Messianic Expectation," *Ensign*, Apr. 1972, pp. 20-21.)

Thus when the Savior refused to take up the sword against Rome, the Jews' hopes were dashed. And His Crucifixion was seen by the majority not as a fulfillment of prophecy but as proof that He could not have been the promised deliverer.

(C-7) The Messianic Expectation in the Book of Mormon

The Old Testament and Book of Mormon prophets understood the true picture. In a great vision given some six hundred years before the Savior's advent in the flesh (1 Nephi 11:13-33), Nephi learned that the Messiah would be born of a virgin "after the manner of the flesh," (v. 18), would be baptized by a "prophet who should prepare the way before him" (v. 27), would go forth "ministering unto the people, in power and great glory" (v. 28), and would heal the sick and infirm.

They knew that He would "suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people" (Mosiah 3:7). Nephi and others foresaw that He would be treated as a thing of naught, rejected by His people, scourged, spit upon, and crucified (see 1 Nephi 19:9; Jacob 4:3-4).

(C-8) The Messianic Expectation in the New Testament

Other messianic prophecies revealed the life and mission of the Messiah in detail. Those who believed in Christ saw the fulfillment of these prophecies in His life. The writers of the four Gospels in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, pointed out how Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies that referred to the coming Messiah. For example, Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea (compare Micah 5:2 with Matthew 2:1-6), would be an object of great adoration (compare Psalm 72:10 with Matthew 2:1-11), would be preceded by a forerunner (compare Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 with Luke 1:17 and Matthew 3:1-3). His ministry was to begin in Galilee (compare Isaiah 9:1-2 with Matthew 4:12, 16-23), He would teach in parables (compare Psalm 78:2 with Matthew 13:34-35). His ministry would be



When Christ appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, He revealed that He was the risen Lord.

marked by miracles (compare Isaiah 35:5–6 with Matthew 11:4–5) and by rejection of His message (compare Psalm 69:8 and Isaiah 53:3 with John 1:11 and John 7:5). Near the end, Messiah would enter Jerusalem in triumph on the back of an ass (compare Zechariah 9:9 with Matthew 21:4–5), would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (compare Zechariah 11:12 with Matthew 26:15), would be betrayed by a close friend (compare Psalm 41:9 and 55:12–14 with John 13:18, 21), and would be deserted by His associates (compare Zechariah 13:7 with Matthew 26:31–56). He would be smitten on the cheek (compare Micah 5:1 with Matthew 27:30), spat upon (compare Isaiah 50:6 with Matthew 27:30), mocked (compare Psalm 22:7–8 with Matthew 27:31, 39–44), and beaten (compare Isaiah 50:6 with Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30). His hands and feet were to be pierced (compare Psalm 22:16 and Zechariah 12:10 with John 19:33–37); yet not a bone in His body would be broken (compare Psalm 34:20 with John 19:33–36). He would be numbered with transgressors (compare Isaiah 53:9 with Matthew 27:38). He would be given vinegar to drink (compare Psalm 69:21 with Matthew 27:34) while thirsting and in pain (compare Psalm 22:15 and John 19:28). When dead, He would be buried with the rich (compare Isaiah 53:12 with Matthew 27:57–60); but His body would not see corruption (compare Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:31), for He would rise from death (compare Psalms 2:7; 16:10 with Acts 13:33), making it possible

for all the dead to rise (compare Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2 with Matthew 27:52–53).

(C-9) Jesus Is the Christ, the Expected Messiah

Jesus is the Son of God. He was born of a mortal mother and an immortal father. He made an infinite Atonement for man's sins. He was resurrected, thus opening the doors of immortality and eternal life for all mankind. Jesus is the *only* individual who ever lived to have the details of His birth, life, mission, death, and resurrection spelled out in public documents centuries before.

Who could have written the life of any great man before it happened? Nothing but divine foreknowledge and power could have revealed the life of Jesus in such detail and then brought it to pass. No person could have done this. It was God's way of placing His divine stamp on the life and work of His Only Begotten Son, a means for letting all mankind know that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the hope and desire of the ages. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said:

"We of our faith know that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. This is our knowledge. We must proclaim it at all times and under all circumstances. . . .

"So as I conceive it, we must stand adamant for the doctrine of the atonement of Jesus the Christ, for the divinity of his conception, for his sinless life, and for, shall I say, the divinity of his death, his voluntary

surrender of life. He was not killed; he gave up his life. . . .

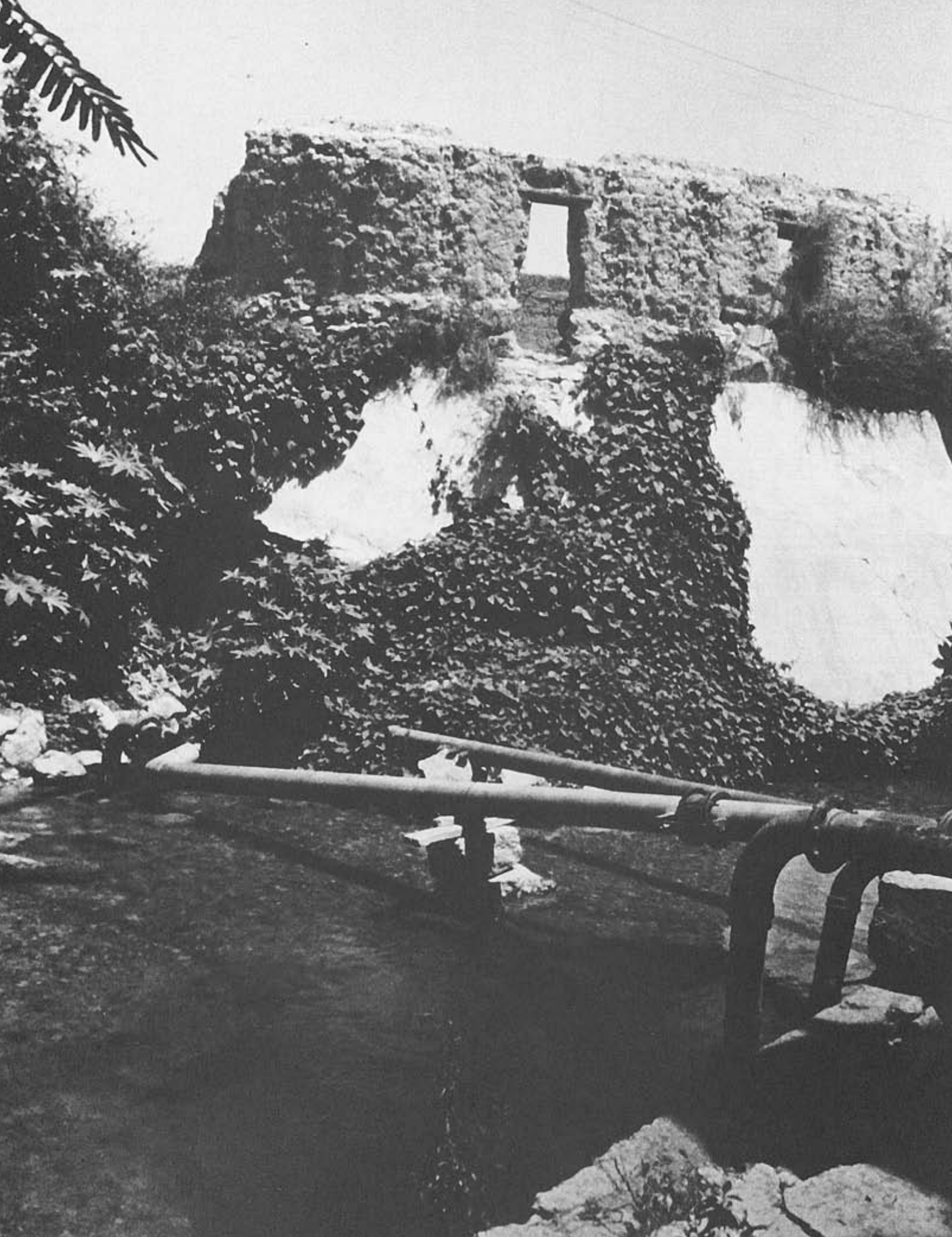
“It is our mission, perhaps the most fundamental purpose of our work, to bear constant testimony of Jesus the Christ. We must never permit to enter into our thoughts and certainly not into our teachings, the idea that he was merely a great teacher, a great philosopher, the builder of a great system of ethics. It is our duty, day after day, year in and year out, always to declare that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ who brought redemption to the world and to all the inhabitants thereof.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1955, pp. 22–24).

(C-10) Summary

Messianic prophecy was given by revelation. To understand it, one must have the same spirit of prophecy as the one who gave it. Peter said, “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved

by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20–21). And John was told that the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (see Revelation 19:10). The Jewish nation did not have this spirit. Because the leaders of the Jews had interpreted privately many prophecies concerning the Messiah, they did not recognize Him as the Savior when He came to earth the first time. When prophecies began to be fulfilled, the Jews did not have the spiritual eyes to see the signs.

Today Latter-day Saints have every expectation that Jesus will come again. The prophecies and signs concerning His Second Coming are found in the scriptures. Those who have interpreted privately or have built false notions of the Savior’s Second Coming may not recognize the signs. The prophecies concerning the expected return of the Messiah “are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy” (2 Nephi 25:4). It is an individual responsibility to seek diligently with pure hearts in order to recognize the signs.



Hearkening unto the Counsel of God

(6-1) Introduction

“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. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.” (2 Nephi 9:28–29).

This scripture applies very well to the children of Israel in ancient times. Israel seems to have had great difficulty listening to and obeying the counsel of their prophets. They trusted in their own wisdom and rejected the counsel of the Lord. Elisha found no better response, even though his ministry was as remarkable as Elijah’s. As he wrestled with the problems of prophetic leadership, he found the nation of Israel plagued with apostate kings and leaders. The common people followed the example of their leaders in having trouble heeding the prophetic call to righteousness.

Second Kings 3–13 tells of such people as Gehazi, Naaman, and a woman of Shunem. The wicked kings of Moab, Israel, and Syria are also encountered. Each person responded to Elisha’s counsel in a different way and for different reasons.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 2 Kings 3–13.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 2 KINGS 3–13

(6-2) 2 Kings 3–13

The accompanying map indicates the relative locations of the kingdoms and places written of in 2 Kings 3–13. Note especially Judah, Israel, Edom, Moab, and Syria.

(6-3) 2 Kings 3:2–3. The Idolatry of Jehoram

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch noted that Jehoram’s attempt to reform Israel was only partial. “*Joram* or *Jehoram* was not so ungodly as his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel. He had the statue or pillar of Baal, which his father had erected in Samaria, removed; and it was only to the sin of Jeroboam, *i.e.*, the calf-worship, that he adhered. Joram therefore wished to abolish the worship of Baal and elevate the worship of Jehovah, under the image of the calf (ox), into the religion of his kingdom once more. . . . He did not succeed, however, in exterminating the worship of Baal. It not only continued in Samaria, but appears to have been



Israel and Moab

carried on again in the most shameless manner . . . at which we cannot be surprised, since his mother Jezebel, that fanatical worshipper of Baal, was living throughout the whole of his reign.” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:1:300–301.)

The worship of Baal, who was a fertility god, involved all sorts of immorality, temple prostitution, and other wicked practices that were extremely difficult to stop when most of the people were themselves immoral and wicked. (See *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 245–48.)

(6-4) 2 Kings 3:4–10. Why Did Judah and Edom Unite with Israel against Moab?

The Moabites had paid tribute to Israel since the days of King David. They gave a hundred thousand lambs and the same number of rams to the king of Israel each year (see v. 4). With the death of Ahab, King Mesha of Moab thought Israel was weakening, so he rebelled and began to attack nearby towns and villages.

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had maintained friendly relations with Ahab (see 1 Kings 22:4) and wanted to maintain them with Jehoram, Ahab's son and successor. Judah had also been attacked by Moab (see 2 Chronicles 20:1), so it was natural for Jehoshaphat to agree to an alliance with Israel against a common enemy. By marching through Edom, Judah and Israel could increase their army with Edomite soldiers, who were in servitude to Judah. They could also surprise Moab by attacking from the geographically most difficult, and therefore the least likely, direction.

(6-5) 2 Kings 3:11–15. Why Was Elisha Upset?

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, desired the advice of a true prophet of God before he went into battle because he was a follower of Jehovah. The kings went to the prophet Elisha, who was irritated by the presence of Jehoram, king of Israel. Elisha sarcastically advised him to seek the counsel of the false prophets of his father (see v. 13).

A minstrel, or harpist, was then called to soothe Elisha before he complied with King Jehoshaphat's request to seek the Lord's direction. It seems ironic that even though they were not willing to follow Elisha's counsel, they were anxious to have his blessing on their endeavor.

(6-6) 2 Kings 3:11. What Was the Meaning of Elisha's Pouring "Water on the Hands of Elijah"?

In the East a servant pours water over the hands of his master after each meal so he can clean them. The expression merely indicates that Elisha was the servant and disciple of Elijah (see James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 169–70).

(6-7) 2 Kings 3:19. Besides in Actual Combat, How Was Israel to Destroy Her Enemies?

The prophet Elisha commanded Israel to do three things as they went through the land of Moab: (1) cut down all trees that could be used to build fortifications (see Deuteronomy 20:19–20 for the justification of this practice); (2) destroy the wells that provided the life-giving waters of the land; and (3) throw rocks on the fields. A large army passing through an area could quickly cover the land with rocks. It would then take months of hard work to uncover the land so crops could again be grown. The reasoning was that the defeated enemy would have to spend its labor in recovering from war rather than in preparing to wage it again.

(6-8) 2 Kings 3:20–24. Why Was Moab Deceived?

"On hearing the report of the march of the allied kings, Moab had raised all the men that were capable of bearing arms, and stationed them on the frontier. In the morning, when the sun had risen above the water, the Moabites saw the water opposite to them like blood,

and said: 'That is blood: the (allied) kings have destroyed themselves and smitten one another; and now to the spoil, Moab!' Coming with this expectation to the Israelitish camp, they were received by the allies, who were ready for battle, and put to flight. The divine help consisted, therefore, not in a miracle which surpassed the laws of nature, but simply in the fact that the Lord God, as He had predicted through His prophet, caused the forces of nature ordained by Him to work in the predetermined manner. . . .

"From the reddish earth of the freshly dug trenches the water collected in them had acquired a reddish colour, which was considerably intensified by the rays of the rising sun, so that when seen from a distance it resembled blood. The Moabites, however, were the less likely to entertain the thought of an optical delusion, from the fact that with their accurate acquaintance with the country they knew very well that there was no water in the wady at that time, and they had neither seen nor heard anything of the rain which had fallen at a great distance off in the Edomitish mountains. The thought was therefore a natural one, that the water was blood, and that the cause of the blood could only have been that their enemies had massacred one another, more especially as the jealousy between Israel and Judah was not unknown to them, and they could have no doubt that Edom had only come with them as a forced ally." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:305–6.)

(6-9) 2 Kings 3:26–27. Why Did the Moabite King Offer His Son As a Sacrifice?

The king of Moab made a desperate attempt to flee the city because of its imminent destruction. But his flight was stopped by the Edomites, and he was forced back into the city. When his attempted flight failed, the king offered his firstborn son, who would have succeeded him, as a burnt offering. Chemosh, god of the Moabites, was frequently offered human sacrifice to appease his anger. This custom may have prompted the Moabite king in this case.

With the death of the heir, Israel lifted their siege and departed, perhaps feeling that Moab's power as a nation had ended. This feeling, however, was a mistake (see 2 Kings 13:20).

(6-10) 2 Kings 4:1–7. How Could Debts Be Paid?

Anciently, when one was unable to meet a legal debt, one could bind out one's sons as servants to satisfy the obligation (see Leviticus 25:39–40). If a thief could not restore what he had stolen, he could be sold to square a debt (see Exodus 22:3). Sometimes creditors would even take children from their parents and sell them into slavery to pay a debt (see Nehemiah 5:5, 8). The custom of paying off a debt through servitude was apparently still practiced in the days of Jesus, for the Savior referred to it in one of his parables (see Matthew 18:25).

(6-11) 2 Kings 4:8–17. A Faithful Woman Rewarded

Those who receive the servants of the Lord also receive Him (see D&C 84:36). The Shunammite woman showed her love for God by her kindness to His chosen servant Elisha. She, in turn, was assured that she would be blessed with a child. Like the widow who helped Elijah, she received a special blessing from the prophet.

(6-12) 2 Kings 4:10. What Is a “Chamber . . . on the Wall”?

“The *aliyah*, ‘chamber,’ is an upper room of an Eastern house, being sometimes built on the roof, and sometimes making a second story to the porch, to which it has access by stairs. It is hence called in 2 Sam. xviii, 33, ‘the chamber over the gate.’ . . . In the text it is called a chamber ‘in the wall,’ probably because its window, opening to the street, made a break in the dead wall, and was thus about the only evidence to an outside spectator of the existence of rooms in the house. It is usually well furnished, and kept as a room for the entertainment of honored guests.” (Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 171.)

(6-13) 2 Kings 4:17–44. Miracles Performed by Elisha

These verses recount three great miracles Elisha performed through the power of the priesthood. First, he raised from the dead the son of the Shunammite woman who had shown so much kindness to him. Second, he blessed food that was bitter and inedible and made it whole, or good. And third, he multiplied a small number of loaves of barley bread and ears of corn to feed many people.

Many features of Elisha’s ministry parallel those of the Savior’s. He truly was a type of the Messiah, as Elijah had been before him.

(6-14) 2 Kings 4:16. Did the Shunammite Woman Doubt the Promise Made to Her?

The woman’s response to Elisha’s promise of a child is not one of doubt but one of hope. In essence she was saying, “Let not your words be a lie,” or “Let your words come true.”

(6-15) 2 Kings 4:23. Why Did the Husband Question His Wife about the Day on Which She Went to See Elisha?

“The Shunammite’s husband did not connect his wife’s proposed visit to the prophet with the death of his child, but with some religious duty. The new moon (i.e. the first day of the month) and the sabbath were feasts at which the prophets might be asked to preside, as Samuel did at the feast held at the high place of Ramah [see 1 Samuel 9:12–13].” (J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 231.)



Shunem, at the southwest foot of the Hill of Moreh

(6-16) 2 Kings 5:1. What Is Known about Naaman?

Naaman was a great warrior and appears to have been a very good man, for “by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria” from the Assyrians. He was captain of the entire army of the Syrians, but he was plagued with leprosy. Leprosy, which has been called the living death, is any of a variety of chronic skin diseases. Its most mild form is characterized by skin that is scaly with reddish patches. In the most extreme cases of leprosy, the flesh actually falls off the bone. The law of Moses required that those afflicted with it live apart from society (see Leviticus 13:46). It is not known how severe Naaman’s leprosy was.

(6-17) 2 Kings 5:2–19. The Miraculous Healing of Naaman, the Syrian Leader

Learning from an Israelite girl in his household that there was a prophet in Samaria who could heal him, Naaman asked the king of Syria for a letter to introduce him to Jehoram, king of Israel. However, Jehoram’s response, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive?” (v. 7), shows that he immediately saw the difficult situation Naaman’s request put him in. Jehoram was saying, in essence, “Only God can perform such miracles.” If Jehoram sent him to Elisha and the prophet failed to heal him, the situation could cause a difficult rift between Israel and Syria. Perhaps, if Naaman were not healed, Jehoshaphat would grow angry and declare war on Jehoram.

When Elisha learned of the distress of the king of Israel, he sent for Naaman. Elisha tested Naaman’s faith by telling him to wash in the Jordan seven times. Though skeptical at first, Naaman complied because of the persuasion of his servants, and he was made whole.

(6-18) 2 Kings 5:17–19. Why Did Naaman Carry Soil Back with Him?

“It is very evident from Naaman’s explanation, ‘for thy servant,’ etc., that he wanted to take a load of earth with him out of the land of Israel, that he might be able to offer sacrifice upon it to the God of Israel, because he was still a slave to the polytheistic superstition, that no god could be worshipped in a proper and acceptable manner except in his own land, or upon an altar built of the earth of his own land. And because Naaman’s knowledge of God was still adulterated with superstition, he was not yet prepared to make an unreserved confession before men of his faith in Jehovah as the only true God, but hoped that Jehovah would forgive him if he still continued to join outwardly in the worship of idols, so far as his official duty required.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:320.)

Elisha told Naaman to go in peace, evidently accepting the sincerity of his conversion, even though Naaman obviously had more to learn about the true God.

(6-19) 2 Kings 5:15–16, 20–26. Why Did Elisha Refuse Gifts from Naaman?

Elisha refused the gifts Naaman offered for his use of God’s power, but Gehazi did not. The temptation to use priesthood power for personal gain has plagued man throughout history (see for example the account

of Balaam in Jude 1:11 and the account of Nehor in Alma 1). Nephi called such employment priestcraft and said it is forbidden by the Lord (see 2 Nephi 26:29–31). Paul suggested that if one charged for his service in the priesthood, he would *abuse* his power in the gospel (see 1 Corinthians 9:18). And Jesus taught His ministering servants, “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). It is, after all, by divine power that men are able to perform priesthood miracles.

Elisha understood this truth perfectly, but Gehazi saw a chance for personal gain slipping away and let his greed overpower his good judgment.

(6-20) 2 Kings 5:26. What Was the Significance of Elisha’s Question: “Is It a Time to Receive Money?”

Keil and Delitzsch noted that Elisha was asking, “Is this the time, when so many hypocrites pretend to be prophets from selfishness and avarice, and bring the prophetic office into contempt with unbelievers, for a servant of the true God to take money and goods from a non-Israelite for that which God has done through him, that he may acquire property and luxury for himself? . . . It was not too harsh a punishment that the leprosy taken from Naaman on account of his faith in the living God, should pass to Gehazi on account of his departure from the true God. For it was not his avarice [greed] only that was to be punished, but the abuse of the prophet’s name for the purpose of carrying out his selfish purpose, and his misrepresentation of the prophet.” (*Commentary*, 3:1:322–23.)

(6-21) 2 Kings 6:1–7. Why Did Elisha Perform This Miracle?

The scarcity of iron and its great value were not sufficient reason to perform such a miracle. “The prophet’s powers were exerted to help one who was honest enough to be the more concerned for his loss because the axe was not his own” (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 232).

(6-22) 2 Kings 6:8–23. The Lord’s Host

Syria attacked Israel several times but was always defeated. When it finally came to the attention of the king of Syria that his soldiers were losing because of the prophetic power of Elisha, he sent a large army to destroy Elisha. The Syrian army located Elisha in Dotham (see v. 13) where they surrounded the city so he could not escape. The next morning Elisha’s servant, realizing the precarious situation they were in, said to his master, “How shall we do?” (v. 15.) Elisha asked the Lord to let his servant see that “they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (v. 16). Elisha’s servant was then allowed to see the Lord’s host that had been sent to protect them. (For other examples of the Lord’s host, see Joshua 5:13–15; *History of the Church*, 2:381–83.)

(6-23) 2 Kings 6:23–24. Was There Peace or War between Syria and Israel?

Josephus explained the apparent contradiction between these two verses: “Now when these men were come back, and had showed Ben-hadad how strange an accident had befallen them, and what an appearance and power they had experienced of the God of Israel, he wondered at it, as also at that prophet with whom

God was so evidently present; so he determined to make no more secret attempts upon the king of Israel, out of fear of Elisha, but resolved to make open war with them, as supposing he could be too hard for his enemies by the multitude of his army and power.” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 9, chap. 4, par. 4.)

(6-24) 2 Kings 6:24–29. Scarcity of Food in Samaria

Instead of trying to take Samaria by force, the king of Syria surrounded it and attempted to starve its inhabitants. The severity of the famine is attested to by this verse. The ass was an unclean animal (see Leviticus 11) and was not to be eaten by an Israelite. The head of an animal was also the most inedible part. To eat bird dung for what little nutritional value there was in it also graphically illustrates the severity of the siege. A cab of dove dung would be a little less than two quarts. A fourth part, then, would be about one pint. (See Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 232.)

Eventually the famine became so severe that some even resorted to cannibalism (see vv. 28–29). Like Ahab, who had blamed Elijah and sought his life (see 1 Kings 18:17–18), King Jehoram refused to see that his own actions had caused Israel’s problems. Instead, he blamed Elisha and tried to kill him.

(6-25) 2 Kings 6:27. What Does the Expression “out of the Barnfloor, or out of the Winepress” Mean?

The king of Israel was simply saying that he could not provide food or drink.

(6-26) 2 Kings 7. The Lord Saved Israel

Elder Orson Hyde said:

“Once on a time there was a great famine in Samaria, and so sore was that famine that a mule’s head sold for four score pieces of silver in the market, and a cab of dove’s dung sold for food in the market, I can not recollect for how much. We should consider it pretty much of a task or penalty to be compelled to use an article like that for food, but the people of Samaria were sorely distressed with famine, and which way to turn to save themselves they knew not. About this time, the King of Syria, with a large army, came to besiege the city, and there was a mighty host of them, and they brought everything in the shape of food that was necessary for the comfort and happiness of man; and although the famine was so sore among the Samaritans, the old Prophet, Elisha . . . , told them that on the next day meal should be sold in the gate of their city at very low figures, lower than it had ever been known to be sold before. A certain nobleman, who heard the prophecy of Elisha expressed his doubt of its truth, and he said that if the windows of heaven were opened and meal poured down from above it could not fall to such low figures. Now see what he got by doubting the words of the Prophet—said Elisha to him—‘Your eyes shall see it, but you shall not taste it.’ That night the Lord sent forth the angels of his presence and they made a rustling in the trees, and sounds like horses’ hoofs and chariots, as if the whole country had combined to go out to battle against the Syrians, and they did not know what to make of it, and they were frightened, and fled, leaving almost everything they had brought with them in the borders of the town; and as they went, the rustling of the trees and the noise of the horses and chariots seemed to

pursue them, and in order to make their burdens as light as possible, they threw away everything they had with them, and their track was strewn with everything good and desirable. The next morning the people of Samaria went out and brought the spoils into the market, and it was overstocked with provisions, and the word of the Lord through the Prophet was fulfilled.

“Now, you see, the Lord knew they had eaten mules’ heads long enough, and that they had need of something more palatable; he had had the matter under advisement, no doubt, when the crusade was inaugurated against the people of Samaria, and he, in all probability, inspired them to take abundant supplies, that they might feel all the more confident on account of their great numbers being so well provided for. They no doubt calculated that they had the sure thing, little thinking that God was making them pack animals to take to his people what they needed. Their Father in heaven knew that they had need of them, and he sent them, and the people of Samaria brought them into market, and behold and lo the multitude rushed together just as hungry people will, and this nobleman came out also, and he was trodden down under foot and stamped to death—he saw it but he never tasted it. That is the reward of those who disbelieve the Prophets of God; it was so then, and if the same thing does not occur in every instance something of a similar character is sure to take place. There was no living faith in that man, he could not believe the testimony of the Prophets, and in this he was like some of our—what shall I say, great men, whose faith is weak and sickly, and they think they know it all, and can chalk out right and left that which would be best for building up the kingdom of God.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 17:6–7.)

In a similar prophecy, Heber C. Kimball prophesied that the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley would be able to purchase goods more cheaply than they could back

East. The prophecy was fulfilled when thousands came through the valley during the California gold rush. (See B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:349–53.)

(6-27) 2 Kings 8:7–15. Prophecy to Hazael and Ben-hadad

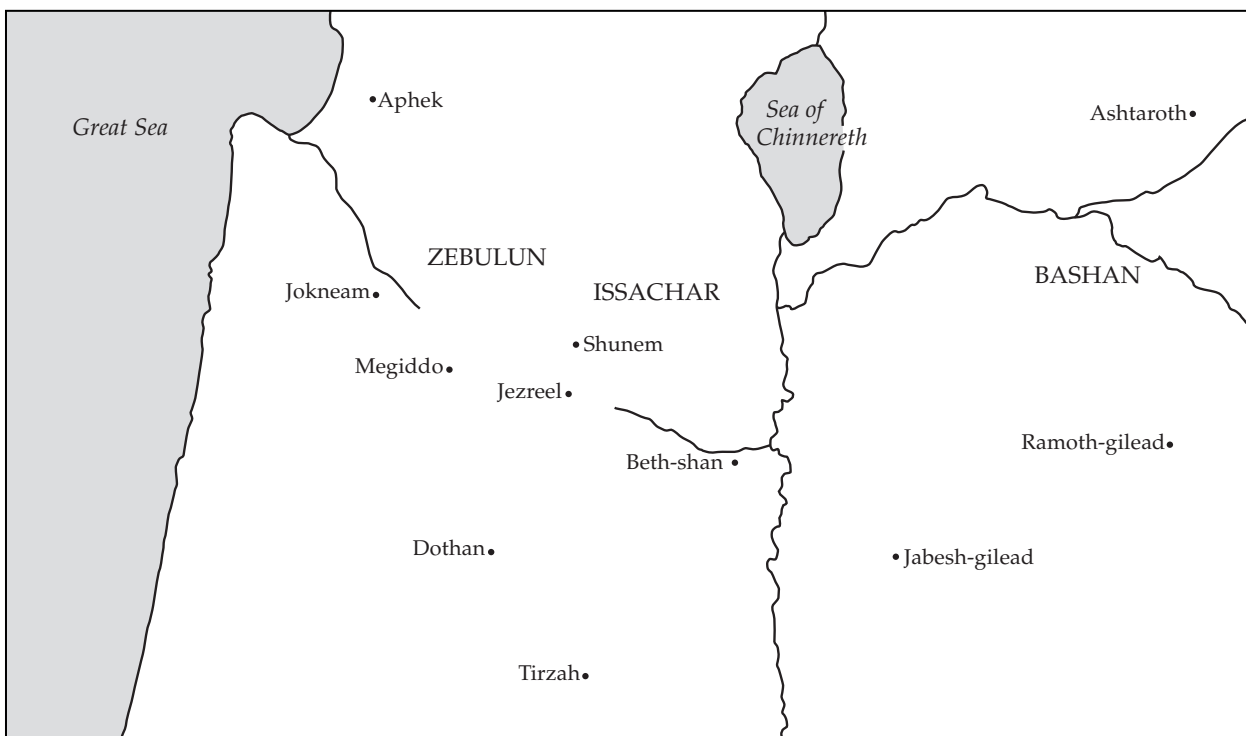
It is probable that more than one king of Syria bore the name Ben-hadad. The name means “son of Hadad” (J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Ben-hadad”).

The Syrian leaders were well acquainted with the prophet Elisha, for they knew of Naaman’s miraculous healing. They also remembered Elisha’s leading a contingent of the Syrian army into captivity single-handedly and then releasing them (see 2 Kings 6:18–23). Ben-hadad’s reaction, when he heard that Elisha was in Damascus, was one of jubilation. Perhaps the prophet of God would tell him whether he would recover from his disease.

Verse 9 indicates that the gifts Ben-hadad sent with Hazael to Elisha were not just a token gesture. It took forty camels to carry them. Elisha informed Hazael (see v. 10) that the disease the king was suffering from was not fatal, but he would die by other means. Elisha knew the heart of Hazael and the evil he would cause, for the wicked cannot look unashamedly into the piercing eye of the righteous (see v. 11). Upon his return Hazael smothered Ben-hadad and became the king. He ruled Syria for forty-two harsh and brutal years in which he did Israel much harm, fulfilling Elisha’s prophecy.

(6-28) 2 Kings 8:16–23. Jehoram, King of Judah

Jehoram, king of Judah, married Athaliah, who was the daughter of Ahab, king of Israel, and Jezebel. She,



Jehu went to Jezreel from Ramoth-gilead.

like her mother, was an evil woman who worshiped the gods of Baal, and she helped corrupt the Southern Kingdom of Judah as her mother had done the Northern Kingdom of Israel. (See Enrichment A for more information on Athaliah.)

Because of the wickedness of Jehoram, the Lord would not support him during his administration, and he was greatly afflicted. Edom revolted, as did Libnah, against his rule. Libnah was a royal city of the Canaanites that had first been conquered by Joshua. Jehoram probably lost Libnah at the time the Philistines attacked Judah and plundered Jerusalem (see 2 Chronicles 21:16–17). Jehoram finally died of a terrible disease (see 2 Chronicles 21:18–20).

(6-29) 2 Kings 8:26. Was Athaliah the Daughter of Omri?

Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab, who was the son of Omri (see 2 Chronicles 21:6). “The terms ‘son’ and ‘daughter’ were used not only of remote descendants but even of successors who were not blood relations” (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 233). The phrase here means that Athaliah was of the Omride dynasty.

(6-30) 2 Kings 9:1–13. Why Was Jehu Anointed King?

One of the last commissions the Lord gave Elijah was to anoint Jehu as king of Israel (see 1 Kings 19:16). Elisha now carried out that commission for Elijah. The purpose of Jehu’s reign was, according to verse 7, to completely destroy the house, or family, of the wicked Ahab and Jezebel. Notice the prophecy about Jezebel in verse 10. The young man Elisha sent to deliver this message and anoint Jehu was probably a priesthood bearer.

Verse 13 describes a special ceremony in which a man was acknowledged king. Those present laid their cloaks down at his feet as a symbol of their loyalty and recognition of his authority.

(6-31) 2 Kings 9:14–26. Vineyard of Naboth

Jehu met King Joram and King Ahaziah in the vineyard called Naboth (see v. 21). This was the very vineyard that Jezebel had obtained by murdering Naboth. This was also the exact spot where Elijah had appeared to Ahab years before and prophesied that his posterity would one day be exterminated (see 1 Kings 21:21–23). That day had come.

Jehu’s being anointed by Elisha’s servant to be king and the prophecy of his brutal destruction of the house of Omri should not be construed to mean that the Lord commanded Jehu to do these things. The prophet simply foresaw what would happen, but Jehu himself was a wicked man (see 2 Kings 10:31), although he was a means for destroying the wickedness out of Israel.

(6-32) 2 Kings 9:30–37. Death of Jezebel

“Jezebel [painted her face] that she might present an imposing appearance to Jehu and die as a queen; not to allure him by her charms. . . . For (ver. 31) when Jehu entered the palace gate, she cried out to him, ‘Is it peace, thou Zimri, murderer of his lord?’ She addressed Jehu as Zimri the murderer of the king, to point to the fate which Jehu would bring upon himself by the murder of the king, as Zimri had already done [vv. 32–33]. But Jehu did not deign to answer the

worthless woman; he simply looked up to the window and inquired: ‘Who is (holds) with me? who?’ Then two, three chamberlains looked out (of the side windows), and by Jehu’s command threw the proud queen out of the window, so that some of her blood spurted upon the wall and the horses (of Jehu), and Jehu trampled her down, driving over her with his horses and chariot.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:345.)

The death of Jezebel fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah (see 1 Kings 21:23).

(6-33) 2 Kings 10:1–6. Were the Seventy Sons Ahab’s Children?

By this time Ahab had been dead fourteen years. Some of the seventy sons mentioned in verse 6 could have been Ahab’s; however, *sons* as used in these verses could also mean grandsons of Ahab. *Master’s sons*, as used in verse 2, is an obvious reference to the sons of Joram.

Jehu wanted to kill all the sons or grandsons of Ahab who were part of the royal line and therefore heirs to the throne of Israel.

(6-34) 2 Kings 10:13. Who Were the Brethren of Ahaziah?

Brethren, as used in this verse, could not be a reference to the actual brothers of Ahaziah because the Philistines had taken them in a battle many years before (see 2 Chronicles 21:17). It is, however, a reference to the relative of Ahaziah who lived in the royal household (see 2 Chronicles 22:8).

(6-35) 2 Kings 10:30–31. How Pleased Was the Lord with Jehu?

“Jehu is promised the possession of the throne to the fourth generation of his sons for having exterminated the godless royal house of Ahab. . . . The divine sentence, ‘because thou hast acted well to do right in mine eyes, (because thou) hast done as it was in my heart to the house of Ahab,’ refers to the deed as such, and not to the subjective motives by which Jehu had been actuated. For it is obvious that it had not sprung from pure zeal for the honour of the Lord, from the limitation added in ver. 31: ‘but Jehu did not take heed to walk in the law of Jehovah with all his heart, and did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam.’—Vers. 32, 33.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:354–55.) In other words, the house of Omri had reached such a state of wickedness that it deserved destruction. Jehu was the means of bringing about the Lord’s will in this regard, but that does not mean the Lord was pleased with his brutal methods or his wickedness.

(6-36) 2 Kings 11. Jehoash Became King

When Athaliah killed the heirs to the throne (see vv. 1–3), Jehoash escaped through the intervention of his aunt (see vv. 2–3). After hiding Jehoash in the temple for six years, Jehoiada the priest decided to make the child’s existence known and install him as Judah’s king. He sent the king’s bodyguard throughout the land of Judah to gather in the Levites and chief rulers to sustain Jehoash as king of Judah (see 2 Chronicles 23:1–3). Because Jehoash was only seven years old at



The holy sanctuaries were vandalized.

the time he began to reign, he would certainly have received the counsel and guidance of Jehoiada in administering the affairs of Judah.

“As soon as Athaliah heard the loud rejoicing of the people, she came to the people into the temple, and when she saw the youthful king in his standing-place surrounded by the princes, the trumpeters, and the whole of the people, rejoicing and blowing the trumpets, she rent her clothes with horror, and cried out, conspiracy, conspiracy! . . . Jehoiada then commanded the captains . . . those placed over the army, *i.e.*, the armed men of the levites, to lead out Athaliah between the ranks, and to slay every one who followed her, *i.e.*, who took her part.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:362–63.)

(6-37) 2 Kings 12. The Reign of Jehoash

The reign of Jehoash, or Joash, lasted forty years.

It appears that the single most important factor in Jehoash’s reign was the wise advice and support he received from the high priest, Jehoiada (see v. 2). During Jehoash’s administration the temple was repaired, but unfortunately, Jehoash did not continue as he had commenced. Later in his reign he turned to idolatry and led Judah into sin (see 2 Chronicles 24:17–18), for soon after Jehoiada’s death, Jehoash became weak and allowed heathen rituals to be performed in Judah again (see 2 Chronicles 24:16–22). He also sought to appease Hazael, king of Syria, through bribery. He even sent Hazael holy objects from the temple (see 2 Kings 12:18).

(6-38) 2 Kings 12:1–16. Why Did Jehoash Take Away the Collection from the Priests?

The account in Kings is a little difficult to follow, and it is not clear what exactly is happening. But the parallel account in 2 Chronicles 24:4–14 is more clearly written. Under Athaliah, Solomon’s temple had been vandalized and images of Baal set up within it. It seems to have been in a poor state of repair, and the king decided to take up a collection from the people to restore it. He gave the priests charge of this fundraising, but “the Levites hastened it not” (2 Chronicles 24:5). In other words, they did not carry out their task very successfully. Therefore King Jehoash took the responsibility away from them (See 2 Kings 12:7–8). Instead, he set up a chest within the temple courtyard into which the people put money. He had his scribes collect it each day and used it to pay the workmen on the project.

(6-39) 2 Kings 12:20–21. Why Did the Servants of Jehoash Murder Him?

When Jehoash turned to idolatry, the Lord sent prophets to testify against him and to call the people of Judah to repentance. One such prophet was Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest. Jehoash had him killed along with the other sons of Jehoiada. Because Jehoash had murdered the sons of Jehoiada, some of his own servants slew him while he lay on his bed (see 2 Chronicles 24:20–22, 25–26).

(6-40) 2 Kings 13:1–9. Jehoahaz, King of Israel

Josephus wrote the following about this king who ruled in the Northern Kingdom at the same time Jehoash ruled in Judah: “He did not [properly] imitate his father, but was guilty of as wicked practices as those that first had God in contempt: but the king of Syria [Hazael] brought him low, and by an expedition against him did so greatly reduce his forces, that there remained no more of so great an army than ten thousand armed men, and fifty horsemen. He also took away from him his great cities, and many of them also, and destroyed his army. And these were the things that the people of Israel suffered, according to the prophecy of Elisha, when he foretold that Hazael should kill his master, and reign over the Syrians and Damascenes. But when Jehoahaz was under such unavoidable miseries, he had recourse to prayer and supplication to God, and besought him to deliver him out of the hands of Hazael, and not overlook him, and give him up into his hands.” (*Antiquities*, bk. 9, chap. 8, par. 5.)

(6-41) 2 Kings 13:4–6. Who Was the “Savior” That Delivered Israel from Syria?

The narrative here is difficult to follow because the historian continually moves ahead of the circumstances he is discussing. He could do so because he was writing many years later.

The Lord’s response to Jehoahaz’s prayer promised a Savior to deliver Israel from the Syrians. Because the title of Savior is associated with Jesus, some may think the Lord was promising a deliverer, but all that was being promised was deliverance. Deliverance from Hazael, king of Syria, and later his son, Ben-hadad,

was to come through the son and grandson of Jehoahaz. Keil and Delitzsch explained: "In this oppression Jehoahaz prayed to the Lord . . . and the Lord heard this prayer, because He saw their oppression at the hands of the Syrians, and gave Israel a saviour, so that they came out from the power of the Syrians and dwelt in their booths again, as before, *i.e.* were able to live peaceably again in their houses, without being driven off and led away by the foe. The saviour . . . was neither an angel, nor the prophet Elisha, . . . nor a victory obtained by Jehoahaz over the Syrians, . . . but the Lord gave them the savior in the two successors of Jehoahaz, in the kings Jehoash and Jeroboam, the former of whom wrested from the Syrians all the cities that had been conquered by them under his father (ver. 25), while the latter restored the ancient boundaries of Israel (ch. xiv. 25). According to vers. 22–25, the oppression by the Syrians lasted as long as Jehoahaz lived; but after his death the Lord had compassion upon Israel, and after the death of Hazael, when his son Ben-hadad had become king, Jehoash recovered from Ben-hadad all the Israelitish cities that had been taken by Syrians." (*Commentary*, 3:1:375.)

The Jehoash mentioned here is not the same Jehoash who was king of Judah (discussed in Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 11; 2 Kings 12; 2 Kings 12:1–16). There were two kings by the same name. Jehoash who became king of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was the son of Jehoahaz and helped deliver Israel from the Syrians. The other Jehoash, also called Joash, was the one hid by the priests in Judah when Athaliah had the royal seed killed (see 2 Kings 11:1–3). He became king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, at the age of seven and ruled for forty years.

(6-42) 2 Kings 13:14–20. Death of Elisha

These verses record the death of Elisha. Jehoash, king of Israel, sought the prophet before his death, perhaps feeling that Elisha alone held the key to Israel's future safety. Elisha responded by inviting Jehoash to open a window and shoot an arrow toward the east. The arrow symbolized the Lord's deliverance of Israel from the Syrians. Elisha also told the king to shoot some arrows into the ground, which he did. "The shooting of the arrows to the earth was intended to symbolize the overthrow of the Syrians" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:377). The king shot only three arrows. For this Elisha chastised him, saying that had Jehoash shot five or six times he would "have smitten the Syrians to destruction" (2 Kings 13:19).

POINTS TO PONDER

(6-43) The Prophets: Key to Spiritual Survival

As you read 2 Kings 3–13, you probably noticed that every time people obeyed the counsel of the prophet Elisha they were blessed, and every time they rejected

his counsel they suffered. Just how important is it for men to receive the counsel of the Lord? Study the following scriptures to help you formulate your answer: Doctrine and Covenants 103:5–8; 105:37; 124:84; 136:19; 2 Nephi 9:28–29.

President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of the importance of these prophets and of the flimsy reasons people have for rejecting them:

"Various excuses have been used over the centuries to dismiss these divine messengers. There has been denial because the prophet came from an obscure place. 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:46.) Jesus was also met with the question, 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' (Matt. 13:55.) By one means or another, the swiftest method of rejection of the holy prophets has been to find a pretext, however false or absurd, to dismiss the man so that his message could also be dismissed. . . . Perhaps they judged Paul by the timbre of his voice or by his style of speech, not the truths uttered by him.

"We wonder how often hearers first rejected the prophets because they despised them, and finally despised the prophets even more because they had rejected them. . . .

"The trouble with rejection because of personal familiarity with the prophets is that the prophets are always somebody's son or somebody's neighbor. They are chosen from among the people, not transported from another planet, dramatic as that would be!

"The prophets have always been free from the evil of their times, free to be divine auditors who will still call fraud, fraud; embezzlement, embezzlement; and adultery, adultery." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, pp. 115–17; or *Ensign*, May 1978, pp. 76–77.)

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught that "the basic truths are always the same, but the emphasis needed will be made by the living prophets under inspiration from the living God, and the people of the living Church will respond. . . .

"In the living Church, members must have living testimonies of the living prophets as well as of the living scriptures and living God. President Lee once gave a speech to seminary and institute faculty members on 'The Place of the Living Prophet' in which he observed how proximity and familiarity sometimes get in the way of people's following the living prophet because 'he is so close.' He commented on the responsiveness of heaven to changing circumstances: '. . . had you ever thought that what was contrary to the order of heaven in 1840 might not be contrary to the order of heaven in 1960?' (Address to Seminary and Institute Faculty, Brigham Young University, July 8, 1968.)" (*Things As They Really Are*, pp. 67, 71.)

Write a short essay on what caused the people of ancient Israel to reject Elisha in spite of marvelous demonstrations of his power. Draw parallels to our own time. Do people still reject the prophets for the same reasons?



God Will Not Be Mocked

(7-1) Introduction

Prophets of the Lord were called to labor among people whose lives remained in spiritual darkness. Joel was one of these prophets called to minister to a people who refused to repent. His prophecies have a common theme with those of Isaiah, Jonah, Amos, and others: repent or face destruction.

Joel is particularly significant to us because he prophesied of our day. On the night he visited Joseph Smith, Moroni quoted from Joel and said that the prophecies would shortly be fulfilled. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:41.) Joel is also a major source of information on the battle of Armageddon, one of the momentous events in the coming history of the world. So, although the book of Joel is a short work, it is full of valuable insights and information. They are applicable to us today, although they were written over twenty-five hundred years ago.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Joel.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JOEL

(7-2) Joel 1:1. Who Was Joel and When Did He Live?

Biblical scholars do not agree on when Joel lived. Some think he preceded Amos and Hosea because both men quoted him (compare Amos 1:2 with Joel 3:16), but it is also possible that Joel quoted them, so this evidence is not conclusive. Joel may have served before the time of Isaiah, for Isaiah quoted one of Joel's prophecies (compare Isaiah 13:6 with Joel 1:15), but it may be that Joel quoted Isaiah.

All things considered, it seems probable that Joel's ministry took place about the time that Joash reigned in Judah (see Enrichment A for more information on the reigns of the kings). Joel's ministry evidently came before Uzziah's reign but after the rule of the infamous Athaliah, the queen who tried to exterminate the Davidic line.

(7-3) Joel 1:1–2. "Give Ear, All Ye Inhabitants of the Land"

The message of the book of Joel is simple and straightforward. The house of Israel has fallen into a state similar to drunkenness caused by iniquity. Therefore, great judgments will come upon them from the Lord. The judgments will be so terrible that Joel calls on the Lord's people to howl and cry for

repentance. They are to call solemn assemblies (see Joel 1:14; 2:15–17) and tell the people of these judgments so that they can cry for deliverance through repentance. Though the warnings are grim and terrible, Joel holds out the assurance that if the people will turn to God in sorrow and repentance, He will respond and the disasters can be averted (see 2:12–14).

As is typical of Old Testament prophecies, Joel's prophecies are dualistic: They warn of an immediate and impending destruction (through the conquests of Assyria and Babylon), but they also refer directly to the last days and the destruction that will again threaten Israel just before the Millennium.

(7-4) Joel 1:1–4. The Use of Imagery in Hebrew Literature

Hebrew literature is noted for its rich imagery. In these verses and those that follow, Joel used the figure of a famine to portray Judah's future. The palmerworm is the Hebrew *gazam*, which means "gnawer." The locust is in Hebrew *arbeth*, which means "many." The cankerworm is the Hebrew *yeleq*, which means "licker"; and the caterpillar is the Hebrew *chasil*, which means "consumer" (see Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:658). These Hebrew terms refer to the stages of development in the life of a locust. Such imagery fixed forever in the minds of the Jews the devastation prophesied by Joel for the latter days.

Is the famine spoken of only literal and physical? Or does it have a symbolic and spiritual meaning?

Looking at what happened to Judah in Joel's day, many scholars feel that the palmerworm was a metaphor for the Assyrian-Babylonian invasions of the Holy Land. What these two empires left, the Medes and Persians "ate" during their invasions. Joel 1:4 can be seen as an example of the Hebrew dualism previously mentioned. A prophet may refer to one incident and also mean another. For example, the cankerworm could also represent the invasions and suppression of the Holy Land by Greece under Alexander the Great and his successors. Then the caterpillar would represent the invasion that consumed Judah when she was overrun by Rome and eventually destroyed by Titus. These references seem also to apply to the coming battle of Armageddon, when armies from the north will gather and fight just before the Millennium.

(7-5) Joel 1:5–7. What Is to Be Understood by the Wine, the Lion, the Vine, and the Fig Tree?

Judah had become drunken with the wine of iniquity and would have cause to weep and to howl, for the Lord would not tolerate their glorying in sin. Judah's security and wealth, which lay at the root of this wickedness, were compared to the vine from which the grapes for wine are taken. Their vineyard was to be cut off: Judah would be humbled by the Lord's almighty hand so they could be drunken no more.



Joel predicted the destruction of the temple.

The vine and the fig tree, among the most stable and enduring of the plants that nourished Israel anciently, represented the finest that the Lord had given His chosen people. But they had rejected the gift and the Giver, and all would be laid waste by the numberless nation of invaders who, as a lion, would not be denied. The lion is the most feared of animals and pulls down his prey with great savagery. A tree is barked by stripping the bark from the trunk, which kills the tree. The imagery was clear. The house of Israel would be pulled down, or cut off, and spoiled by powerful outside nations. Their vineyards and orchards would be desolate.

(7-6) Joel 1:8–20. The Loss of Temple Worship

One of the consequences of Judah's destruction and scattering as a nation was the loss of her temple worship, the source of joy and gladness (see Joel 1:16). Their field was *wasted*; they were no longer a fruitful people unto the Lord (see vv. 10, 12).

At this time a *husbandman* was a person who tended an orchard, and a *vine dresser* was one who cultivated a vineyard. (In New Testament times a *husbandman* also took care of a vineyard.) The *girding* in verse 13 refers to putting on clothing of sackcloth (coarse cloth made of animal hair), which would constantly remind them of the great tragedy coming to their people. Joel called upon all the people to howl and lament because the temple would fall and the people of God would undergo national disaster.

Just as Moses had instructed Israel to learn a song (see Deuteronomy 31:30–32:43), the words of which would remind them of their condemnation if they broke their covenants, so Joel instructed Judah to learn the words they would cry in the last days as a reminder of her future sorrow. A solemn assembly was held to gather priesthood leaders and members to consider these sacred matters (see v. 14).

"The seed [being] rotten under their clods" (v. 17) refers to the fact that when the sprout was bitten off by the locusts, the seed simply rotted away. When Israel and Judah were devoured by their invaders, they, too, would spoil. The barns would be of no value, for they would house nothing.

These dire predictions were fulfilled when the covenant people fell, first to Assyria and then to Babylon, and then were ruled by a series of empires. But these verses also seem to require a latter-day fulfillment

with destruction again threatening Judah. (The phrase "day of the Lord," in verse 15, is a phrase often associated with the time just before the Second Coming. Chapters 2 and 3 of Joel definitely apply to the final days.)

(7-7) Joel 2:1. What Are "Zion" and "My Holy Mount"?

The Lord's holy mountain is the place where His temple is, or the place from which He speaks to the people. Sometimes it is the temple (see Isaiah 2:1–3) or the New Jerusalem (see D&C 84:2). The Zion of the latter days, also frequently referred to in scripture as "my holy mount" (D&C 45:66–70; 82:14; 133:2, 13, 18, 26–32, 56), is a spiritual condition as well as a place. "Verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART" (D&C 97:21).

Speaking of Zion as a spiritual condition Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

"Zion is people. Zion is the saints of God; Zion is those who have been baptized; Zion is those who have received the Holy Ghost; Zion is those who keep the commandments; Zion is the righteous; or in other words, as our revelation recites: 'This is Zion—the pure in heart.' (D&C 97:21.)

"After the Lord called his people Zion, the scripture says that Enoch 'built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION'; that Zion 'was taken up into heaven' where 'God received it up into his own bosom'; and that 'from thence went forth the saying, Zion is fled.' (Moses 7:19, 21, 69.)

"After the Lord's people were translated—for it was people who were caught up into heaven, not brick and mortar and stone, for there are better homes already in heaven than men can build on earth—after these righteous saints went to dwell beyond the veil, others, being converted and desiring righteousness, looked for a city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God, and they too 'were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.' (Moses 7:27.)

"This same Zion which was taken up into heaven shall return during the Millennium, when the Lord brings again Zion; and its inhabitants shall join with the New Jerusalem which shall then be established. (See Moses 7:62–63.)" ("Come: Let Israel Build Zion," *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 117.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith also taught that the place of Zion, or the "land of Zion," is North and South America (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 362).

Though the context makes it difficult to say in which sense Joel used the terms, *Zion* and *holy mountain*, they are probably yet another example of Hebrew dualism. Mount Zion was one of the names of Jerusalem, and thus it is a cry for the inhabitants to awaken. But Mount Zion also has a meaning in the latter days.

(7-8) Joel 2:2–11. "The Day of the Lord Is Great and Very Terrible"

The "day of the Lord" will be great because Zion will be a reality, but the events associated with it will also make it terrible, as these verses make clear (see Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 38 and 39).

An event of the latter days known as the battle of Armageddon is described in these verses. Like the locusts that devour the crops and cover the heavens with blackness because of their numbers, so "a great people and a strong" (v. 2) shall descend upon the

land of Israel in the latter days. (Compare this language with that of John and Ezekiel when they describe the battle of Armageddon in Revelation 9:1–10 and Ezekiel 38:8–9.) So great shall be the number of this people that “the earth shall quake before them” (v. 10). The sun, moon, and stars will be darkened.

The horses (see v. 4) symbolize war. Chariots (see v. 5) symbolize a very powerful army.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said of the warning given in these verses: “Here we have a great, terrible army, marching with unbroken ranks and crushing everything before it, finding the garden like Eden before them, leaving the wilderness behind, causing mourning, causing suffering; and so the prophet raises the warning voice, and that voice is to us, if you please, that we might turn unto the Lord and rend our hearts.” (*The Signs of the Times*, p. 160.)

When these events occur they will strike fear into the hearts of Jerusalem’s inhabitants. The siege against the city will be severe. The relentless army will overrun the land of Israel. The city walls will be breached and the houses plundered (see v. 9). The phrase “when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded” (v. 8) may simply be a way of saying that the armaments used against the invaders will be ineffectual. But the Lord is strong, and He will keep His word. He has promised to rescue the people, and He will (see v. 11; see also Zechariah 14; Revelation 9, 11; Ezekiel 38–39).

Other events, such as the land being “as the garden of Eden before them” (v. 3), refer specifically to the latter days. Today the Galilee area and the Jezreel Valley in modern Israel have truly “blossomed as the rose.”

(7-9) Joel 2:12–22. The Lord Will Redeem and Bless His People

The Lord calls to His children in all ages: “Turn ye unto me with all your heart” (v. 12). He desires them to become His people so that He can be their God. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith commented on the Lord’s powerful intervention and redemption in the latter days: “You know, they used to rend their garments and sit in sack cloth when they were repentant. So the Lord says, ‘Rend your heart and not your garments.’ Humble yourselves. Prepare yourselves, oh Israel, that you may receive My blessings, that you might be protected from this condition that is going to come. And then the last words that I have read from this part of this chapter, the Lord says that He will take that great army in hand, that He also has an army. His army is terrible, just as terrible as the other army, and He will take things in hand. When I say the other army, the Lord’s army, do not get an idea He is thinking about England or the United States. He is not. He is not thinking about any earthly army. The Lord’s army is not an earthly army, but He has a terrible army; and when that army marches, it will put an end to other armies, no matter how terrible they may be; and so He says in these closing words I have read to you that He would do this thing. He would drive this terrible northern army into the wilderness, barren and desolate, with his face towards the east sea and his hinder part towards the utmost sea. He would do that, and then He would bless His people—having references, of course, to Israel.” (*Signs of the Times*, pp. 160–61.)

The figure of the bride and bridegroom (see v. 16) is very apt. Israel was married to the Lord in the Abrahamic covenant (see Jeremiah 3:14; see also Notes and Commentary on Hosea). The Bridegroom was Jehovah, and the bride was Israel. The Bridegroom returned to claim His bride, who had been temporarily set aside for wickedness. (See Joel 2:13–14 notes for further clarification.)

(7-10) Joel 2:23–27. “Ye Shall Know That I Am in the Midst of Israel”

These verses describe Judah’s and Israel’s eventual deliverance. The years of the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmerworm indicate generations of oppression for scattered and rejected Israel. All was not lost, however, for the Lord promised “the former rain and the latter rain” (v. 23). After a punishing drought, these rains returned, a symbol of God’s acceptance of His people, who had been chastened and redeemed. “And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed” (v. 27; see also Philippians 2:10–11). One major theme of the Old Testament prophets is that although there will be a great apostasy in Israel, in the end Israel will be restored to the covenant (the gospel) and become faithful.

(7-11) Joel 2:28–32. “I Will Pour Out My Spirit upon All Flesh”

When Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith he quoted these verses, saying that they were not yet fulfilled but soon would be. Moroni also explained that the “fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in” (Joseph Smith—History 1:41). These statements clearly put the fulfillment of this part of Joel’s prophecy after A.D. 1823. It obviously applies to the latter days in its language and content, although it has also been fulfilled previously. Verse 32 is a reference to Jesus Christ (see Romans 10:13).

Sidney B. Sperry added: “In the mind of the writer no doubt remains that Joel foresaw the dispensation in which we live and God’s judgments upon the world. This he expressed in figures that would be easily understood by his people. So acutely and painfully were the judgments that Joel saw impressed upon his mind that he cried out in anguish—as if he were present—to the people of our day to repent and escape God’s wrath.” (*The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 297.)

The last days are to be characterized by the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh. Peter, experiencing a rich and wonderful outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, quoted Joel (see Acts 2:17–21), who spoke of the latter days, the time just before the Lord’s Second Coming when He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. That Spirit is not only the Holy Ghost but also the Spirit of Christ, that Spirit which enlightens everyone (see Moroni 7:16; D&C 93:2). Sons and daughters will prophesy—preach, exhort, pray, and instruct so as to benefit the Church. Direct revelation will be given. Young men and women who are representatives of the Lord will be inspired. The gifts of teaching and inspiration will be given to all classes and levels of people. The Lord will call and qualify those He chooses. He will pour out His Spirit upon

them, and they will be endowed with the gifts necessary to convert sinners and to build up the Church. Certainly this prophecy is now beginning to be fulfilled.

The message of this passage is fourfold: (1) there will be a rich outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord in the latter days; (2) certain signs will be fulfilled before Christ's Second Coming in the clouds of heaven; (3) His coming will be great for the righteous and terrible for the wicked; and (4) the "remnant" (v. 32), Israel of the latter days, will be those who are left after the period of tribulation and scattering is over.

(7-12) Joel 3:1–8. "I Will Gather All Nations"

These verses add to the picture described in chapter 2. Joel used allusions and figures well understood by his people to describe the great signs and judgments to take place in the latter days just before the return of the Lord. In chapter 3 Joel gave another picture of God's judgment upon the nations. Israel, who had been scattered among the nations, will receive a change in her fortunes, and retribution will come upon her enemies in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, literally, the "Valley of Decision" in Hebrew. Just where this valley is located is not entirely clear. Most likely it is the Kidron, a narrow valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives (see D&C 45:47–49; 133:19–21; Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, s.v. "Jehoshaphat"). This passage seems to refer to the final scenes of the battle of Armageddon in Jerusalem, when the great earthquake will strike the massive army and Jesus will appear on the Mount of Olives to deliver Israel (see Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 38–39 for a more detailed treatment of Armageddon).



The Kidron Valley is also known as the Valley of Decision.

These verses are a declaration of war on the Lord's part. They are also a challenge to those who would test His might. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said: "We find Joel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, all proclaiming that in this last day, the day when the sun shall be darkened and the moon turned to blood and the stars fall from heaven, that the nations of the earth would gather against Jerusalem. All of them speak of it; and when that time comes, the Lord is going to come out of His hiding place." (*Signs of the Times*, p. 170.)

The Lord will be the strength of Israel and will smite her enemies with plagues so severe that their flesh will rot and fall from their bones, their eyes will be consumed in their sockets and their tongues in their mouths—both man and beast (see Zechariah 14:12–15). And then Judah will know that Christ is the Lord their God, for He will stand on the Mount of Olives, which will cleave in twain and Judah will see Him as their delivering Messiah. They will ask about His wounds and learn that He is the Christ, and their mourning will know no bounds, for they will know that this is He for whom they have waited and whom their fathers crucified (see Zechariah 12:9–11; 13:6; D&C 45:51–53).

(7-13) Joel 3:17. Jerusalem to Be Pure

Strangers as used in the Old Testament refers to Gentiles, or those not of Israel. This verse states that no strange god nor impure people will be permitted to enter or pass through the city. This promise is yet to be fulfilled.

(7-14) Joel 3:18. "A Fountain Shall Come Forth"

See Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 47:1–12.

(7-15) Joel 3:18–21. "The Hills Shall Flow with Milk"

Upon accepting Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, the Jews will enter into a new era. The very mountains and hills will flow with the riches of heaven. This imagery implies more than just an abundance of tangible fruits. Judah will know her God, and He will own His people; they will build their Jerusalem and inhabit it in peace thereafter. (See Smith, *Signs of the Times*, pp. 171–72.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(7-16) The Imagery of Joel and His Message for Us

The message of Joel is important for us as Latter-day Saints. Although he used imagery that is not always familiar to us, he dealt with four major issues quite clearly:

1. A lamentation over the devastation of the land by great armies (symbolized by locusts) and other judgments.
2. The destruction of the army of locusts and a renewal of spiritual and material blessings.
3. The outpouring of God's Spirit upon all flesh.
4. The judgment upon the nations and deliverance of God's people.

Joel saw the days preceding the Second Coming. He attempted to warn as well as prophesy concerning those events. Because Moroni quoted a part of the book of Joel to Joseph Smith and said it was "not yet

fulfilled, but was soon to be" (Joseph Smith—History 1:41), we should carefully study the message and learn of the things we need to do before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

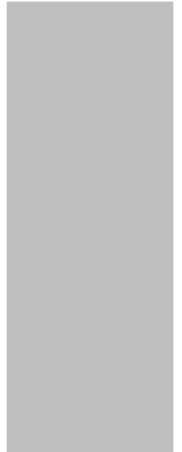
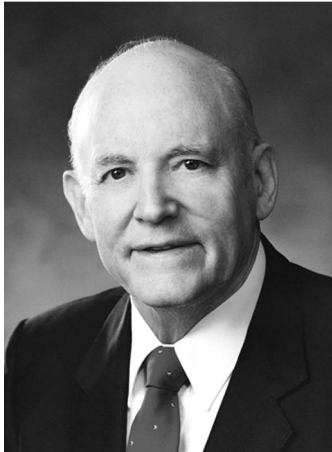
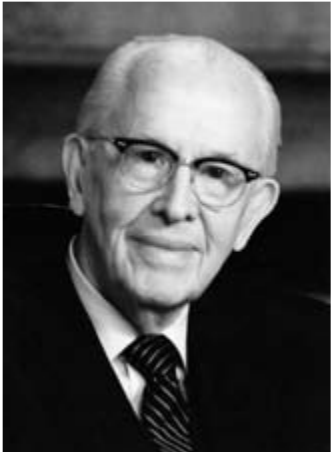
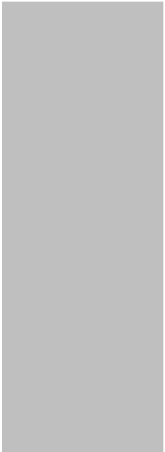
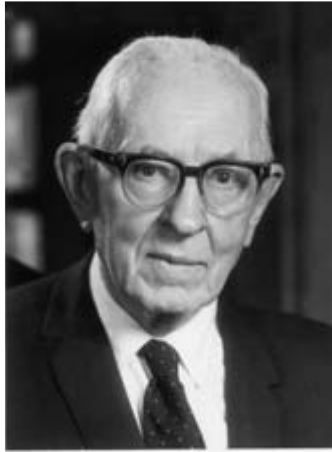
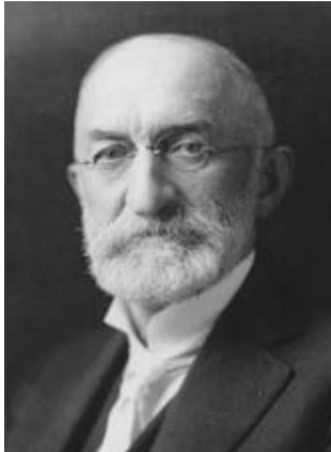
Read Doctrine and Covenants 43:17–30 and answer the following questions:

1. When is the great day of the Lord?
2. What is our obligation to the nations?

3. What should our message be to the world?

4. What will some of the signs in the heavens be prior to the Lord's coming?

5. Knowing that the prophecies of Joel are "about to be fulfilled" what application do you see in Joel's writing for you? In other words, how can the book of Joel benefit you today?



The Lord Reveals His Secrets to His Servants the Prophets

(8-1) Introduction

He was a shepherd from Tekoa, a small village in the hill country of Judah, but his message was for the whole house of Israel and the nations of the world. It was not then a new message, and it has significance even today. Though Amos spoke of the judgments which were about to descend on the nations surrounding Israel and on the two kingdoms of the house of Israel, his message is the same one God has given since the earliest history of the world. It is a simple yet profound message that carries a solemn warning: there is a way to come into God's favor and gain eternal life. That way is always open to the penitent and obedient, but to the impenitent, those who harden their hearts against the Lord, the way is shut. In the place of life there is death; in the place of joy there is sorrow; punishments replace blessing; judgments and destruction replace protection and power.

Study Amos carefully, for his message is one that can help each of us find the way to life and peace.

Instructions to Students

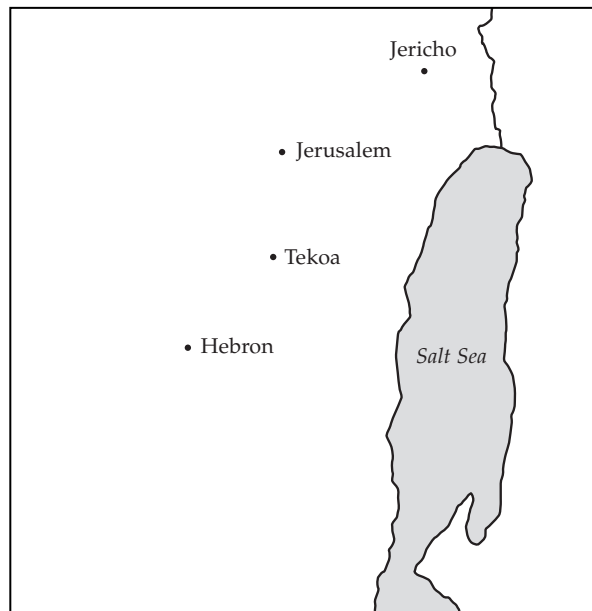
1. Use the Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Amos.
2. Complete the Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON AMOS

(8-2) Amos 1:1. Who Was Amos and When Did He Minister?

The Hebrew name *Amos* means "bearer" or "burden" and refers to the weighty warning that the Lord commissioned Amos to carry to the kingdom of Israel. Amos was a shepherd from a city called Tekoa, now a hilltop of ancient ruins about six miles south of Bethlehem, away from the normal trade routes. Although small and obscure, Tekoa was strategic enough that Rehoboam fortified it as a southern city of defense for Jerusalem (see 2 Chronicles 11:6). Amos was an alert observer of people and nations, and scholars agree that he was far from being an untutored rustic, even though he described himself as a simple herdsman (see 1:1; 7:14–15).

Since the contemporaneous reigns of Judah's Uzziah and Israel's Jeroboam II are specifically mentioned in the scripture, the ministry of Amos has been estimated to have been about B.C. 750. If so, he may have been contemporary with Isaiah and Hosea.



Amos was from Tekoa.

(8-3) Amos 1:2. "The Lord Will Roar from Zion"

"This introduction was natural in the mouth of a *herdsman* who was familiar with the roaring of lions, the bellowing of bulls, and the lowing of kine [cattle]. The roaring of the lion in the forest is one of the most terrific sounds in nature; when near, it strikes terror into the heart of both man and beast." (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:672.)

The term *Zion* sometimes refers to Jerusalem, where there is a hill by that name, but that is not always the case, as the following references indicate: Joel 3:16–17; Isaiah 2:2–3; 40:9; 64:10. Isaiah 2:2–3 speaks of a latter-day Zion. This Zion will be located on the American continent (see Article of Faith 10). For a broader listing of references concerning the geographical location of Zion, see Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Zion." See also Notes and Commentary on Joel 2:1.

(8-4) Amos 1:3–2:16. The Lord Will Pour Out Judgments

Here the prophet Amos forecast the Lord's judgments upon the Syrians (see Amos 1:3–5), Philistines (see Amos 1:6–8), Tyrians (see Amos 1:9–10), Edomites (see Amos 1:11–12), Ammonites (see Amos 1:13–15), and Moabites (see Amos 2:1–3). All of these people were neighbors of the Israelites and in most cases had been enemies to the covenant people. Once those judgments had been pronounced, Amos

outlined the judgments coming upon the kingdoms of Judah (see Amos 2:4–5) and Israel (see Amos 2:6–16). His linking the two kingdoms of the Israelites with other nations suggests that Israel was no longer a “peculiar people” (see Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:2) but had become like the gentile nations around them.

Even though Amos was sent especially to Israel, he spoke for God against the evils of all the nations. Some have termed Amos a prophet of doom, but he only warned the people of the calamitous paths they were following. All of these territories or kingdoms eventually fell.

(8-5) Amos 1:3, 6, 11. “For Three Transgressions . . . and for Four”

The expression “for three transgressions . . . and for four” indicates that the sins alluded to have been exceedingly abundant. The same style is used in Proverbs 6:16, “these six things . . . yea, seven,” and in Matthew 18:21–22, “seventy times seven,” referring to an infinite number. A modern English equivalent would be the expression “a hundred and one times.”

The implication of the idiom is that three transgressions are too many, and you have even exceeded that. Or as C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch explained: “The expression, therefore, denotes not a small but a large number of crimes, or ‘ungodliness in its worst form.’” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10:1:242.)

(8-6) Amos 1–2. Why Were These Nations to Be Punished?

The reasons given by Amos in his pronouncements of the judgments upon the various nations may seem puzzling at first. One could question whether one evil act, no matter how serious, normally brings the judgments of God upon a nation. Amos was inspired to use a poetic device. He selected the act or trait of each nation that dramatically illustrates the extent of their wickedness. The one act mentioned is proof of how far that nation has sunk in iniquity. The following table summarizes the items mentioned and their significance.

Nation	Reason Mentioned	Significance
Damascus (Syria)	They “threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron” (Amos 1:3).	Gilead was part of the land on the east side of the River Jordan inherited by the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh (see Deuteronomy 3:10–13). When the Syrians conquered it under Hazael (2 Kings 10:32–33), they evidently treated their captives with barbaric cruelty, crushing them under iron threshing sleds. (A similar incident is recorded in 2 Samuel 12:31.)
Gaza (Philistines)	They carried away “the whole captivity” to Edom (Amos 1:6).	This passage seems to refer to the time when the Philistines raided Judah under the reign of Joram (see 2 Chronicles 21:16–17). They sold all their captives to the archenemy of Israel, the Edomites.
Tyrus or Tyre (Phoenicia)	They delivered up the Israelite captives to Edom (Amos 1:9).	Like Gaza, Phoenicia also sold Israelite captives although it may be that Phoenicia bought the captives from other enemies of Israel such as Syria and then sold them to Edom, since there is no record of Tyre capturing Israelites directly.
Edom (Idumea)	Pursued his “brother” with the sword and kept his great wrath (Amos 1:11).	The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, whose name was also Edom (see Genesis 25:30). Thus, they were closely related peoples (“brothers”) to Israel, but showed only bitter hatred and hostility. The Edomites were some of Israel’s most determined enemies.

Nation	Reason Mentioned	Significance
Ammon (Ammonites; Rabbah was the capital of Ammon)	They “ripped up the women with child of Gilead” (Amos 1:13).	The incident mentioned here is not recorded in the Old Testament, but the Ammonites were a fierce desert people who often conquered parts of Israel. To kill pregnant women shows a particularly brutal nature.
Moab (Moabites)	The king of Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom (see Amos 2:1).	Keil and Delitzsch noted: “The burning of the bones of the king of Edom is not burning while he was still alive, but the burning of the corpse into lime, <i>i.e.</i> so completely that the bones turned into powder like lime. . . . No record has been preserved of this event in the historical books of the Old Testament; but it was no doubt connected with the war referred to in 2 Kings iii., which Joram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah waged against the Moabites in company with the king of Edom; so that the Jewish tradition found in Jerome, viz. that after this war the Moabites dug up the bones of the king of Edom from the grave, and heaped insults upon them by burning them to ashes, is apparently not without foundation.” (<i>Commentary</i> , 10:1:250.)

(8-7) Amos 2:4–16. The Punishments of Judah and Israel

The reasons for the punishment of Judah and Israel differ from those for the punishment of the gentile nations. No acts are mentioned except for the forsaking of the Lord and turning to wickedness. Israel had been given the law of God. Therefore, more was expected of them.

Panting “after the dust of the earth upon the head of the poor” (v. 7) refers to the people being general oppressors of the poor, showing them neither justice nor mercy. The idea is that the people longed to see the poor in such a state of misery that they threw dust on their heads (a sign of mourning). Verses 11 and 12 refer to the Nazarites, who were instituted by the Lord to show the spiritual nature of His religion (see Numbers 6:2–21). Amos condemned Israel for polluting the Nazarites by giving them wine to drink. He also chastized them for commanding the prophets not to prophesy. Apparently, Israel would have liked to set these servants of the Lord aside so that they could live every man according to his own way and feel comfortable in doing so.

(8-8) Amos 3:1–8. God Will Not Do Anything without Forewarning His Prophets

Amos spoke to the whole of Israel, all twelve families or tribes. Using the metaphor of a husband, the Lord reminded Israel that He had chosen no other (see Amos 3:2; Deuteronomy 7:6). He spoke of Himself as a faithful husband and reminded Israel of her covenant

relationship with Him (see Jeremiah 3:19–20). In verse 3 He asked Israel to remember the need for unity in her relationship with Him. It is necessary, if they are to walk together, for them to be in agreement. The images are all chosen to express the same thing: God, has foreknowledge of all calamities (see vv. 2–6), but He never sends a calamity unless He first notifies His prophet of it (see v. 7; see also 2 Nephi 30:17; Jacob 4:8). Prophecy comes by direct revelation. God has knowledge of all His children and their doings and justly warns and threatens with His judgments. The fact that the prophets prophesy correctly is an indication that they are in communion with God and that they do indeed walk together.

Amos 3:7 is a clear statement concerning the role of prophets. President N. Eldon Tanner said: “There are many scriptures which assure us that God is as interested in us today as he has been in all his children from the beginning, and thus we believe in continuous revelation from God through his prophets to guide us in these latter days. The Prophet Amos said, ‘Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.’” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 52.)

(8-9) Amos 3:9–11. What Is the Significance of the Mention of Ashdod and Egypt?

“Ashdod, one of the Philistian capitals, is mentioned by way of example, as a chief city of the uncircumcised, who were regarded by Israel as godless heathen; and Egypt is mentioned along with it, as the nation whose

unrighteousness and ungodliness had once been experienced by Israel to satiety [fulness]. If therefore such heathen as these are called to behold the unrighteous and dissolute conduct to be seen in the places, it must have been great indeed." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:1:262–63.)

Amos 3:11 says "an adversary there shall be," which means there should be no escape. Wherever the people turned they would meet a foe, for God's judgments and retributions are sure.

(8-10) Amos 3:12–15. What Is the Significance of the Imagery Amos Used Here?

Amos used vivid imagery to show that scarcely any would escape and those who did would do so with extreme difficulty. It is like a shepherd who can recover no more of a sheep carried away by a lion than two of its legs or a piece of its ear, just enough to prove that they belonged to his sheep. This prophecy saw fulfillment when Sargon took Samaria, part of the Northern Kingdom, captive about B.C. 721.

In the East the corner is the most honorable place, and a couch in the corner of a room is the place of greatest distinction. These words were used to mean that even in the cities which were in the most honorable part of the land, whether Samaria in Israel, or Damascus in Syria, none would escape the judgments. In that day the Lord would remove His power from among Israel, as symbolized by the cutting off of the horns of the altar (see *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 166–67 for an explanation of the horns as a symbol of power).

Bethel (see v. 14) was the official religious capital of the Northern Kingdom. The prophet was saying that not only the poor habitations of the villages and the country would be smitten but also those of the nobility, those who had summer and winter homes adorned with ivory vessels and carvings.

(8-11) Amos 4:1–3. The Evils of Israel's Women

The quality of life in any community is largely what its women make it. If they are cruel and covetous, their children will likely be the same. Here Amos compared the women of Samaria with the cows (kine) which fed upon the rich pastures east of the Sea of Galilee, caring for little but eating and drinking. Their sin consisted of urging their husbands to bring them food bought with money squeezed from the poor. Thus, in the same way that fish are caught with hooks and pulled from the pond, these women and their children would become ensnared by Israel's enemies and violently torn from their affluence and debauchery. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:1:266–68.)

(8-12) Amos 4:4–5:3. How Did the Lord Regard Israel's Spiritual Condition?

The sacrifices of Israel had degenerated into heartless ritual. It did no good to go to religious centers, to Bethel or Gilgal, and offer sacrifice in a sinful state. The outward sacrifices should have symbolized repentance, an inward change; but outward sacrifice without inward change is a mockery, and God will not be mocked.

Sidney B. Sperry wrote: "Israel was meticulous in its performance of the outward requirements of its religion, but the inner and less tangible requirements

of love, mercy, justice and humility either were not understood or were disregarded. In an endeavor to bring His people to their senses the Lord, said Amos, had sent upon them seven natural calamities. Cleanness of teeth [hunger], drought, blasting and mildew, insect pests, pestilence, death by the sword, and burning were brought in succession, but all to no avail. (4:6–11) Amos's heart was bleeding over the sinful state of Israel. He could do nothing but warn the nation of the final blow which God would send and for which the people must prepare themselves. (4:12, 13) It was no pleasure for him to pronounce judgment upon his brethren." (*The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 311.)

The God of hosts (see Amos 4:13) is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of heaven and earth (see *Topical Guide*, s.v. "Jesus Christ, Creator"). The first three verses of chapter 5 are a lamentation over Israel's fallen state. The pure virgin (Israel) became an evil woman, and "there is none to raise her up" (Amos 5:2).

(8-13) Amos 5:4–27. "Hate Evil and Love the Good"

Here the Lord appealed to fallen Israel to repent and mend her evil ways: "Seek me, and ye shall live" (v. 4). This message is the same for every generation and people (see 2 Nephi 1:20; Mosiah 26:30). The Lord wants to be a personal God to His faithful, obedient children. It was not too late for Israel to repent. Failure to do so, however, would result in a situation like that of a man running from a lion only to meet a bear (see v. 19). Neither would various sacrificial offerings help unless true repentance followed: "Of what avail would feasts, solemn assemblies, burnt and meal offerings be in the worship of a righteous God, when their hearts and minds were evil and their actions toward their less fortunate brethren were unjust? All of this outward display was unavailing, and Amos cries out for justice in two lines that have become famous: 'But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a perennial stream.' (5:24) This clarion call to repentance is one of the finest of all times." (Sperry, *Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 313.)

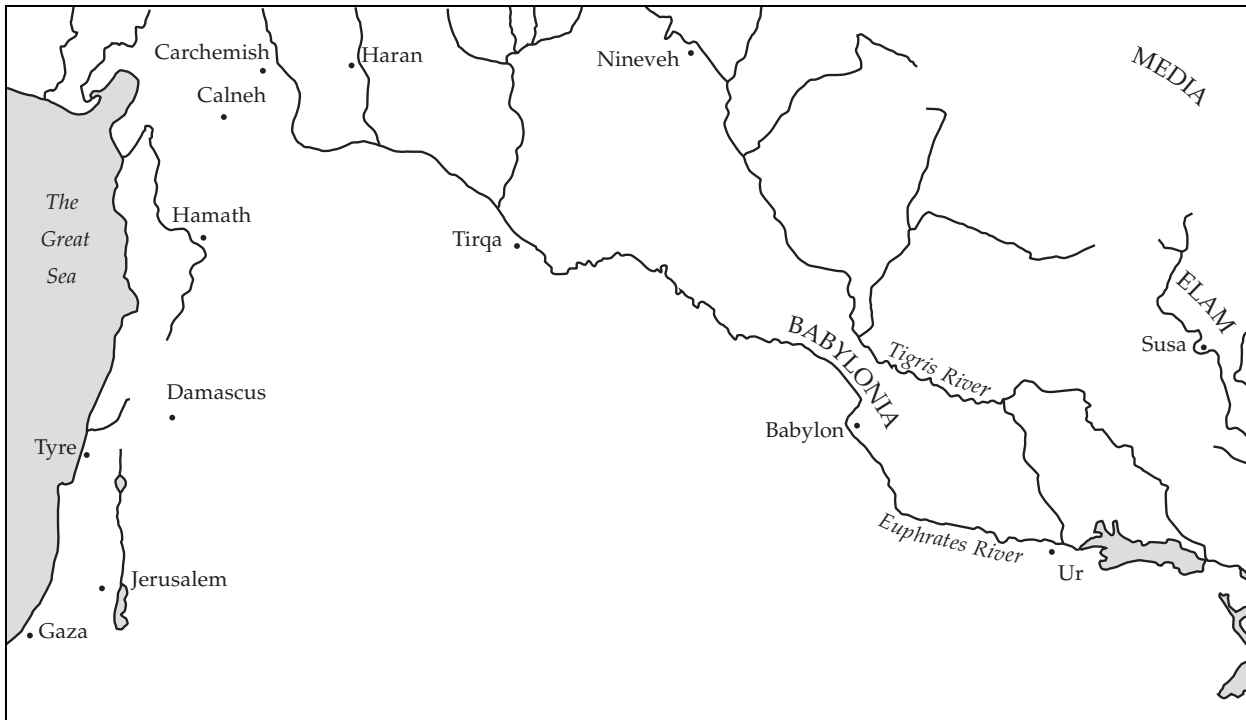
(8-14) Amos 5:26. Who Were Moloch and Chiun?

Moloch and Chiun were heathen gods that the Israelite women had adopted. So grievously addicted to idolatry were those in Samaria that they carried miniature replicas of these gods everywhere they went. The Lord promised "captivity beyond Damascus" (v. 27) for this sin.

(8-15) Amos 6. "Woe to Them That Are at Ease in Zion"

The Lord enlarged here on the captivity that He foresaw for degenerate Israel. But first He invited them to visit other places of destruction—Calneh in Mesopotamia, Hamath in Syria, and Gath in Philistia—and observe what happened to the people there. Were the Israelites any better than they? Certainly not. They had been punished, and so would Israel. Moreover, the wealthy—those who lay on ivory beds and ate sumptuous food—would be the first to suffer (see Amos 6:3–7; 2 Nephi 28:21–25).

"Amos next turns his invective on the careless and reckless rich of Israel, on those who are at ease, on the self-satisfied and the arrogant—in short, on those who,



Major cities were destroyed because of wickedness.

having plenty, take no thought of the sad social and religious state of their country. These persons are absolutely indifferent to the threatened ruin of their people. The prophet indicates (6:1–8, 11–14) that exile is to be their portion, that the nation is to be destroyed because its inhabitants pervert truth and righteousness and trust in their own strength.” (Sperry, *Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 313.)

Thus, Israel’s destruction was made sure by her own choice. Horses cannot run on rocks without slipping, nor can a man plough rocks in order to plant (see v. 12). By the same token, rebellious Israel could not expect to prosper in her state of evil. Verse 13 is an indictment against Israel, who rejoiced in casting off the Lord’s power and feeling sufficient in and of herself. What Amos had predicted came to pass within thirty years.

(8-16) Amos 7–9. The Visions of Amos

The last three chapters of Amos deal with five visions Amos had. The first four of these visions begin with a phrase such as “Thus hath the Lord God showed me” (see Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1). The fifth commences with the words “I saw the Lord” (Amos 9:1). The first four visions show the various judgments of the Lord upon Israel, while the fifth vision portends the overthrow of their apostate theocracy and the restoration of fallen Israel. The visions are (1) a swarm of locusts (Amos 7:1–3); (2) devouring fire (Amos 7:4–6); (3) the master builder with the plumbline (Amos 7:7–9); (4) the basket of summer fruit (Amos 8); and (5) the smitten sanctuary (Amos 9:1–6). Each has a symbolic meaning that clearly shows that the Lord intended to bring the kingdom of Israel to an end if His people did not repent. The meaning of each vision will be considered individually.

A swarm of locusts (Amos 7:1–3). “The king, who has had the early grass mown, is Jehovah; and the mowing

of the grass denotes the judgments which Jehovah has already executed upon Israel. The growing of the second crop is a figurative representation of the prosperity which flourished again after those judgments; in actual fact, therefore, it denotes the time when the dawn had risen again for Israel (ch. iv. 13).” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:1:306–7.)

Devouring fire (Amos 7:4–6). The fire that devoured the great deep (presumably the ocean) is symbolic of the partially destructive wars that Israel was later involved in. Like the fire which “did eat up a part” of the great deep, Israel’s land was partly despoiled and many of its people led away.

The master builder with the plumbline (Amos 7:7–9). A plumbline is used to obtain exactness and accuracy in construction work. Here it seems to symbolize that God’s strict justice will prevail in judging Israel for her evil ways. All wickedness will be sought out, measured (judged), and destroyed.

The basket of summer fruit (Amos 8:1–9). The harvest of summer fruit symbolized the ripening of Israel. Just as summer fruit must be eaten when picked or it will spoil, Israel was ripe for picking and spoiling by enemies.

The sun going down at noon (Amos 8:9–14). A man’s sun can be said to set at noon if he is taken by death during the prime of his life. A nation’s sun figuratively sets at noon when the country is destroyed in the midst of prosperity. But Amos’ dual prophecy is also a reminder that before the Second Coming of the Lord, the sun will be darkened and refuse to give her light. Indeed, it will be a sign for the wicked of the latter days that their sun is about to set at noon. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:1:317.)

The smitten sanctuary (Amos 9:1–6). From His dwelling place, the Lord will smite the wicked. There is none to escape, hide where they may. Only the Second Coming

of the Lord fulfills such a description, for when the Lord comes in His glory, the rewards of justice will be met. No mountain is high enough, no sea so deep that the unrepentant sinner can hide from the judgments of a just God.

(8-17) Amos 8:11–12. A Famine in the Land

Here again one finds a clear case of prophetic dualism. Amos predicted a famine of the word of the Lord, which famine certainly occurred during the period of apostasy in Israel and Judah. The hardness of their hearts reached such a state that from 400 B.C. until the ministry of John the Baptist, which began in A.D. 30, as far as we know there were no prophets in Israel (see Enrichment K).

But Amos's prophecy was also fulfilled at a later time. After Christ reestablished His Church on earth, it too eventually fell into apostasy. Again revelation ceased, and there was a great famine of the word of God, this famine lasting for well over a thousand years. President Spencer W. Kimball, after quoting Amos 8:11–12, said of this famine:

"Many centuries passed and that day came when a blanket of disbelief covered this earth, not a blanket of cotton or wool, but a blanket of apostasy, and a hunger and a thirst by many which was not satisfied.

"It was the Lord our God who came to the earth and manifested himself and brought truth again to the earth with prophecy, revelations, authority, priesthood, organization and all of the benefits of mankind. It was the Lord our God who did all this for us." (In Conference Report, Temple View New Zealand Area Conference 1976, p. 4.)

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, who at the time was the Executive Area Administrator for one of the European areas, spoke of the effect this famine had had upon Europe: "We have observed a restless spirit of searching today among the people of Europe. Why? Because there is a gnawing hunger in the human heart that, if not fed by the truths of the gospel, leaves life empty and devoid of peace. The hodgepodge of economic 'isms' advocated by so-called wise men of the world has solved few, if any, problems, and has brought no real joy. Such empty nostrums have led mankind to seek worldly goods and symbols of material power, blinding humanity to the truth that only the righteous life firmly established in the daily living of God's commandments brings true happiness. Anything less leaves the heart unfed, with a yearning inner hunger—a hunger which it is our mission to identify and define and of which we should make the people aware. I have seen in Europe the fulfillment of the words of Amos, that there would be 'a famine in the land, not a famine of bread . . . but of hearing the words of the Lord.' (Amos 8:11.)" (In Conference Report, Oct. 1975, pp. 154–55.)

With the restoration of the gospel, the famine came to an end, not for every individual at once, but for the earth in general. Elder Spencer W. Kimball said, "After centuries of spiritual darkness, . . . we solemnly announce to all the world that the spiritual famine is ended, the spiritual drought is spent, the word of the Lord in its purity and totalness is available to all men. One needs not wander from sea to sea nor from the north to the east, seeking the true gospel as Amos predicted, for the everlasting truth is available." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, pp. 93–94.)

(8-18) Amos 9:7–15. "I Will Sift the House of Israel among All Nations"

Amos told Israel that they could not expect deliverance simply because they were the chosen people (see Amos 9:7). The kingdom of Israel, he said, would be destroyed, except for a remnant of Jacob whom the Lord would preserve because of His mercy (see v. 8). The gathering of the righteous remnant will be such that not one worthy soul will be unnoticed (see v. 9), and the Lord will establish His work, even to the raising of the temple in Jerusalem to its proper place (see v. 11a).

Every righteous soul who has taken upon himself the name of the Lord—be he Israelite or Gentile—will be brought into the kingdom (see Amos 9:12). And the lands of the earth will shed forth their riches. The promises to scattered Israel are secure, for they will be gathered back into the kingdom of God, inheriting every blessing promised to the righteous with no fear of losing them evermore (see vv. 14–15).

POINTS TO PONDER

(8-19) Amos: An Example for Today's World

Amos was a discerning observer of the religious and social conditions of his times. The kingdom of Israel to the north was prosperous. Greed, corruption, and vice were common among the wealthy. The condition of the poor was pitiful. Religion had lost its vitality. Morals seemed forgotten. When called by the Lord, Amos was a herdsman, one who kept flocks and tended vineyards. Yet he rose fearlessly to the occasion and worked among the people, prophesying of their future as individuals and as a nation. The same counsel was given to other generations in similar words (see 2 Nephi 1:9–10).

One of the main values in having the scriptures and reading them is that we can become acquainted with the Lord and with His ways; we can then transfer the principles we learn to our own lives. This generation is under a greater obligation to live His commandments, for greater light and knowledge have been given to us.

In the face of Amaziah, the priest, Amos fearlessly declared his call from the Lord. In reply to Amaziah's attempt to intimidate him, we can almost imagine him saying, as Paul did, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16). Amaziah was one of many in Old Testament times who preached for hire. They taught what the people wanted to hear and belittled the Lord's authorized servants. Are there Amaziahs in our day? Has their method changed? In quiet dignity the servants of the Lord go on, and in time the self-appointed prophets fade into obscurity.

Take a moment to read again Amos's recounting of his call from the Lord (see Amos 7:12–17). Can you relate this event to similar events in the lives of some of the Lord's prophets today? What really qualifies a man to be a prophet? (See Enrichment B.)

Amos 8:7–10 gives a view of some of the circumstances associated with the Second Coming of Christ and the Judgment. Remember that Amos had seen the Lord and received His message. All the prophets through the ages have had a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and have testified of His mission (see Helaman 8:16; Jacob 4:4–5; Acts 3:21–24).



One Should Not Flee from One's Responsibilities

(9-1) Introduction

The prophet Jonah was an unusual servant of the Lord. Jonah was called on a mission very similar to that of other prophets: he was to cry repentance to a people ripening in iniquity. Unlike other prophets, however, Jonah responded by attempting to flee from his assignment. Had his reason been cowardice, though still wrong, it would have been understandable. The brutality of the Assyrians in the treatment of their enemies was well known (see Enrichment D). But Jonah's problem does not seem to be cowardice. Rather, it seems to have been resentment against the Lord for giving the hated enemy a chance to repent (see Jonah 4:1-2).

To someone who has been taught to have Christian love for all men, Jonah's attitude may seem almost unbelievable. But to an Israelite who had been taught that he was of the chosen people and that the Gentiles were corrupt and therefore not acceptable to God, Jonah's attitude was more understandable. Though surprising because we expect a different response from the Lord's prophets, Jonah's response was very human. As you read Jonah's story, see if you can understand what made him respond as he did.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Jonah.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JONAH

(9-2) Jonah 1:1. Where and When Did Jonah Live?

Sidney B. Sperry, a well-known Latter-day Saint Bible scholar, answered that question by saying:

"We know little of the life of Jonah, but that little is more than we know about some of the other prophets discussed in this volume. In the first verse of the book under his name he is said to be 'the son of Amittai.' But the Book of Jonah is not the only Old Testament book in which he is mentioned. In II Kings 14:25 we are told that Jeroboam II, king of Israel, '... restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by the hand of His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.'

"There can be little doubt, therefore, that Jonah was a historical person and was engaged in prophetic activities. The prophet's home, Gath-hepher, according

to Joshua 19:10-13, was located in the territory of the tribe of Zebulun. According to monastic tradition it was the same as the present Arab village of El-Meshed, some three miles northeast of Nazareth, where one of the many Moslem tombs of Nebi Yunus, the Prophet Jonah, is pointed out. St. Jerome (*circa* 400 A.D.) also speaks of Gath-hepher as being situated two Roman miles from Sepphoris towards Tiberias.

"Jonah's name means 'dove' and that of his father 'truthful.'

"Since Jonah lived during the reign of Jeroboam, it is possible to date him at approximately 788 B.C." (*The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 326.)

Both Jonah and Jesus were from the Galilee area. That Jonah's story is a true one, and not an allegory as some scholars maintain, is evidenced by 2 Kings 14:25 and three New Testament references. "The story of Jonah was referred to by our Lord on two occasions when he was asked for a sign from heaven. In each case he gave 'the sign of the prophet Jonah,' the event in that prophet's life being a foreshadowing of Jesus' own death and resurrection (Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-30)." (Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Jonah.")

(9-3) Jonah 1:3. "Jonah Rose Up to Flee unto Tarshish"

Jonah's life and experiences, like Job's, provide a universal lesson similar to an allegory, and the application to all men is drawn from one man's actual experiences.



The seaport at Joppa

Jonah was a type of Christ in that he was in the belly of the whale—in “hell,” in his own words (Jonah 2:2)—just as Jesus was in the grave for three days, and then came forth again. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch showed that the significance of Jonah’s story is broader than that:

“The mission of Jonah was a fact of symbolical and typical importance, which was intended not only to enlighten Israel as to the position of the Gentile world in relation to the kingdom of God, but also to typify the future adoption of such of the heathen, as should observe the word of God, into the fellowship of the salvation prepared in Israel for all nations.

“As the time drew nigh when Israel was to be given up into the power of the Gentiles, and trodden down by them, on account of its stiff-necked apostasy from the Lord its God, it was very natural for the self-righteous mind of Israel to regard the Gentiles as simply enemies of the people and kingdom of God, and not only to deny their capacity for salvation, but also to interpret the prophetic announcement of the judgment coming upon the Gentiles as signifying that they were destined to utter destruction. The object of Jonah’s mission to Nineveh was to combat in the most energetic manner, and practically to overthrow, a delusion which had a seeming support in the election of Israel to be the vehicle of salvation, and which stimulated the inclination to pharisaical reliance upon an outward connection with the chosen nation and a lineal descent from Abraham. . . . The attitude of Israel towards the design of God to show mercy to the Gentiles and grant them salvation, is depicted in the way in which Jonah acts, when he receives the divine command, and when he goes to carry it out. Jonah tries to escape from the command to proclaim the word of God in Nineveh by flight to Tarshish, because he is displeased with the display of divine mercy to the great heathen world, and because, according to ch. iv. 2, he is afraid lest the preaching of repentance should avert from Nineveh the destruction with which it is threatened. In this state of mind on the part of the prophet, there are reflected the feelings and the general state of mind of the Israelitish nation towards the Gentiles. According to his natural man, Jonah shares in this, and is thereby fitted to be the representative of Israel in its pride at its own election. . . . The infliction of this punishment, which falls upon him on account of his obstinate resistance to the will of God, typifies that rejection and banishment from the face of God which Israel will assuredly bring upon itself by its obstinate resistance to the divine call. But Jonah, when cast into the sea, is swallowed up by a great fish; and when he prays to the Lord in the fish’s belly, he is vomited upon the land unhurt. This miracle has also a symbolical meaning for Israel. It shows that if the carnal nation, with its ungodly mind, should turn to the Lord even in the last extremity, it will be raised up again by a divine miracle from destruction to newness of life. And lastly, the manner in which God reproves the prophet, when he is angry because Nineveh has been spared (ch. iv.), is intended to set forth as in a mirror before all Israel the greatness of the divine compassion, which embraces all mankind, in order that it may reflect upon it and lay it to heart.” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10:1:383–85.)

(9-4) Jonah 1:2–3. Why Did Jonah Flee to Tarshish?

“A call on a mission—and direct from the Lord! But it was no surprise to the prophet to be called, for he had probably carried out many missions for the Lord in Israel before. His surprise lay not in the *fact* of the call but in the *kind* of call, and rebellion arose in his heart. It was a call to go to Nineveh, ‘the great city’ of Assyria, and preach to its heathen inhabitants, for their wickedness had come up before the Lord. . . .

“Jonah was torn between his loyalty to God and the whip of his emotions. The latter were at a fever pitch and in the end determined his actions. Because he couldn’t face the mission call, he determined to flee the country and get away from the unpleasant responsibility. He did not intend to lay down his prophetic office; he merely wanted to absent himself without leave for a time until an unpleasant situation adjusted itself.” (Sperry, *Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 328–29.)

The exact location of Tarshish is unknown, but it is supposed by Adam Clarke and others that it is the same place as Tartessus in Spain, near the Straits of Gibraltar (see *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:700). Whether it was there that Jonah fled or some other port on the Mediterranean, it is certain that Tarshish was in the opposite direction of Nineveh. Joppa was a significant seaport on Israel’s coast in Jonah’s day. From there ships sailed to points throughout the Mediterranean. Joppa is the same as the present-day city of Jaffa, beside which the modern city of Tel Aviv has grown.

(9-5) Jonah 1:4–7. What Was the Practice of Casting Lots?

In ancient times lots were cast when an impartial decision was desired. The character and shape of the objects used in biblical times are not known, nor is the precise method by which they were cast, although some scholars suggest that smooth stones or sticks distinguished by colors or symbols were used. The heathens cast lots because, they believed, the gods would guide what happened. In Jonah’s case, the Lord seems to have guided the outcome.

(9-6) Jonah 1:8–10. The Greatness of Jonah’s God

Jonah fearlessly proclaimed that Jehovah is the one God over all creation.

(9-7) Jonah 1:11–16. Jonah Suggested His Own Fate

How do these verses show that Jonah’s running away was not because he was a coward? The men did not accept Jonah’s offer until they had made every effort to save themselves in other ways. Jonah’s willingness also shows his awareness that his actions had displeased God. Jonah 1:14–16 witnesses that only reluctantly did the sailors cast Jonah overboard, as he had commanded them to do. In an attempt to absolve themselves from offense against any of the gods, the sailors offered a prayer to the Lord and begged that their deed might not be counted against them.

(9-8) Jonah 1:17. “Now the Lord Had Prepared a Great Fish”

The account of Jonah being swallowed by a “great fish” has been the subject of much ridicule and

controversy on the part of the world. They use this verse as one argument to sustain the belief that the book of Jonah is simply a parable and not a record of historical fact. Speaking to those who take such a position, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“Are we to reject it as being an impossibility and say that the Lord could not prepare a fish, or whale, to swallow Jonah? . . . Surely the Lord sits in the heavens and laughs at the wisdom of the scoffer, and then on a sudden answers his folly by a repetition of the miracle in dispute, or by the presentation of one still greater. . . .

“I believe, as did Mr. William J. Bryan, the story of Jonah. My chief reason for so believing is not in the fact that it is recorded in the *Bible*, or that the incident has been duplicated in our day, but in the fact that *Jesus Christ, our Lord, believed it*. The Jews sought him for a sign of his divinity. He gave them one, but not what they expected. The scoffers of his day, notwithstanding his mighty works, were incapable, because of sin, of believing.

“He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:314–15.)

The Hebrew word *taneen* used in Jonah and the Greek word *katos* used in the New Testament describe any sea creature of immense proportion. Sharks are common to the Mediterranean and have throats sufficiently large to admit the body of a man. Of course, the miraculous nature of this event lies in the fact that Jonah could survive in the digestive tract of a large fish for three days as much as in the fact that he could be swallowed whole.

(9-9) Jonah 2. Jonah Prayed to the Lord and Was Saved

Jonah, in his extremity, finally turned back to God. His prayer was one of sincere and meaningful repentance. His use of *hell* (*sheol* in Hebrew, which means the spirit world and is sometimes translated as “grave”) adds to the parallels with Christ’s burial. The language of Jonah’s prayer (see Jonah 2:3–5) and the language the Lord used with the Prophet Joseph Smith while he was imprisoned in Liberty Jail (see D&C 122:7) are similar, both even speaking of the “jaws of hell [gaping] open the mouth.” Also compare Jonah 2:7 with the language in Alma 36:18. Jonah’s vow to “pay that that I have vowed” was his way of saying he would fulfill the mission given him, and so “the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land” (see Jonah 2:9–10).

(9-10) Jonah 3:1–3. Why Is Nineveh Called “the Great City?”

Nineveh was a well-known trade center in Jonah’s day. It had terraces, arsenals, barracks, libraries, and temples. The walls were so broad that chariots could drive abreast on them. Beyond the walls were great suburbs, towns, and villages. The circumference of the great city was about sixty miles, or three days’ journey. (See Sperry, *Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 331–32n.)



Jonah’s burial in the belly of the fish symbolized the burial of Christ in the tomb. The Burial of Christ by Carl Bloch. Original at King’s Prayer Chair, Frederiksborg Castle, Denmark. Used by permission of the National Historic Museum at Frederiksborg.

(9-11) Jonah 3:5–9. What Is Signified by Sackcloth and Ashes?

Jonah’s words appear to have had an immediate and very positive effect upon the Ninevites. Why a non-Hebrew people would believe a Hebrew prophet one can only conjecture. Perhaps they were shocked into repentance by the appearance of a foreigner who, apparently without thought of personal safety, would come such a distance to unveil the sins of a people he did not know. At any rate, his mission had the intended result: Nineveh repented in “sackcloth and ashes.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

“A coarse, dark cloth made of hair of camels and goats and used anciently for making sacks and bags was called *sackcloth*. It was also used for making the rough garments worn by mourners, and so it became fixed in the prophetic mind as a symbol for sorrow and mourning. It was the custom for mourners, garbed in sackcloth, either to sprinkle *ashes* upon themselves or to sit in piles of ashes, thereby showing their joy had perished or been destroyed. (Gen. 37:34; Esther 4:1–3; Isa. 61:3; Jer. 6:26.)

“The use of sackcloth and ashes anciently was also a token of humility and penitence. When righteous persons used the covering of sackcloth and the sprinkling of ashes to aid them in attaining the spiritual strength to commune with Deity, their usage was always accompanied by fasting and prayer. Daniel, for instance, prefaced the record of one of his

great petitions to the throne of grace with this explanation: 'I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession.' (Dan. 9:3–4; Isa. 58:5; 1 Kings 21:17–29.)

"Sackcloth and ashes (accompanied by the fasting, prayer, and turning to the Lord that attended their use) became a symbol of the most sincere and humble repentance." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 659.)

(9-12) Jonah 3:10. Does God Need to Repent?

The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible renders this verse as follows: "And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way and repented; and God turned away the evil that he had said he would bring upon them" (JST, Jonah 3:10).

(9-13) Jonah 4:1–11. Jonah Was Displeased with the Lord

Here Jonah demonstrated a second weakness: he pouted because the people did repent and God turned His wrath away. Jonah was so upset that he wished he were dead. Though he had repented of his desire to escape the call of the Lord and went to Nineveh, Jonah had not substantially changed his attitude toward the Gentiles.

The Lord taught Jonah in a way that he could understand that all things are in His hand—the gourd, the worm, even life itself. First, the Lord sent the dreaded east wind, which was very destructive, for it blew off the hot, dry Arabian Desert. Then the Lord caused the sun to beat upon Jonah, making him so uncomfortable that he wished for death. Once Jonah was in that position, the Lord was able to teach him the worth of souls in Nineveh. Because the thousands who lived in Nineveh were ignorant of the saving gospel principles, they could not fully "discern between their right hand and their left hand" (Jonah 4:11). Surely the Lord felt more pity for them than Jonah felt for the gourd (see Alma 26:27, 37). By means of this simple plant, the Lord taught Jonah about the way in which God loves all of His children.

POINTS TO PONDER

(9-14) Trying to Run Away from the Lord

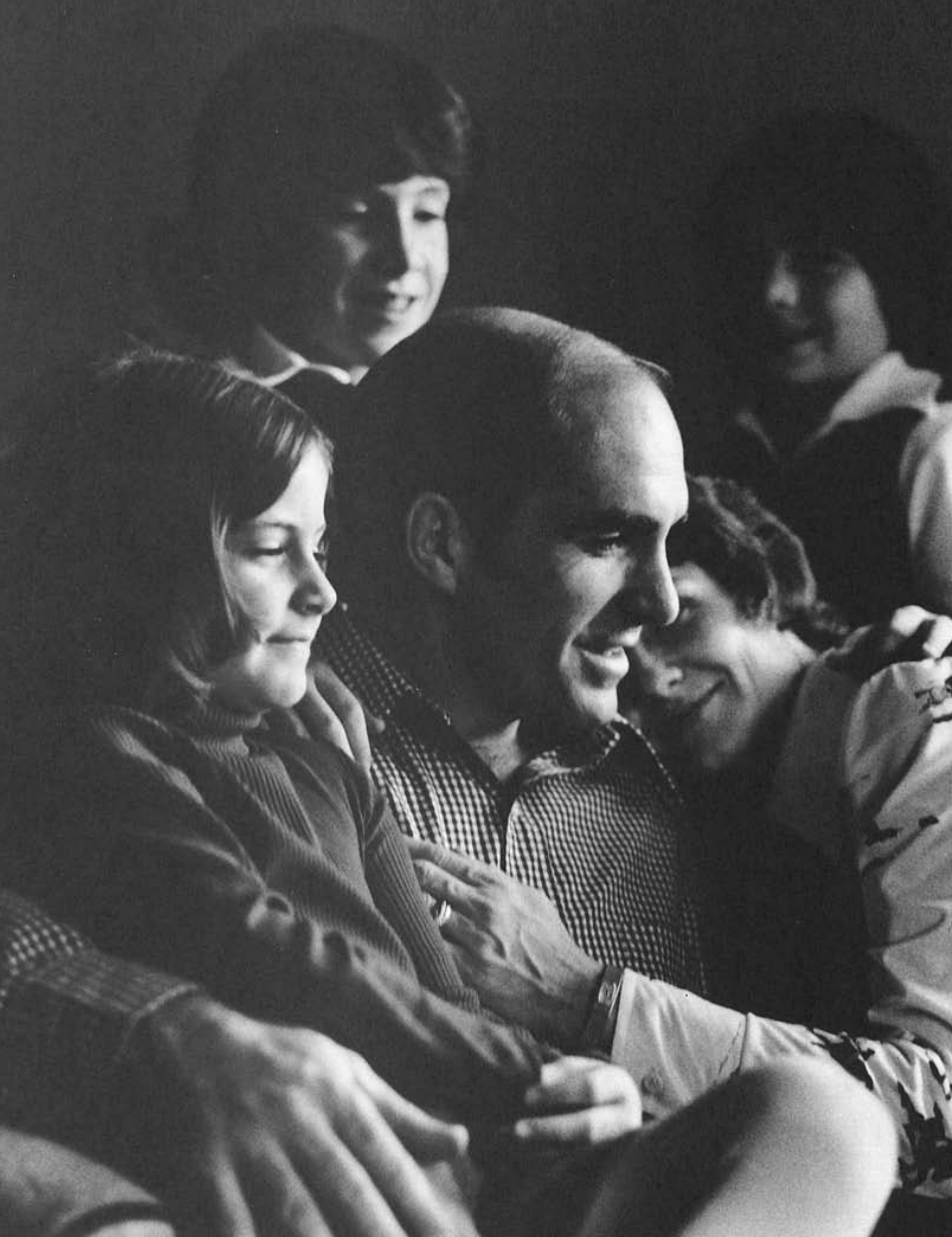
Now that you have read through the book of Jonah, what do you think of its message? How do you feel about Jonah's running away from a call to serve? Is there a difference between Jonah, Joel, and Amos? Write a short essay discussing the differences and similarities and the application of their messages to you today.

Nineveh had a reputation for being wicked (see Nahum 3:1–4). There are many wicked cities in our day. Does their wickedness lessen the Lord's feelings for the people of those cities? What is our obligation when we are called to serve in a way that we might consider distasteful?

It is apparent throughout the story that Jonah could not stand to see God's love, so often promised to Israel and cherished by her, bestowed on others, particularly her heathen oppressors. Have you ever known anyone who has tended to resent someone newly baptized or recently activated and the attention and favor they received in the Church? Is there not a parallel here?

Though most Latter-day Saints may never be called to do anything as dramatic as calling on a whole city to repent or be destroyed, we receive numerous calls of our own from the Lord. Sometimes, like Jonah, we seem to run away or at least to escape our responsibility. Consider the following:

1. A person who refuses to accept a call in the Primary because she would not be able to attend Relief Society meetings.
 2. A young man who turns down a mission call so he can accept a scholarship from a university.
 3. A family who does not hold regular family home evenings.
 4. A person who gets behind on his bills and does not pay his tithing.
 5. A young woman too shy to accept a call as a Young Adult Relief Society teacher.
- We all receive calls, and sometimes we try to escape them. But we can repent, accept the call, and reap joy in our service.



The Ministry of Hosea: A Call to Faithfulness

(10-1) Introduction

Have you ever given love and trust, or even made solemn covenants, and then been betrayed? Or have you ever been loved and trusted by someone but then, in weakness, betrayed that trust and damaged the relationship and thus know the yearning to be loved and trusted again?

Read carefully Hosea's description of God's feelings toward those who have covenanted with Him and then betrayed the trust. Examine your own life for experiences that will help you understand Hosea's message.

During the time of Hosea, the Israelites were influenced heavily by the worship and ways of the Canaanites. The sophistication of the city-based Canaanite farmers who surrounded them, the fertility of their flocks and fields (apparently elicited from the gods and goddesses of fertility) attracted the Israelite farmers. The rites by which the people supplicated the gods of fertility were lewd, licentious, and immoral. Even though Israel had covenanted at Sinai to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation unto God, by the time of Hosea, God's people had become deeply involved in the practices of their neighbors, whose way of life should have repelled them.

Using the imagery of a marriage, the Lord, through Hosea, taught His people that though they had been unfaithful to Him, yet He would still not divorce them (cast them off) if they would but turn back to Him. Though Hosea speaks of a nation, the same principle holds true for individuals. Even those who have been grossly unfaithful to God can reestablish their relationship with Him if they will but turn back to Him with full purpose of heart.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Hosea.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

(10-2) Hosea 1–14. "The Manner of Prophesying among the Jews" (2 Nephi 25:1)

Nephi said that to understand the writings of Isaiah, one has to understand the Jewish way of prophesying (see 2 Nephi 25:1). The same is true of Hosea because he, like Isaiah, made extensive use of metaphors and symbolism (see *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 111–15). Each chapter contains at least one metaphor, and all need to be seen against the background of Israel's history and tradition to be understood.

One metaphor that is central to Hosea's message is marriage. Throughout history every culture has prescribed ways to celebrate the covenants of marriage. Because most people had personal knowledge of marriage, they understood the Lord better when the prophets used marriage terms to describe symbolically the covenants God made with them and they with Him. The covenant relationship between Jehovah and His people Israel was likened to the relationship between a man and his wife.

In the symbolic marriage covenant, God is the husband and Israel, the covenant people, is the bride. God wed Israel in the covenant of Abraham (see Genesis 17). That covenant was renewed with Moses' people at the foot of Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19:4–8). Isaiah 54:5 reads, "For thy Maker is thine husband," and Jeremiah 3:14 reads, "For I am married unto you." Further references to God's role as husband in the covenant are found in Jeremiah 3:20; 31:32 and Revelation 19:7.

When Israel turned away from her husband to worship other gods, then she broke the covenants. She "hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord" (Hosea 1:2) and "hath played the harlot" (Hosea 2:5; see also Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1, 9; 5:7; Exodus 34:14–16; Deuteronomy 31:16). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: "In a spiritual sense, to emphasize how serious it is, the damning sin of idolatry is called *adultery*. When the Lord's people forsake him and worship false gods, their infidelity to Jehovah is described as whoredoms and adultery. (Jer. 3:8–9; Hos. 1:2; 3:1.) By forsaking the Lord, his people are unfaithful to their covenant vows, vows made to him who symbolically is their Husband." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 25.)

The symbolism is central to Hosea's message. He depicts Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord as that of a wife who has turned her back on a faithful husband to follow her lovers.

(10-3) Hosea 1:1. Who Was Hosea?

"The superscription of this book informs us that Hosea was the son of Beeri. Unfortunately we know nothing about the father. The Hebrew name of the prophet, Hoshea, signifies 'help,' 'deliverance,' and 'salvation,' and is derived from the same root as the names of Joshua and Jesus. By reason of numerous allusions in the prophecy to the Northern Kingdom, it is commonly supposed by commentators that Hosea was a native of that commonwealth. The superscription further informs us that Hosea was a prophet 'in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.' Jeroboam II, the king of Israel, reigned from 788 B.C. until 747 B.C. and Hezekiah, the last-named of the kings of Judah, began to reign in 725 B.C. We may

not be far off from the truth if we date Hosea's ministry, therefore, from about 755 B.C. to 725 B.C. He was, then, a contemporary of three other great prophets, Isaiah, Amos, and Micah." (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 274.)

(10-4) Hosea 1:1. What Was Happening in Hosea's Time?

"The years of Hosea's life were melancholy and tragic. The vials of the wrath of heaven were poured out on his apostate people. The nation suffered under the evils of that schism, which was effected by the craft of him who has been branded with the indelible stigma—'Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin.' The obligations of law had been relaxed, and the claims of religion disregarded; Baal became the rival of Jehovah, and in the dark recesses of the groves were practiced the impure and murderous rites of heathen deities; peace and prosperity fled the land, which was harassed by foreign invasion and domestic broils; might and murder became the twin sentinels of the throne; alliances were formed with other nations, which brought with them seductions to paganism; captivity and insult were heaped upon Israel by the uncircumcised; the nation was thoroughly debased, and but a fraction of its population maintained its spiritual allegiance." (Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. "Hosea"; see also *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel*, pp. 245–48.)

(10-5) Hosea 1:2–3. How Are We to Understand God's Commanding Hosea to Marry a Harlot?

Would God literally command one of His servants to take an immoral woman for His wife? Or is this command to be interpreted only in a symbolic sense? Interpretations fall into five general categories:

1. Hosea was actually asked by God to marry a harlot. Those scholars who maintain this view think that such a marriage served as an object lesson to call Israel's attention to their carnal state. Others have felt that such an act would be inconsistent with God, who "cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance" (Alma 45:16). While the Lord was not commanding Hosea to sin, some have felt God would not use sinful behavior even in an object lesson of this kind. Sidney B. Sperry said that this "would be imputing to God a command inconsistent with His holy character. Furthermore, for Hosea to marry a woman with a questionable past would make it impossible for him to preach to his people and expose their sexual immoralities. They could point the finger of scorn at him and say, 'You are as guilty as we are; don't preach to us.'" (*Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 281.)

2. The whole experience came to Hosea in a dream or vision. There was neither harlot nor marriage, but Hosea was asked to accept the burden of being prophet (husband) to immoral Israel (Gomer). Although possible, most scholars reject this alternative because of the intensity of Hosea's involvement with the imagery.

3. Hosea married a woman who at the time was good and faithful but later became a faithless wife, a

harlot, when she left her husband to participate in the fertility rites of the neighboring Canaanites. In this case Hosea's life was an "enacted parable," and the phrase "wife of whoredoms" (Hosea 1:2) refers to what Gomer became. In other words, Hosea did marry Gomer, but she was not a harlot then. Those scholars who sustain this view explain that later in life, Hosea, looking back on his experiences and all that he had suffered and learned through them, recorded incidents that helped illustrate his teachings. The difficulty with this interpretation is that the Lord commanded Hosea to take a "wife of whoredoms" (v. 2). If Gomer were faithful and true at the time of the marriage, this phrase would seem like a peculiar way to describe her.

4. A variation of the interpretation in number three is that Gomer was not an actual harlot but was a worshiper of Baal; therefore, she was guilty of spiritual harlotry. But even so, it seems peculiar that God would ask a prophet to marry a nonbelieving wife.

5. Another approach that avoids some of these difficulties is that the words present an allegory designed to teach the spiritual consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness. Sperry felt that Hosea never did actually contract such a marriage. He explains: "The Lord's call to Hosea to take a harlotrous woman to wife represents the prophet's call to the ministry—a ministry to an apostate and covenant-breaking people. The . . . children of this apparent union represent the coming of the judgments of the Lord upon Israel, warning of which was to be carried to the people by the prophet. The figure of the harlotrous wife and children would, I believe, be readily understood at the time by the Hebrew people without reflecting on Hosea's own wife, or, if he was unmarried, on himself." (*Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 281.)

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles commented on his experience years before teaching Hosea to his early morning seminary classes:

"The book of Hosea, like the writings of Isaiah, uses what seem to me almost poetic images. The symbols in Hosea are a husband, his bride, her betrayal, and a test of marriage covenants almost beyond comprehension. . . . Here are the fierce words of the husband, spoken after his wife has betrayed him in adultery: [Hosea 2:6–7].

"He goes on (through verse 13) to describe the punishment she deserves, and then comes a remarkable change in the verse that follows. . . . : [Hosea 2:14–15, 19–23].

"At that early point in the story, in just two chapters, even my youngest students knew that the husband was a metaphor for Jehovah, Jesus Christ. And they knew that the wife represented his covenant people, Israel, who had gone after strange gods. They understood that the Lord was teaching them, through this metaphor, an important principle. Even though those with whom he has covenanted may be horribly unfaithful to him, he would not divorce them if they would only turn back to him with full purpose of heart.

"I knew that too, but even more than that, I felt something. I had a new feeling about what it means to make a covenant with the Lord. All my life I had heard explanations of covenants as being like a contract, an

agreement where one person agrees to do something and the other agrees to do something else in return.

“For more reasons than I can explain, during those days teaching Hosea, I felt something new, something more powerful. This was not a story about a business deal between partners, nor about business law. . . . This was a love story. This was a story of a marriage covenant bound by love, by steadfast love. What I felt then, and it has increased over the years, was that the Lord, with whom I am blessed to have made covenants, loves me, and you, . . . with a steadfastness about which I continually marvel and which I want with all my heart to emulate” (*Covenants and Sacrifice* [address to religious educators, 15 Aug. 1995], pp. 1–2).

(10-6) Hosea 1:4–11. Symbolic Names

Biblical names often were taken from the circumstances surrounding the child’s birth. In Hosea’s narrative Gomer bore her husband three children: two sons and a daughter. The names given to the children symbolize the destruction that lies in Israel’s future as a result of her idolatrous (adulterous) ways—that is, children (judgments) are the natural result of Israel’s harlotry (unrighteousness).

The name of the first child, *Jezreel*, is the same as that of the valley of former King Jehu’s bloody purge, and foreshadowed Israel’s overthrow in that strategic valley. It is a valley overlooked by Megiddo (New Testament “Armageddon”; see Revelation 16:16) and famed for crucial battles past and future. *Jezreel* means “God shall sow,” or scatter abroad, since anciently sowing was done by casting handfuls of seed. It undoubtedly alludes to the overthrow and scattering of Israel.

The name *Lo-ruhamah* in Hebrew means “not having obtained mercy” and suggests that no amount of mercy from God would set aside divine justice and save northern Israel; the ten tribes would be taken captive and led away.

The name of the third child, *Lo-ammi*, in Hebrew, “not my people,” is like a lament and shows that by their harlotry Israel could not be thought of as God’s people.

With the last two symbolic names, the Lord predicted the negative results of sin (see Hosea 1:6, 9), but in the next verses He held out a promise of hope (vv. 7, 10). Throughout the book, Hosea interweaves the promise of destruction or a curse with the promise of future restoration to favor.



The Jezreel Valley

(10-7) Hosea 2. What Are the Meanings of the Metaphors?

Verse 1	Ammi	“My people”
Verse 1	Ruhamah	“Having obtained mercy,” or “those who have obtained mercy”
Verse 2	your mother	The nation Israel
Verse 3	wilderness	The captivity
Verse 5	lovers	The priests, priestesses, and idols of the Canaanite temples or, in the larger sense, any person one loves more than God.
Verses 5–9, 13	bread, corn, wool, and jewels	Worldly values and treasures
Verses 9–10	her nakedness and her lewdness	Israel’s sin
Verses 11–14	allure her	Jehovah still cares for her and will try to win her back.
Verse 15	Valley of Achor, a rich valley north of Jericho, near Gilgal	The Lord will restore her to great blessings.
Verse 16	<i>Ishi</i> (Hebrew for “my husband”) and <i>Baali</i> (Hebrew for “my master”)	Eventually Israel will accept God as her Lord and her true husband.
Verses 19–20	betroth thee unto me forever	The fulness of the new and everlasting covenant restored to Israel in the latter days and the eternal blessings that will result from Israel’s faithful marriage to Jehovah.
Verse 22	Jezreel (Hebrew for “God shall sow”)	The downtrodden and poor Israel. Like the Jezreel Valley, they have great potential and will be resown and made fruitful by the Lord.

(10-8) Hosea 3:1–3. What Is Represented by the Marriage in Chapter 3?

In the first and third chapters of Hosea the Lord commands His prophet to marry. Scholars disagree on whether these represent two separate marriages or the same one. Either way, they were an effective means for the Lord to teach the people of His own relationship with faithless Israel. From the beginning Israel played the part of the harlot (see Hosea 1:2). Even after entering into covenants of obedience and faithfulness to the Lord as a married spouse, she forsook her husband, the Lord, and went whoring after idol gods (see Hosea 3:1–3).

Keil and Delitzsch write: “The price paid . . . is not to be regarded as purchase money, for which the wife was obtained from her parents; for it cannot be shown that the custom of purchasing a bride from her parents had any existence among the Israelites. . . . It was rather the marriage present . . . which a bridegroom gave, not to the parents, but to the bride herself, as soon as her consent had been obtained” (*Commentary*, 10:1:69). Through paying this price, Hosea (symbolizing the Lord) was able to place her (Israel) beyond her former consorts and receive her back as his own.

(10-9) Hosea 3:2. Come unto Me

Verse 2 gives the price of redeeming the woman spoken of in verse one. Keil and Delitzsch write that “it is a very natural supposition . . . that at that time an ephah of barley was worth a shekel, in which case the whole price would just amount to the some of which, according to Ex. xxi. 32, it was possible to purchase a slave, and was paid half in money and half in barley.

. . . The circumstance that the prophet gave no more for the wife than the amount at which a slave could be obtained, . . . and that this amount was not even paid in money, but half of it in barley—a kind of food so generally despised throughout antiquity . . . —was intended to depict still more strikingly the deeply depressed condition of the woman. . . . [If] the woman was satisfied with fifteen shekels and fifteen ephahs of barley, she must have been in a state of very deep distress” (*Commentary*, 10:1:68–69).

When one considers Gomer as symbolic of Israel, the purchase price implies that Israel’s freedoms had been or would be lost, and in addition she suffered the slavery of sin, which also requires a purchase price before Israel can be reconciled with her Savior. Hosea desired to purchase his wife from slavery just as Heavenly Father seeks after His children to redeem them from Satan’s power with the blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

(10-10) Hosea 3:3. “Thou Shalt Not Play the Harlot”

Even though the purchase price mentioned in Hosea 3:2 has been paid, there is a time of testing, of waiting and preparing, before one is reinstated to all the blessings of the covenant and enjoys the company of a husband and a savior. This principle is valid whether applied to Gomer as a person or to Gomer as a figure for Israel.

(10-11) Hosea 3:4–5. The Captivity

Hosea 3:4 alludes to Israel’s impending captivity when they would be without leadership (“kings,” “princes”) and without the temple and the religious practices they believed in (“sacrifice”). They would

also be without revelation (represented by the ephod, to which the Urim and Thummim were attached). The teraphim were worshiped by the Canaanites as givers of earthly prosperity and deities who revealed the future. Commentators believe that these objects of Canaanite worship were included with objects from the worship of Jehovah to show the people that the worship of idols would also be lost. "David their king" (v. 5) is one of the titles of the Messiah or Jesus Christ (see Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1).

As noted in Hosea 3:3, Gomer had to purify her life before she could feel Hosea's love. In their captivity Israel would suffer without God's help until she purified her life. Then she would know of God's continued love.

(10-12) Hosea 4:3. "Therefore Shall the Land Mourn"

See also Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, in which the Lord outlines the relationship between the bounties of the land and the righteousness or wickedness of the people.

(10-13) Hosea 4:8. What Is Meant by the Phrase "They Eat Up the Sin of My People"?

Keil and Delitzsch explained that the Hebrew phrase translated as the "sin of my people" referred to "the sin-offering of the people, the flesh of which the priests were commanded to eat, to wipe away the sin of the people (see [Leviticus 6:26], and the remarks upon this law at [Leviticus 10:17]). The fulfillment of this command, however, became a sin on the part of the priests, from the fact that they directed their soul, *i.e.* their longing desire, to the transgression of the people; in other words, that they wished the sins of the people to be increased, in order that they might receive a good supply of sacrificial meat to eat." (*Commentary*, 10:1:78-79.)

(10-14) Hosea 4:12. What Are Stocks and Staffs?

The stocks were wooden idols. The staffs were divining rods, instruments used to foretell the future, to find lost or hidden objects, and so forth. All were consulted within the Canaanite culture much like divining instruments are used in today's Satanic cults. Thus, instead of seeking counsel from the living God, they looked to the idols.

(10-15) Hosea 4:15. Why Avoid Gilgal and Bethaven?

Gilgal was where the law of circumcision was renewed after Israel crossed over Jordan in Joshua's day, but it had become polluted by idolatry since the days of Jeroboam. Bethaven means "house of iniquity," and Bethel means "house of God." Hosea, like Amos in Amos 4:5, applied the name *Bethaven* to the town Bethel to show that the house of God had now become the house of iniquity and idols.

(10-16) Hosea 4:16. "A Backsliding Heifer" and "a Lamb in a Large Place"

A backsliding heifer is one who refuses to follow when led and sets her feet and slides in the dirt. She is an unmanageable animal and will not pull together with the other ox yoked with her, nor will she submit to the guidance of the driver.

A lamb in a large place suggests a helpless animal lost in a large open area with no protection. This figure suggests Israel's being scattered among the Gentiles.



A valley in the mountains of Ephraim

(10-17) Hosea 4:17; 5:3, 9, 11-14; 6:4. Why Is There So Much Emphasis on Ephraim and Judah and No Mention of the Other Tribes?

Because they were the two dominant tribes, Judah came to represent all the Israelites in the Southern Kingdom, and Ephraim came to represent the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom. Thus, as used here, *Judah* means the Southern Kingdom, and *Ephraim* the Northern Kingdom.

(10-18) Hosea 5:1-2. Nets and Snares

Mizpah and Tabor, both mountains, were famous for hunting; hence, the "net" and "snare." *Revolters* were those who drove animals into a pit that had been camouflaged. The metaphor depicts the rulers and priesthood in the bloody role of the hunters who spiritually killed their prey, Israel.

(10-19) Hosea 5:7. "Begotten Strange Children"

"Israel ought to have begotten children of God in the maintenance of the covenant with the Lord; but in its apostasy from God it had begotten an adulterous generation, children whom the Lord could not acknowledge as His own" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:1:89).

(10-20) Hosea 5:10-11. "Remove the Bound"

Deuteronomy 27:17 says, "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark" (see also Deuteronomy 19:14). In ancient Israel, property was marked with stone markers or "landmarks." To move such a mark was a serious offense, for it was the same as stealing land. If one who destroyed a neighbor's boundaries was cursed, how much more cursed were the princes of Judah who destroyed the moral and spiritual boundaries that guarded the worship of Jehovah? In Hosea 5:11 the phrase "walked after the commandment" indicates that Ephraim was oppressed because it willingly walked after filth instead of walking after true commandments (see Hosea 5:11a).

(10-21) Hosea 6:1–3. A Call to Return

Hosea 6:2 may be a symbolic reference to the gathering of Israel and the Millennium. If a day is a thousand years (see 1 Peter 3:8), Israel is to be revived and blessed some two or three thousand years in the future.

Hosea 6:3 is a call to seek the knowledge of Jehovah, whose rising is fixed like the morning dawn and whose blessing is “as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” To the farmer in ancient Israel, two “rains” were very critical. The former (or first) rains softened the earth so that he could plow it and plant the seed; the latter (or second) rains gave the crop its growth. (See also Joel 2:23.)

(10-22) Hosea 6:6. What Did Israel Lack in Her Relationship to Jehovah?

“Israel’s fidelity, then, was that of a fickle woman. It lacked the steadfastness, the trustworthiness of true covenant love. In Hosea’s native language, Israel lacked *hésed*. This word is exceedingly difficult to render into English. (The Revised Standard Version usually translates it ‘steadfast love.’) It is a covenant word that refers to the faithfulness or loyal love that binds two parties together in covenant. When a person shows *hésed* to another, he is not motivated merely by legal obligation but by an inner loyalty which arises out of the relationship itself. Such covenant love has the quality of constancy, firmness, steadfastness. In Hosea’s vivid figure, Israel’s *hésed* was like a transient morning cloud, or like the morning dew that evaporates quickly (6:4). Hence Yahweh [Jehovah] scorned the existing forms of worship:

“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.”—Hosea 6:6

“We probably should not press Hosea’s words to mean that he was opposed to formal worship. But clearly he was opposed to forms that were devoid of the spirit of true faithfulness to the God of the covenant. Jesus twice asked his hearers to go and reread Hosea 6:6 when he was accused of breaking the formal rules of orthodoxy (cf. Matt. 9:13 and 12:7).” (Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, p. 248.)

(10-23) Hosea 7:8–9. How Is Ephraim a “Cake Not Turned”?

Because Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) had mixed with other nations, worshiped their idols, and learned their ways, she had only fulfilled half the requisites for the conquest of Canaan, or she was only “half baked.”

“Israel had thereby become a cake not turned. [The image in Hebrew is of] a cake baked upon hot ashes or red-hot stones, which, if it be not turned, is burned at the bottom, and not baked at all above. The meaning of this figure is explained by ver. 9. As the fire will burn an ash-cake when it is left unturned, so have foreigners consumed the strength of Israel, partly by devastating wars, and partly by the heathenish nature which has penetrated into Israel in their train.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:1:107–8.)

(10-24) Hosea 7:11–13. What Were the Dangers of Israel’s Entangling Alliances?

“We live at a time when the drums of war cause many people . . . to debate whether or not we ought to make

alliances with other countries in self-defense. During Hosea’s ministry there occurred conspiracies and other internal disturbances that seriously weakened Israel (2 Kings 15). In desperation the people alternately sought aid from Assyria and Egypt, paying tribute to both, with the result that they lost their independence and national autonomy, being forced to accept vassalage to Assyria. Hosea warned the nation of its folly in seeking alliances with foreign nations. Political alliances would not remedy the real cause of their trouble—moral disease and rebellion against God. Hosea doubtless believed that God would protect His own if they but trusted Him.

“‘And Ephraim is become like a silly dove, without understanding; They call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria.’ (7:11)

“Hosea wanted his people to avoid making covenants with nations whose sole reliance was on force. Let the big nations fight their own wars; little nations that elected to mix up with them were sure to be worsted. The big nations, furthermore, had religious practices that were utterly opposite to prophetic ideals. Their immoralities, added to those already prevalent in Israel would, in time, wreck the nation. So Israel would spread the net of destruction over herself. Instead of courting God’s love and protection, her courting of the nations would only put her in a trap—and it did.” (Sperry, *Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 285–86.)

(10-25) Hosea 7:14. Why Would the People Cry for Corn and Wine?

When hardships come, some cry upon their beds. Rather than pray to God with all their heart, they look for corn and wine—something to take away the hurt. They do not seek that which brings the Lord’s help.

(10-26) Hosea 7:16. A Deceitful Bow

A “deceitful bow” is one that flies back to its curved position while the archer is stringing it or breaks while he has it drawn. In either case, the archer can be wounded.

(10-27) Hosea 8:8–9. A Wild Ass

A wild ass is one of the most independent and unreliable beasts on earth. Because Israel wanted to go her own way and be alone, she was likened to a wild ass. She would go alone into Assyria and be swallowed up by the Gentiles. The “lovers” hired by Ephraim represent her continued attempt to find security and friends through political alliances rather than through obedience to God.

(10-28) Hosea 8:13; 9:3, 6. Egypt

Egypt was the land of the first captivity—between the times of Joseph and Moses. The word here refers to captivity or bondage in general; thus, Assyria is the new Egypt.

(10-29) Hosea 9:7. Why Did Hosea Say the “Prophet Is a Fool”?

Hosea was referring to false prophets who were saying that all was well in Israel and that their enemies would not come against them.

(10-30) Hosea 9:10–17. The Imagery of Hosea

Hosea used several figurative expressions that ancient Israel would clearly understand but which are not clearly understood by modern readers.

Grapes in the wilderness; first ripe fruit of the fig (v. 10). Both grapes and figs were viewed as choice fruits by the people anciently. Jehovah found Israel, at first, a delightful thing.

Baal-peor (v. 10). Another way of saying the people were committing immoral acts (see Numbers 25:1–3; Psalm 106:28).

Ephraim's glory flies away (v. 11). The Northern Kingdom shall see no conception, no pregnancy, no birth—Ephraim will be left totally desolate.

Have children but be bereaved (v. 12). Even their grown-up sons shall be cut off.

Ephraim and Tyre (Tyrus) (v. 13). Tyre was renowned for its glory and splendor. God had chosen Ephraim for similar blessings, but because of their wickedness they would be barren.

Gilgal (v. 15). See Notes and Commentary on Hosea 4:15.

The princes are revolters (v. 15). See Notes and Commentary on Hosea 5:1–2.

(10-31) Hosea 10:12. How Can Israel or Any Child of God Obtain Mercy?

“Mercy is not showered [indiscriminately] upon mankind, except in the general sense that it is manifest in the creation and peopling of the earth and in the granting of immortality to all men as a free gift. Rather, mercy is granted (because of the grace, love, and condescension of God), as it is with all blessings, to those who comply with the law upon which its receipt is predicated. (D. & C. 130:20–21.) That law is the law of righteousness; *those who sow righteousness, reap mercy*. (Hos. 10:12.) There is no promise of mercy to the wicked; rather, as stated in the Ten Commandments, the Lord promises to show mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments. (Ex. 20:6; Dan. 9:4; D. & C. 70:18.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 484.)

(10-32) Hosea 10:12–13. The Law of the Harvest

If one plants or does works of righteousness, he reaps mercy and the blessings of obedience (see D&C 130:20–21). If one plants wickedness, he reaps iniquity. What one gets is the result of what one does. What one does is a result of where one puts one's trust. We can trust God, or power, or friends, or money; but what we receive will depend on what we trusted (see also Hosea 8:7).

Elder Bernard P. Brockbank counseled college students: “If you sow seeds of righteousness, you will harvest righteousness. If you sow thorns and corruption, you will reap thorns and corruption. A prophet of the Lord said, ‘For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind’ (Hosea 8:7). If you sow seeds of purity, you will harvest purity. If you sow seeds of petting, immorality, and promiscuity, you will harvest destruction to your godlike attributes. If you sow seeds of pure love, you will receive pure love. If you love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, you will reap God's love. If you would obtain celestial glory, you must plant into your heart and character God's heavenly ways. Jesus

admonished in these words: ‘For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you’ (D&C 78:7). If you want a celestial life, you will have to plant celestial seeds. Pure religion comes from God. If you want pure religion in your life, you must plant the gospel of Jesus Christ in your heart. Remember, ‘As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.’ If you think as a celestial being, you will be a celestial being. If you think as a child of God should think, you will be a member of his celestial family.” (“Be Worthy of Celestial Exaltation,” in *Speeches of the Year, 1974*, pp. 386–87.)

(10-33) Hosea 10:14. Who Was Shalman?

Shalman may be Shalmaneser and Beth-arbel may be the Armenian city Arbela, which Shalmaneser destroyed while still a general under Tiglath-pileser (see Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:645).

(10-34) Hosea 11:1. Israel's Coming out of Egypt

Matthew saw the emergence of Israel from Egypt as a type or pattern of Jesus' coming out of Egypt (see Matthew 2:15). When the Israelites were humble, God could work miracles with them. (See also Hosea 12:13.)

(10-35) Hosea 11:4. “As They That Take off the Yoke”

“This is an agricultural simile, and refers to the custom of raising the yoke from the neck and cheeks of the oxen so that they can more readily eat their food. Henderson says: ‘The *ol*, yoke, not only included the piece of wood on the neck by which the animal was fastened to the pole, but also the whole of the harness about the head which was connected with it. The yokes used in the East



A yoke for oxen

are very heavy, and press so much upon the animals that they are unable to bend their necks.’ . . .

“Compare this statement with what Jesus says about *his yoke* in Matthew [11:28–30].” (James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 317.)

(10-36) Hosea 12:1. Feeding on the Wind

“Feeding on the wind” (see Hosea 12:1) is believing that which has not truth or substance. Carrying oil into Egypt (see v. 1) represents the attempt to get protection through tribute from an alliance with Egypt.

(10-37) Hosea 13:13–14. What Are the Analogies in These Verses?

The travailing woman is Israel, and “as there is a critical time in parturition [the process of giving birth] in which the mother in hard labour may by skillful assistants be eased of her burden, which, if neglected, may endanger the life both of parent and child; so there was a time in which Ephraim might have returned to God, but they would not; therefore they are now in danger of being finally destroyed.” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:651.)

Hosea 13:14 uses the figures of resurrection as a metaphor that promises the gathering and restoration of Israel. The “dry bones” metaphor in Ezekiel 37:1–14 conveys the same message. The fact that the resurrection is symbolic of the gathering of Israel does not diminish the usefulness of these passages in proving that the resurrection was a firm doctrine among the Israelites. In fact, just the opposite is true; for a metaphor of this type loses its force if the type or figure used is not real.

At the end of Hosea 13:14, the Lord says “repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” This could mean that the Lord will not swerve in His purpose even though Israel may cry out for deliverance. When the grave is conquered, however, and the judgments rendered, there will be no more sin; hence, no more repentance because all will be assigned to a kingdom whose laws they can obey.

(10-38) Hosea 14:2. “The Calves of Our Lips”

This verse deals with one’s resolves to do better. To present the sincere prayers of one’s lips as an offering to the Lord was as precious as the best offerings in the Mosaic law, which were young oxen or bullocks; hence, “the calves of our lips.”

POINTS TO PONDER

(10-39) Concepts Taught in Hosea

Some individual verses in Hosea, because of the symbolism, contain whole concepts or sermons. Listed below are some examples for your consideration. Read them and underline the ones you like in your Bible. Try to understand their symbolic meaning. Commit some to memory to use as a spiritual thought or short sermon.

Hosea 6:1. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.”

Hosea 6:4. “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.”

Hosea 8:7. “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.”

Hosea 10:13. “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.”

Hosea 11:1. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”

Hosea 11:8. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” (Emphasis added. Note God’s agony over the impending captivity.)

Hosea 13:4. “Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.”

Hosea 13:9. “Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.”

Hosea 14:1. “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.”

Hosea 14:5. “I will be as the dew unto Israel.” (In a land of little rain, dew gives life to the desert as God’s love gives life to us.)

(10-40) Gomer and Hosea: A Story of Hope

In the book of Hosea we can see two applications for the symbols *Hosea* and *Gomer*. We can think of each as having been living people, or we can apply the second analogy where Hosea represents God and Gomer represents a nation—Israel. The second representation illustrates God’s love for an unfaithful people, while the first application has a personal message of comfort and encouragement for you to remain faithful to your covenants and promises.

Review the two suggested applications of Hosea’s message and see if Hosea and Gomer’s experiences are like those of someone you know.

(10-41) Dealing with Betrayal

The modern world entices people as it did in the days of Hosea to worship at the shrine of pleasure. Because the sin is as enticing as ever, many people give into temptation. Someone you know well may betray your trust. What can compare to the hurt that accompanies betrayed trusts, friendships, confidences, and even covenants? Feelings of bitterness, revenge, pride, and withdrawal are immediately experienced.

How could Hosea still have loved Gomer? How could God still have loved Israel? How could Jesus have said, “Forgive them; for they know not what they do”? (Luke 23:34). How can you still love someone who has betrayed you?

Dealing with the feelings that come with betrayal may be one of the greatest trials of your life. Humility must replace pride; charity, revenge; hope, despair; faith, fear. These trials may require your greatest prayers as you seek to forgive someone who has betrayed you.

(10-42) Hope for You in the Story of Gomer

God loves you, no matter what you have ever done to hurt or disappoint Him, and He has provided a way for you to return to Him. The story of Gomer clearly shows God’s love for you. Even when you break His commandments and your life seems to fall apart, God’s greatest desire is to see you repent and come back to receive the happiness of a good life.

The world today exhibits many of the same social ills that existed in Gomer’s time. Perhaps in the past you have forgotten covenants in order to respond to the promises and flattery of the world. Now you know the longing to be loved and trusted again. For you, the story of Gomer testifies of hope and a Redeemer who longs to have you restored to the close relationship you once had with Him (see Hosea 3:1–2). Her story is a promise that if you will return “home” and prove your repentance and faithfulness (see Hosea 3:3–4), then all that you desire will be restored to you (see Hosea 2:19–23). Enduring or overcoming trials in proving your repentance and faithfulness will require your greatest efforts in prayer and acts of obedience to God’s laws.



The Assyrian Conquest and the Lost Tribes

(D-1) Assyria: Masters of War

In 721 B.C. Assyria swept out of the north, captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and took the ten tribes into captivity. From there they became lost to history.

Assyria, named for the god Ashur (highest in the pantheon of Assyrian gods), was located in the Mesopotamian plain. It was bordered on the west by the Syrian desert, on the south by Babylonia, and on the north and east by the Persian and Urarthian hills (see J. D. Douglas, ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Assyria," 1:137). This area today is primarily the nation of Iraq.

Perhaps the earliest inhabitants of the area were the Subareans, who were joined later by the Sumerians. In the third millennium B.C. came the Semites who eventually merged with the Subareans and Sumerians. "They took their common language and their arts from Sumeria, but modified them later into an almost undistinguishable similarity to the language and arts of Babylonia. Their circumstances, however, forbade them to indulge in the effeminate ease of Babylon; from beginning to end they were a race of warriors, mighty in muscle and courage, abounding in proud hair and beard, standing straight, stern and solid on their monuments, and striding with tremendous feet the east-Mediterranean world. Their history is one of kings and slaves, wars and conquests, bloody victories and sudden defeat." (Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, *The Story of Civilization*, 1:266.)

Assyria's ascent as a formidable power in the Near East was due in large measure to strong kings who increased her borders and subjected other nations as tributaries. Assyria first became an independent nation between 1813 and 1781 B.C. under Shamshi-Adad (see LaMar C. Berrett, *Discovering the World of the Bible*, p. 180). Other powerful kings who left their mark on Assyrian history included Tiglath-pileser I (1115–1077 B.C.), Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.), Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.), Shamshi-Adad V (824–811 B.C.), Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 B.C.), Shalmaneser V (726–722 B.C.), Sargon II (721–705 B.C.), Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.), Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.), and Ashurbanipal (668–627 B.C.) (see Berrett, *World of the Bible*, p. 180; see also Douglas, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Assyria," 1:139).

Under these kings Assyria reached its greatest apex of power, controlling the area that included not only Assyria but also Babylonia, Armenia, Media, Judea, Syria, Phoenicia, Sumeria, Elam, and Egypt. This empire "was without doubt the most extensive administrative organization yet seen in the Mediterranean or Near Eastern world; only Hammurabi and Thutmose III had approached it, and Persia alone would equal it before the coming of Alexander" (Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, 1:270).

(D-2) The Standardization of Terror

The most vital part of the Assyrian government was its army. Warfare was a science to the leaders of Assyria. Infantry, chariots, cavalry (introduced by Ashurnasirpal to aid the infantry and chariots), sappers, armor made from iron, siege machines, and battering rams were all developed or perfected by the Assyrians. Strategy and tactics were also well understood by the Assyrian officers. (See Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, 1:270–71.)

But it was not just Assyrian effectiveness in warfare that struck terror to the hearts of the Near Eastern world. They were savage and brutal as well.

"A captured city was usually plundered and burnt to the ground, and its site was deliberately denuded by killing its trees. The loyalty of the troops was secured by dividing a large part of the spoils among them; their bravery was ensured by the general rule of the Near East that all captives in war might be enslaved or slain. Soldiers were rewarded for every severed head they brought in from the field, so that the aftermath of a victory generally witnessed the wholesale decapitation of fallen foes. Most often the prisoners, who would have consumed much food in a long campaign, and would have constituted a danger and nuisance in the rear, were dispatched after the battle; they knelt with their backs to their captors, who beat their heads in with clubs, or cut them off with cutlasses. Scribes stood by to count the number of prisoners taken and killed by each soldier, and apportioned the booty accordingly; the king, if time permitted, presided at the slaughter. The nobles among the defeated were given more special treatment: their ears, noses, hands and feet were sliced off, or they were thrown from high towers, or they and their children were beheaded, or flayed alive, or roasted over a slow fire. . . .

"In all departments of Assyrian life we meet with a patriarchal sternness natural to a people that lived by conquest, and in every sense on the border of barbarism. Just as the Romans took thousands of prisoners into lifelong slavery after their victories, and dragged others to the Circus Maximus to be torn to pieces by starving animals, so the Assyrians seemed to find satisfaction—or a necessary tutelage for their sons—in torturing captives, blinding children before the eyes of their parents, flaying men alive, roasting them in kilns, chaining them in cages for the amusement of the populace, and then sending the survivors off to execution. Ashurnasirpal tells how 'all the chiefs who had revolted I flayed, with their skins I covered the pillar, some in the midst I walled up, others on stakes I impaled, still others I arranged around the pillar on stakes. . . . As for the chieftains and royal officers who had rebelled, I cut off their members.' Ashurbanipal boasts that 'I burned three thousand captives with fire, I left not a single one among them alive to serve as a hostage.' Another of his inscriptions reads: 'These

warriors who had sinned against Ashur and had plotted evil against me . . . from their hostile mouths have I torn their tongues, and I have compassed their destruction. As for the others who remained alive, I offered them as a funerary sacrifice; . . . their lacerated members have I given unto the dogs, the swine, the wolves. . . . By accomplishing these deeds I have rejoiced the heart of the great gods.' Another monarch instructs his artisans to engrave upon the bricks these claims on the admiration of posterity: 'My war chariots crush men and beasts. . . . The monuments which I erect are made of human corpses from which I have cut the head and limbs. I cut off the hands of all those whom I capture alive.' Reliefs at Nineveh show men being impaled or flayed, or having their tongues torn out; one shows a king gouging out the eyes of prisoners with a lance while he holds their heads conveniently in place with a cord passed through their lips." (Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, 1:271, 275–76.)

(D-3) Assyria Came to the Land of Israel

The prophet Isaiah warned Israel that if they did not repent, the Lord would use Assyria as "the rod of mine anger" (Isaiah 10:5). Assyria was at the height of its power, and its reputation for terror and brutality should have been sufficient to turn Israel back to their God, but they would not heed. Under the reign of Tiglath-pileser II, Assyria began consolidating its power in the western part of the empire. Around 738 B.C. he demanded and received tribute from Damascus, the capital of Syria, and Samaria, the capital of Israel (see 2 Kings 15:19–20). But four years later, the two Syrian states rebelled, and once again Tiglath-pileser moved in. Damascus was conquered, as was part of the territory of the Northern Kingdom, and the people were carried off into captivity (see 2 Kings 15:29).

It seems to have been Tiglath-pileser who originated large-scale deportations of conquered peoples. By deporting a conquered people en masse to a foreign land, Tiglath-pileser hoped to break their unity and destroy their national identity (see *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Assyria and Babylonia," 1:272).

The practice of large deportations continued under Shalmaneser and later Sargon II, successors to Tiglath-pileser who also played an important role in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Because of the revolt of Hoshea, king of Israel, Shalmaneser laid siege to Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom. The siege lasted three years, during which time Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by Sargon II. Sargon II finally destroyed Samaria and carried the survivors captive into Assyria (see 2 Kings 17:1–6), thus ending the history of Israel in the Old Testament and setting the stage for the loss of the ten northern tribes.

Not long after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (Israel), the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was also threatened with destruction by Assyria. Sennacherib, successor to Sargon II, attacked Judah during the reign of King Hezekiah and destroyed most of her principal cities. Through the intervention of the Lord, however, Sennacherib was unable to capture Jerusalem (see Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 19:35). Having failed to conquer Judah, Sennacherib returned home to Nineveh, capital of Assyria at the time.

(D-4) Assyria Passed from the Scene

Nineveh, the city in which Jonah had preached repentance, was the last capital of the Assyrian Empire (Ashur and Calah were the first two capitals). Sennacherib rebuilt the city, strengthened its walls, and built a canal system to bring water into it. But Zephaniah and Nahum both prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed (see Zephaniah 2:13–15; Nahum 3). The destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. fulfilled the words of these two Old Testament prophets.

The Assyrian Empire, too, was destroyed, in part because, as Durant noted, "the qualities of body and character that had helped to make the Assyrian armies invincible were weakened by the very victories that they won; in each victory it was the strongest and bravest who died, while the infirm and cautious survived to multiply their kind; it was a dysgenic [biologically defective] process that perhaps made for civilization by weeding out the more brutal types, but undermined the biological basis upon which Assyria had risen to power. The extent of her conquests had helped to weaken her; not only had they depopulated her fields to feed insatiate Mars [the god of war], but they had brought into Assyria, as captives, millions of destitute aliens who bred with the fertility of the hopeless, destroyed all national unity of character and blood, and became by their growing numbers a hostile and disintegrating force in the very midst of the conquerors. More and more the army itself was filled by these men of other lands, while semi-barbarous marauders harassed every border, and exhausted the resources of the country in an endless defense of its unnatural frontiers." (*Our Oriental Heritage*, 1:283.)

Finally, under Nabopolassar, the Chaldeans and Babylonians drove the Assyrians out of Babylonia in 625 B.C. The Medes and Babylonians then united and captured Ashur in 614 B.C. Two years later Nineveh, capital of Assyria itself, fell. With the destruction of Assyria, Babylon became the world empire that all countries in the Near East feared and paid tribute to.

(D-5) What Became of the Tribes of Israel?

How long Israel remained in Assyria after they had been carried away captive by Sargon II is not known. It is likely that many accepted the life and culture of their captors and lost their identity. They had gone into captivity because of their extreme wickedness, so it would not be surprising to find them accepting the pagan culture of the Assyrians. One of the books of the Apocrypha, however, records that one group of the captives saw that their captivity was the result of their own wickedness and sought the Lord in repentance (see Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Apocrypha"). The Lord heeded their cries and led them away into the north countries.

In the Apocrypha, Esdras describes the following vision: "But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river. For the most High then shewed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to

go, namely, of a year and a half: and the same region is called Arsareth. Then dwelt they there until the latter time." (2 Esdras 13:41–46.)

Elder George Reynolds commented on the direction of the travels of the tribes of Israel: "They determined to go to a country 'where never man dwelt,' that they might be free from all contaminating influences. That country could only be found in the north. Southern Asia was already the seat of a comparatively ancient civilization; Egypt flourished in northern Africa; and southern Europe was rapidly filling with the future rulers of the world. They had therefore no choice but to turn their faces northward. The first portion of their journey was not however north; according to the account of Esdras, they appear to have at first moved in the direction of their old home; and it is possible that they originally started with the intention of returning thereto; or probably, in order to deceive the Assyrians, they started as if to return to Canaan, and when they crossed the Euphrates and were out of danger from the hosts of Medes and Persians, then they turned their journeying feet toward the polar star." (In James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, p. 512.)

The account in Esdras is supported by what the Savior taught the Nephites, for He said the lost tribes had been "led away out of the land" by the Father (3 Nephi 15:15). Elder Reynolds's explanation takes into account the numerous prophecies that indicate that when the ten lost tribes return, they will come out of the north (see, for example, Jeremiah 3:18; 16:15; 31:8; D&C 110:11; 133:26). Where they went is not known, and this fact has led to much speculation about their present whereabouts. The Lord has not seen fit to reveal their location, however, and until He does so, it is useless to try to identify their present location.

Certain things about this intriguing group have been revealed through latter-day scriptures and the writings of living prophets. These are discussed below (see 3 Nephi 15:15).

(D-6) The Return of the Ten Tribes

The prophets of old saw that in the last dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of times, would come a complete gathering and restoration of the house of Israel. With the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 6 April 1830, this great restoration began. The ensign (see Isaiah 11:12) has been unfolded to the nations, and Israel is invited by her King to gather again in preparation for the great day when He will personally reign in their midst.

At a conference held 3–6 June 1831 in Kirtland, Ohio, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained that John the Beloved was then ministering among the lost tribes of Israel, preparing them for their return to again possess the lands of their fathers (see *History of the Church*, 1:176; D&C 77:14). Five years later, Moses appeared in the Kirtland Temple to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and committed to them the keys of the priesthood for "the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north" (D&C 110:11). It is apparent from this passage that though the main body of ten of the tribes is lost, there are representatives of all twelve tribes scattered throughout the earth. This statement can be explained as follows:

1. When Assyria attacked the Northern Kingdom, many fled to the safety of the Southern Kingdom.

2. When the Lord led Israel out of Assyria, some remained behind (see Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 325).

3. As the ten tribes traveled north, some stopped along the way—many possibly being scattered throughout Europe and Asia.

4. From time to time the Lord has led groups of Israelites into other areas of the earth: the Nephites and the Mulekites being two such groups (see 1 Nephi 22:3–5). Concerning this scattering, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "One of the most interesting and significant parables ever written is that revealed to Zenos and recorded in the fifth chapter of Jacob in the Book of Mormon. It is a parable of the scattering of Israel. If we had the full key to the interpretation, then we would have in detail how Israel was transplanted in all parts of the earth." (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:56–57.)

5. The scriptures teach that remnants of all the tribes of Israel were scattered among the nations of the earth and in the last days will be gathered out from among these nations and from the four quarters of the earth. The remnant known as the lost ten tribes will return as a body out of the north countries. (See Deuteronomy 4:27; 28:29, 64; Jeremiah 16:14–15; 31:8; Ezekiel 11:15–17; Hosea 9:16–17; Daniel 9:7; 1 Nephi 22:3–4; 19:16; 3 Nephi 5:23–24; 21:26–29; D&C 110:11; 133:26–32.)

The Doctrine and Covenants clearly foretells the time when the prophets among these tribes will lead the people back in a great and marvelous show of power (see D&C 133:26–34). Jeremiah promised that so marvelous would be this event that no longer would God be called the Lord who led Israel out of Egypt but the Lord who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north (see Jeremiah 16:14–15). The appointed time will come when the lost tribes of Israel will return to Zion to receive their blessings at the hands of Ephraim. "This great gathering will take place under the direction of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for he holds the keys" (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 458). The lost tribes, as well as all others who want to be numbered in the house of Israel and receive the blessings of the priesthood, must come to Ephraim, who holds the birthright blessings (see Genesis 48:15–22; 1 Chronicles 5:1–2; Jeremiah 31:9).

Elder Wilford Woodruff taught that when the ten tribes returned, they would come to Ephraim to obtain the priesthood as well as their endowments and sealings (see *Journal of Discourses*, 4:231–32; 18:127). Elder Orson Pratt stated: "God is determined to raise up Prophets among that people, but he will not bestow upon them all the fulness of the blessings of the Priesthood. The fulness will be reserved to be given to them after they come to Zion." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 18:25.)

(D-7) The Lost Tribes to Come to Zion

When the ten tribes return, they will bring their rich treasures to the children of Ephraim (see D&C 133:30). Part of this rich treasure will be the records, which they have kept all these centuries. In them will be found the account of their miraculous escape from Assyria, their journey into the land to the north, their history, their prophets, and the appearance to them of the Savior after His Resurrection (see 2 Nephi 29:12–13; 3 Nephi 16:1–3).



Elder James E. Talmage

In April conference of 1916, Elder James E. Talmage, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, spoke of the lost tribes and their records: "There is a tendency among men to explain away what they don't wish to understand in literal simplicity, and we, as Latter-day Saints are not entirely free from the taint of that tendency. . . . Some people say that prediction is to be explained in this way: A gathering is in progress, and has been in progress from the early days of this Church; and thus the 'Lost Tribes' are now being gathered; but that we are not to look for the return of any body of people now unknown as to their whereabouts. True, the gathering is in progress, this is a gathering dispensation; but the prophecy stands that the tribes shall be brought forth from their hiding place . . . [and their] scriptures shall become one with the scriptures of the Jews, the holy Bible, and with the scriptures of the Nephites, the Book of Mormon, and with the scriptures of the Latter-day Saints as embodied in the volumes of modern revelation." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1916, p. 130.)

Then in October conference Elder Talmage spoke again of the lost tribes and made this remarkable prediction: "The ten tribes shall come; they are not lost unto the Lord; they shall be brought forth as hath been predicted; and I say unto you there are those now

living—aye, some here present—who shall live to read the records of the Lost Tribes of Israel, which shall be made one with the record of the Jews, or the Holy Bible, and the record of the Nephites, or the Book of Mormon, even as the Lord hath predicted" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, p. 76; emphasis added).

The ten tribes will remain in the land of Zion among the tribe of Ephraim for some time. Elder Orson Pratt explained: "How long will they who come from the north countries tarry in the heights of Zion? Sometime. They have got to raise wheat, cultivate the grape, wine and oil, raise flocks and herds, and their souls will have to become as a watered garden. They will dwell in Zion a good while, and during that time, there will be twelve thousand chosen out of each of these ten tribes, besides twelve thousand that will be chosen from Judah, Joseph, and the remaining tribes, one hundred and forty-four thousand in all [see Revelation 7:4–8; D&C 77:11]. Chosen for what? To be sealed in their foreheads. For what purpose? So that the power of death and pestilence and plague that will go forth in those days sweeping over the nations of the earth will have no power over them. These parties who are sealed in their foreheads will go forth among all people, nations and tongues, and gather up and hunt out the house of Israel, wherever they are scattered, and bring as many as they possibly can into the Church of the first-born, preparatory to the great day of the coming of the Lord. One hundred and forty-four thousand missionaries! Quite a host. All this has got to take place." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 18:25.)

The ten tribes, however, are to eventually receive their land inheritance with Judah and not with Ephraim (see Ether 13:11), and there will come a time after they have received their priesthood blessings when they will go to Jerusalem. In that day will be fulfilled the statement of Jeremiah: "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers" (Jeremiah 3:18).

Elder Orson Pratt stated further: "By and by, when all things are prepared—when the Jews have received their scourging, and Jesus has descended upon the Mount of Olives, the ten tribes will leave Zion, and will go to Palestine, to inherit the land that was given to their ancient fathers, and it will be divided amongst the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They will go there to dwell in peace in their own land from that time, until the earth shall pass away. But Zion, after their departure, will still remain upon the western hemisphere, and she will be crowned with glory as well as old Jerusalem, and, as the Psalmist David says, she will become the joy of the whole earth. 'Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.'" (In *Journal of Discourses*, 18:68.)



Promise of Judgments, Promise of Salvation

(11-1) Introduction

Several prophets with books in the Old Testament were contemporaries or near contemporaries: Joel, Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Micah was called by the Lord to cry warning to Israel and Judah. As Nephi wrote, none of the house of Israel had even been destroyed “save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord” (2 Nephi 25:9). The literal fulfillment of that statement is shown in this period of Israel’s history.

In some ways the messages of these prophets were similar, as one would expect, but they also have differences. Sidney B. Sperry explained: “Since Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos, the problems he faced were much the same as theirs. . . . Micah was not a statesman like Isaiah; consequently, he was not so much concerned about his nation’s political sins. The prophet was more like Amos in that his grievances were social in character. He was especially concerned with the attempts of the nobles to build up large estates by ejecting small property owners. Corrupt judges assisted their greedy friends in robbing the weak; widows and orphans without means of defense were deprived of their goods by force and oftentimes sold into slavery. The common people were kept in bondage through high taxation, and creditors were unmerciful on their victims. Micah held the nobility to be responsible for the terrible moral and social corruption among his people. He likened the nobles to cannibals, who eat the flesh of the people and chop their bones in pieces for the pot. There was no end to their greed and rapacity, and decisions were given to those who paid the largest bribes.” (*The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 334–35.)

Social and individual corruption and greed are evidenced everywhere today. Though you are studying the writings of a man who lived over twenty-five hundred years ago, you will find his message remarkably up-to-date.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Micah.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON MICAH

(11-2) Micah 1:1. Some Facts about Micah

“From the superscription of the Book of Micah it is apparent that the prophet’s ministry was during reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. His

preaching, therefore, took place during the years from approximately 740 B.C. to 697 B.C. We may assign to him an approximate date of 725 B.C. This date reveals Micah as a contemporary of the great Isaiah and possibly also of Hosea and Amos.

“The name *Micah* is an abbreviation of *Micaiah*, as the prophet is called in Jer. 26:18, which in turn is probably a contraction of *Mikayahu*, ‘who is like unto Jehovah?’ The prophet is to be distinguished from the elder prophet Micah, the son of Imlah (1 Kgs. 22:8 ff.), as well as from ten other persons of the same name in the Old Testament. The fact that Micah is called the Morashtite would point strongly to his being a native of Moresheth-Gath, which is mentioned in the text. (1:14) The name of the town means *Territory or Property of Gath* and seems to have been located in the Shephelah or low hill region of Judea some twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. If our location of Moresheth is correct . . . it commands a marvelous view of the surrounding country and anciently must have been of considerable importance. Micah was, therefore, a product of the open hills and valleys and seems to have had no special love for the cities. (1:5; 5:11; 6:9)” (Sperry, *Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 334.)

(11-3) Micah 1:4. “The Mountains Shall Be Molten under Him”

Compare the language in Micah 1:4 with that of Isaiah 64:1–2; 2 Peter 3:10; Doctrine and Covenants 101:23–25; 133:40–41.

(11-4) Micah 1:8–16. Judgments on Villages of Judah

Micah used word play to pronounce an indictment against Judah (see Micah 1:8–16). The technique is readily apparent in the Hebrew and can be appreciated in this more-literal translation of Micah 1:10–14:

“Weep tears at Teartown (Bochim),
grovel in the dust at Dustown (Beth-ophrah)
fare forth stripped, O Fairtown (Saphir)!
Stirtown (Zaanan) dare not stir,
Beth-êsel . . .
And Maroth hopes in vain;
for doom descends from the Eternal
to the very gates of Jerusalem.

“To horse and drive away, O Horsetown (Lakhish)
O source of Sion’s sin,
where the crimes of Israel centre!
O maiden Sion, you must part with
Morêsheth of Gath;
and Israel’s kings are ever balked
at Balkton (Achzib).”

(James Moffatt, *A New Translation of the Bible* [1954], p. 1009.)

The phrase “her wound is incurable” (v. 9) refers to the wickedness of the Northern Kingdom. The statement “it is come unto Judah” shows that the spiritual sickness had spread to the Southern Kingdom as well.

(11-5) Micah 2:1–11. What Added Indictment Did Micah Lay at His People’s Feet?

Micah had strong feelings about the social injustices of his day. He spoke here of those who “devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds” (Micah 2:1), probably referring to those who lay awake at night thinking up evil things to do. Then when daylight came, they put their nighttime plots into action. One specific charge seems to be against individuals in power who were using their positions to acquire the land and property of others as their own. Sperry wrote:

“Micah felt keenly the social injustices that plagued Israel in his own day. Coming as he did, from the country, he no doubt felt these wrongs more acutely than he would had he come from the city. He could not help but cast his invective [condemnations] at the wealthy, greedy land grabbers, who descended upon the rural districts and made the poor their debtors. Even today, the agricultural communities in our own nation could well take a leaf from Micah’s note book and beware letting their properties go into the hands of money lenders. . . .

“Micah was not so much concerned about the taking of mere chattels [pieces of property]. What ground his soul and made him righteously indignant was that unscrupulous men were allowed to commit wrongs so easily and put human beings in their power. Personal independence was lost and the security of home and family was put in the hands of a few capricious men.” (*Message of the Twelve Prophets*, pp. 112–13.)

When prophets like Micah inveighed against these evils, those spoken against replied: “Prophesy ye not” (Micah 2:6). Their reply only caused Micah to renew his accusations against them. To these money-and-land-hungry pirates he said, “Ye pull off the robe with the garment” and “the women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses” (vv. 8–9). Sperry explained:

“Such preaching on the part of Micah does not please the corrupt great men, for they imagine that his threats are irreconcilable with the goodness of the Lord. Micah interposes (verse 7) by pointing out that God is not wrathful and has no love for chastening, but that He is stirred up to anger by the nation’s sins and is obliged to punish. When the prophet has overthrown (verses 7–9) the objections to his prophecies by pointing out the transgressions of the people, he repeats the prediction of punishment in the form of a summons to Israel (verse 10) to depart out of the land because it cannot bear uncleanness and abominations. To this Micah adds the point that the people only want to hear predictions of good, that they would rather hear the lies of false prophets who pursue *the wind* (i.e., emptiness and nothingness) than to be impelled by the Spirit of the Lord.

“If a man walking in the wind and falsehood do lie:
“I will preach into thee of wine and of strong
drink”;

He shall even be the preacher of this people.”

(*Message of the Twelve Prophets*, pp. 113–14.)

(11-6) Micah 2:12–13. The Future Gathering of Israel Promised

After he castigated the false prophets for telling the people all was well, Micah prophesied salvation. This prophecy concerns a people who had been scourged because of iniquity, and only a remnant remained of the once mighty house of Israel. Micah foretold a miraculous growth as the people were gathered. He used the illustration of the sheep-rich area of Bozrah to illustrate how the people will become mighty. He compared their scattered condition to a form of imprisonment and foretold a Savior and Redeemer who would break the prison walls and lead the people to the promised land.

(11-7) Micah 3:1–3. Who Were the “Heads of Jacob”?

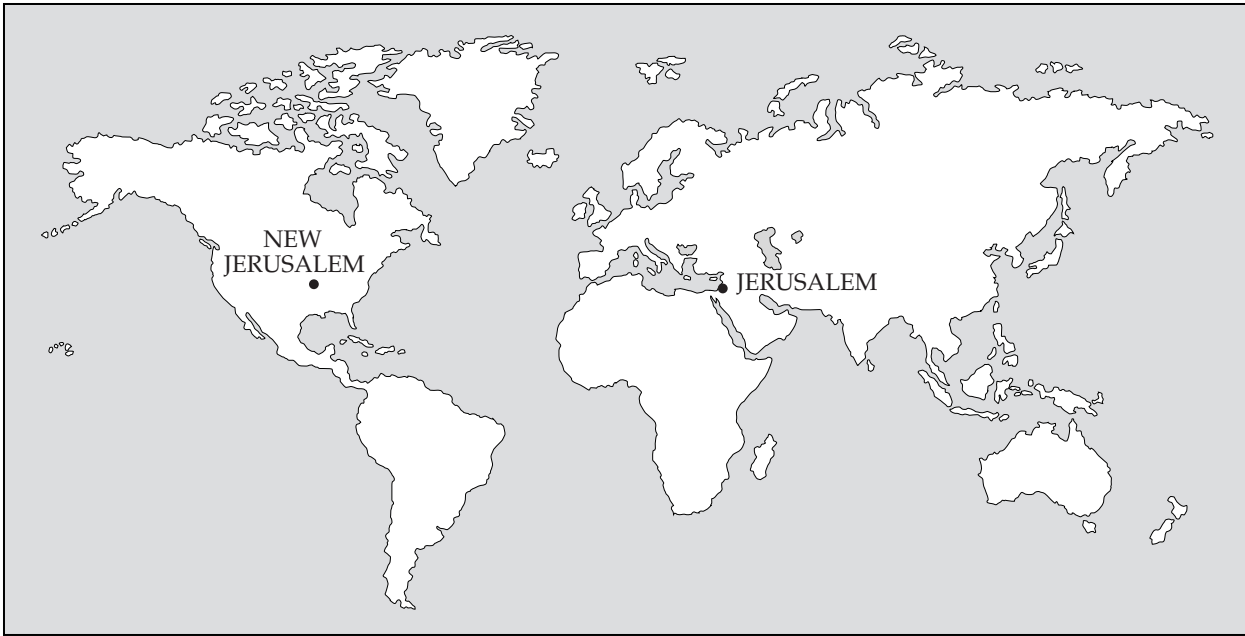
Micah, referring to the iniquity that lay before him, spoke to the “heads of Jacob” (Micah 3:1), or the current rulers of the house of Israel. He accused them of hating good and loving evil, and he likened them and their use of administrative powers to a group of cannibals who eat the flesh and break the bones of their own people (see Micah 3:2–3)—vivid imagery that seared in its condemnation of their wickedness.

(11-8) Micah 3:4–12. What Did Micah Mean by the “Prophets Who Make My People Err”?

Continually encountered throughout the Old Testament are true and false prophets. The true prophets speak the word of God; the false prophets speak the pleasant but often untrue things that people like to hear. Sperry wrote: “It seems that in the generation of Amos and Micah the leaders of Israel—tyrants would be a better name—used professional prophets and seers to cloak their misdeeds. Religion, unfortunately, lends itself, or rather its cloak, very easily to the uses of the hypocrite. So the rich and unscrupulous leaders of Israel found it easy—for a price—to hire professional religionists to cover their actions by flattery and falsehood. The hireling prophet depended upon his rich clients for a living. He could not, therefore, be independent in his thinking and in his judgment. He was high-pressured into siding with the rich, and consequently shut his eyes to the real conditions among the people. Naturally he could not attack the sins of the day that made it possible for his clients to exploit Israel’s common people.” (*Message of the Twelve Prophets*, pp. 116–17.)

Micah, a true prophet of God, did not speak pleasant words to Israel when evil was to be denounced. He accused the heads of the country as judging “for reward,” the priests, or religious leaders, of teaching “for hire,” and the prophets of divining, or prophesying, for money (Micah 3:11). Using these false religionists allowed the leaders to rationalize, to think that they were relying on the Lord, and to say, “Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us” (Micah 3:11).

What, then, Micah asked, would be the result? When these false prophets prophesied their lies, true prophecy would cease throughout the land and gross apostasy would set in. What better way is there to describe this deplorable condition than to compare it to a night without vision or a day without light? (See v. 6.) When men cry unto God, “he will not hear them” (v. 4). As a result, “there is no answer from God” (v. 7).



The two Jerusalems of latter-day Zion

(11-9) Micah 4:1–2. What Special Meaning Do These Verses Have for Latter-day Saints?

President Harold B. Lee gave the following commentary on these verses:

“With the coming of the pioneers to establish the Church in the tops of the mountains, our early leaders declared this to be the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy that out of Zion should go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

“I have often wondered what that expression meant, that out of Zion should go forth the law. Years ago I went with the Brethren to the Idaho Falls Temple, and I heard in that inspired prayer of the First Presidency a definition of the meaning of that term—‘out of Zion shall go forth the law.’ Note what they said:

“‘We thank thee that thou hast revealed to us that those who gave us our constitutional form of government were wise in thy sight and that thou didst raise them up for the very purpose of putting forth that sacred document [as revealed in Doctrine and Covenants 101]. . . . We pray that kings and rulers and the peoples of all nations under heaven may be persuaded of the blessings enjoyed by the people of this land by reason of their freedom under thy guidance and be constrained to adopt similar governmental systems, thus to fulfill the ancient prophecy of Isaiah and Micah that “. . . out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.’” (*Improvement Era*, Oct. 1945, p. 504.)

“The history of nations records the efforts of statesmen to adopt these basic principles as the basis of sound fundamental structures. I have often speculated as to the meaning of the Lord’s injunction to our early leaders, not only to keep his commandments, but also to assist in bringing forth his work according to his commandments, with the promise that they would then be blessed. Also, they were to seek to bring forth and to establish Zion. All of this emphasized what the Church was told by the Lord in another revelation. He said, ‘For if you

will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.’ (D&C 78:7.)

“You will note that it was not merely enough to be good; all must also be willing to bring forth his work and to bring forth and establish Zion. This meant to work and labor with all one’s might, mind, and strength if he would obtain a place in the celestial world.

“Many people, so these prophets said, would say, ‘Show me your path, that we may walk in your way.’” (In Conference Report, Manchester England Area Conference 1971, pp. 138–39.)

(11-10) Micah 4:8–13. If Jerusalem Is Overthrown and Her People Scattered, How Will She Then Become Great?

Micah used the figure of travail or childbirth to illustrate that Judah would bring upon herself the pain out of which would eventually come a new life in the Lord. Shortly she would be driven from her city and find herself a captive of Babylon. This prophecy is amazing because Assyria was mistress of the world in Micah’s day, Babylon being only a province of Assyria. This part of Micah’s vision projected nearly 130 years into the future, but time is nothing to a prophet. Then, looking several millennia into the future, Micah saw Israel return in the strength of God. Using the symbol of horns like iron and hooves like brass, he predicted that Israel would trample her enemies as easily as an ox threshes grain.

This passage has great significance for Latter-day Saints because Jesus referred to it when He visited the Nephites. After speaking of the gathering of Israel in the latter days, Jesus used Micah’s prophecy to depict the kind of destruction that awaited the Gentiles of that period if they did not repent (see 3 Nephi 20:17–21).

(11-11) Micah 5:1–4. “But Thou, Beth-lehem, . . . out of Thee Shall He Come . . . That Is to Be Ruler in Israel”

This is one of the best-known messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. It is, in fact, the one quoted by Matthew in the New Testament as having been fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. *Ephratah* is simply an additional name to distinguish the Bethlehem in Judah from another Bethlehem in the land assigned to the tribe of Zebulun (see Joshua 19:15). The prophecy was fulfilled, of course, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king (see Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:1–20).

Ironically, this prophecy was used by some of the Jews to try to disprove that Jesus was the Messiah. Not knowing that he was born in Bethlehem but thinking he was from Nazareth, these people cited Micah to show that Jesus could not be the Messiah (see John 7:40–43).

(11-12) Micah 5:5–15. Will Israel Become Powerful?

Still looking into the far distant future, Micah prophesied of the great last battles through which Israel, under Christ, will at last triumph over all enemies. “In this relation the Messiah is called the Prince of peace in [Isaiah 9:5], as securing peace for Israel in a higher and more perfect sense than Solomon. But in what manner? This is explained more fully in what follows: viz. (1) by defending Israel against the attacks of the imperial power (vers. 5b, 6); (2) by exalting it into a power able to overcome the nations (vers. 7–9); and (3) by exterminating all the materials of war, and everything of an idolatrous nature, and so preventing the possibility of war (vers. 10–15). Asshur is a type [symbol] of the nations of the world by which the people of the Lord are attacked, because in the time of the prophet this power was the imperial power by which Israel was endangered. Against this enemy Israel will set up seven, yea eight princes, who, under the chief command of the Messiah, *i.e.* as His subordinates, will drive it back, and press victoriously into its land. . . . Seven is mentioned as the number of the works proceeding from God, so that seven shepherds, *i.e.* princes, would be quite sufficient; and this number is surpassed by the eight, to express the thought that there might be even more than were required.” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10:1:486–87.)

When Christ appeared to the Nephites, He quoted this prophecy of Micah (compare 3 Nephi 21:12–21 and Micah 5:8–15) to stress the power that would be upon Israel as the Lord gathered them out from the nations and by them purified those Gentiles who would hear His word. Those who would not hear His word and opposed His work would be cut off and trodden down.

(11-13) Micah 6:6–8. A Summary of What the Lord Requires of His Children

The laws of God can all be summarized, as Micah did in verses 6–8, in three words: *keep the commandments!* Micah said in these verses that sin is the breaking of a divine law and that the offering of blood sacrifices could have no effect in remitting sin unless there was also a change of heart.

“It is true that under the Law of Moses the Lord required sacrifice and other ritualistic practices, but they were all symbolic of principles that were to lead His people to higher and better things. But Israel’s worship had become formalized and the wickedness of the people had rendered their ritual unacceptable to God.

“Micah conveyed to the people the fundamental requirements of true religion in an answer that is one of the noblest of all time.

“‘It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, And what the Lord doth require of thee: Only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.’

“In these few lines Micah has summed up the essence of the teachings of the prophets. They were coined in the same spirit as the lines of the Christ when He said:

“‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. A second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’” (Sperry, *Message of the Twelve Prophets*, pp. 125–26.)

(11-14) Micah 6:9–16. What Was Israel’s Wickedness before the Lord?

The Lord once again turned His attention to Israel’s specific sins. The rich of Israel did much violence and spoke lies (see Micah 6:12), but worst of all “the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab” (v. 16). Adam Clarke wrote:

“*Omri*, king of Israel, the father of Ahab, was one of the worst kings the Israelites ever had; and *Ahab* followed in his wicked father’s steps. The *statutes* of those kings were the very grossest *idolatry*. *Jezebel*, wife of the latter, and daughter of Ithobaal, king of Tyre, had no fellow on earth. From her Shakespeare seems to have drawn the character of *Lady Macbeth*; a woman, like her prototype, mixed up of *tigress* and *fiend*, without *addition*. *Omri*, *Ahab*, and *Jezebel*, were the *models* followed by the Israelites in the days of this prophet. . . .

“There are few chapters in the prophets, or in the Bible, superior to this for genuine worth and importance. The structure is as elegant as it is impressive; and it is every way worthy of the Spirit of God.” (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:725.)

(11-15) Micah 7:1–6. What Is the Meaning of the Figures of Speech Used by Micah?

The prophet Micah employed three figures to portray the gross state of Israel’s wickedness: (1) the picture of a solitary grape upon the vine (see Micah 7:1); (2) a battle between a man with a net and a man without a net (see v. 2); and (3) the comparison of a wicked man to a briar or a thorn hedge (see v. 4).

“Here the prophet points out the *small number* of the upright to be found in the land. He himself seemed to be the only person who was on God’s side; and he considers himself as a *solitary grape*, which had escaped the general gathering. . . . He desired to see the *first-ripe fruit*—distinguished and eminent piety; but he found nothing but a very imperfect or spurious kind of godliness. . . .

“*They hunt every man his brother with a net*. This appears to be an allusion to the ancient mode of duel between the *retiarius* and *secutor*. The former had a

casting net, which he endeavoured to throw over the head of his antagonist, that he might then despatch him with his short sword. The other parried the cast; and when the *retiarius* missed, he was obliged to run about the field to get time to *set his net in right order* for another throw. While he ran, the other *followed*, that he might despatch him before he should be able to recover the proper position of his net; and hence the latter was called *secutor*, the *pursuer*, as the other was called *retiarius*, or the *net man*. . . .

“ . . . The best of them is as a brier. They are useless in themselves, and cannot be touched without *wounding* him that comes in contact with them. He alludes to the *thick thorn hedges*, still frequent in Palestine.” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:726.)

The Savior appears to have had Micah 7:6 in mind when He spoke the words recorded in Matthew 10:35–36.

(11-16) Micah 7:7–20. What Did Micah Foresee and Prophecy Of?

In these verses Micah prophesied of Israel’s eventual restoration as a people and of that day when Israel has learned to “look unto the Lord, . . . the God of [her] salvation” (Micah 7:7). Though her enemies have prevailed against her because of her wickedness, “the Lord shall be her light.” He will plead her cause and bring her “forth to the light” (vv. 8–9). Her enemies shall see it too and be ashamed (see v. 10). The walls of her cities shall be rebuilt, and her people shall be gathered from throughout the earth (see vv. 11–12). She shall again inhabit her land as in previous times and “shall be afraid of the Lord our God” (v. 17), for He is with His people then as He was in former days (see vv. 13–17).



Jerusalem in the last days, as seen in prophecy

Sperry identified Micah 7:14–20 as a prayer:

“After promising Israel’s restoration, Micah prays beautifully for its fulfillment. The prayer is distinguished for the poetical elevation of its style and the appropriateness of its petition. Like many other Old Testament prayers it is prophetic in its spirit. . . .

“Micah ends with a doxology. He revels in the prospect of Israel’s glorious future and breaks out into a strain of sublime praise and admiration for the divine attributes of loving-kindness, faithfulness, and compassion to be manifested by God in her deliverance.” (*Message of the Twelve Prophets*, pp. 126–27.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(11-17) Overcoming Spiritual Blindness

Like Micah, a modern prophet talked about the problems that face our own society.

“While the iron curtains fall and thicken, we eat, drink, and make merry. While armies are marshalled and march and drill and officers teach men how to kill, we continue to drink and carouse as usual. While bombs are detonated and tested, and fallout settles on the already sick world, we continue in idolatry and adultery.

“While corridors are threatened and concessions are made, we live riotously, and divorce and marry in cycles, like the seasons. While leaders quarrel and editors write and authorities analyze and prognosticate, we break all the laws in God’s catalog. While enemies filter into our nation to subvert and intimidate and soften us, we continue on with our destructive thinking—‘It can’t happen here.’

“If we would but believe the prophets! For they have warned that if the inhabitants of this land are ever brought down into captivity and enslaved, ‘it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land . . .’ (2 Ne. 1:7.) . . .

“O that men would listen! Why should there be spiritual blindness in the day of brightest scientific and technological vision? Why must men rely on physical fortifications and armaments when the God of heaven yearns to bless them? One stroke of his omnipotent hand could make powerless all nations who oppose, and save a world even when in its death throes. Yet men shun God and put their trust in weapons of war, in the ‘arm of flesh.’ . . .

“Will we ever turn wholly to God?” (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 317–19.)

Take a moment to consider your life. All of us have some spiritual blindness that we can strive to overcome. In what ways in your life have you not turned completely to God? Which of these most hampers your spiritual growth?

That is a place to begin. Read the promise in Ether 12:27. You can take your weakness and make it a strength. That is essentially what Micah tells us. Read again Micah 6:8.

Kingdom of
Israel



Assyria 721 B.C.

Kingdom of
Judah

The Fall of the Northern Kingdom

(12-1) Introduction

The story is told of two young men in a canoe sailing down the river to Niagara Falls. Although the water was placid and calm, they were approaching the area where the water began to pick up speed as it headed for the falls. A man on the shore, sensing the danger, called out, “Young men, ahoy, the rapids are below you!”

But the young men, who heard the warning, did not heed the call. Instead they went on laughing and joking, paying no attention to the danger.

On the shore, the man watching began to run and shouted in desperation, “Ahoy, the rapids are below you!”

Still the young men did not heed his warning. Faster and faster ran the current until the young men were entrapped in the rapids and began to fear. With all the power at their command they tried to turn the canoe but it was too late. Over the falls they went—all because they refused to heed the warning voice. (Adapted from David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, p. 512.)

Ancient Israel could be compared to these two young men. Repeated warnings from the prophets were ignored. The withholding of blessings failed to check Israel in their mad rush to destruction. In the year 721 B.C. the Northern Kingdom fell before the vigorous attack of the Assyrian enemy, and its people were taken to a foreign land as captives. Later some escaped and went into the north countries. They are often referred to as the lost ten tribes. (See Enrichment D.)

This chapter will deal with the history of this tragic fall. In previous chapters, it has been shown that the Lord again and again gave clear warning through the prophets, who worked feverishly to bring Israel to her senses. Isaiah, Micah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, and probably many others called again and again to a rebellious Israel. These chapters of the Old Testament answer this question: Could God have done more to bring this recalcitrant people back to Him?

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 2 Kings 14–20.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 2 KINGS 14–20

(12-2) 2 Kings 14–20

The period encompassed by this section of study is roughly 800 B.C. to 721 B.C., a period of eighty years (see Enrichment A, where a chronology of the kings is given).

(12-3) 2 Kings 14:3–11. Was Amaziah a Righteous King?

Second Chronicles 25:2 comments that Amaziah’s heart was not perfect in what he did. This is a way of saying he was double-minded, an attitude that makes bad the good things that are done. His instability is shown in (1) his failure to eliminate the high places used for worship of false gods; (2) his desire to make war with the help of enemies; and (3) his failure to heed Joash’s warning.

(12-4) 2 Kings 14:7. Why Did Amaziah Attack Edom?

The kingdom of Judah had controlled Edom and exacted tribute from that kingdom since the days of King David. In the days of King Joram, however, Edom revolted (see 2 Kings 8:20). Amaziah raised a large army and again made Edom subordinate to Judah.

(12-5) 2 Kings 14:8–14. Why Did Amaziah Want to Look King Joash in the Face?

To “look one another in the face” is a Hebrew idiom for going to war with one another. Although in the version here no explanation is given for why Amaziah asked for war, the parallel version in Chronicles explains what occurred (see 2 Chronicles 25:1–13). As he was strengthening his army for the war with the Edomites, Amaziah hired a hundred thousand mercenaries from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, or Ephraim. A prophet warned him that since Israel was in such disfavor with God, to add these mercenaries to Judah’s army would cause Judah to lose the battle. Amaziah sent the men back, and they were greatly angered by the act.

While Amaziah went south to battle the Edomites, the mercenaries vented their anger by ravaging several of Judah’s towns on their return to the north. When Amaziah learned of their actions, he declared war on Israel.

Joash’s answer was a contemptuous insult. In his parable, Amaziah and Judah are the thistle, a weed that dries up and blows away in the summer heat. Joash and Israel are the cedar, an allusion to the cedars of Lebanon, giant and majestic trees that grew to over one hundred feet in height. Amaziah evidently asked for a royal princess as part of an official state apology. Joash said he would be like a wild beast instead and trample the thistle weed down. Amaziah took the challenge and was badly beaten. The Chronicles account explains that the loss came because Amaziah had brought back the gods of Edom with him after the victory there, and he had worshiped them. (See 2 Chronicles 25:14–16, 20.)

(12-6) 2 Kings 14:22. Elath

Elath was also known as Ezion-Geber. It was an area that had been controlled by Solomon and used as a home port for his Red Sea trading fleet to Ophir and Arabia (see 1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chronicles 8:17).

(12-7) 2 Kings 15:1, 13. Who Were Azariah and Uzziah?

They were the same person. It is not clear why the text here uses the two different names.

(12-8) 2 Kings 15:5. Why Did the Lord Smite Uzziah, and What Is a “Several House”?

A favorite passage of missionaries and teachers is 2 Chronicles 26:16–21. They use it to show that it is necessary to have divine authority to act in the ordinances and offices of the Church. Uzziah was smitten because he took it upon himself to perform rites reserved only for the priesthood. Uzziah was a fairly good king and, as such, prospered and became strong. But at that point he became lifted up and usurped priesthood authority, with disastrous results.

A “several house” gets its name from the word *sever*. The “several house” in which Uzziah lived was one *severed* or separated from society to house lepers, who were separated from society because of their disease.

(12-9) 2 Kings 15:11. The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel

This record is not what is now called the books of Chronicles in the present Old Testament. They are the chronicles, or record, of the kings of Judah. The record of the kings of Israel was lost and is not available today.

(12-10) 2 Kings 15:19. Who Was Pul?

Pul is the personal name of King Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. The kings of Israel paid tribute to him in return for protection against Egypt and other powers. He invaded Israel in 733 B.C. and captured some towns later taken over by his successor, Shalmaneser V.

(12-11) 2 Kings 15:25. Who Were the Gileadites?

The Gileadites were mainly of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (see Numbers 26:29–30; 27:1; 36:1; Joshua 17:1, 3; 1 Chronicles 2:21, 23; 7:14–17).

(12-12) 2 Kings 16:3. Did Ahaz Sacrifice a Son to Molech?

This verse leaves some doubt about what Ahaz did. Did he kill his son or merely initiate him into the worship of a false god? Second Chronicles 28:3 supports the idea of an actual human sacrifice, and the commentators generally agree that Ahaz did murder some of his children in this fashion.

“So far as the fact is concerned, we have here the first instance of an actual Moloch-sacrifice among the Israelites, *i.e.* of one performed by slaying and burning. . . .

“The offering of his son for Moloch took place, in all probability, during the severe oppression of Ahaz by the Syrians, and was intended to appease the wrath of the gods, as was done by the king of the Moabites in similar circumstances [2 Kings 3:27].” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:1:399–400.)

(12-13) 2 Kings 16:11. “Made It against King Ahaz Came from Damascus”

This phrase means that Urijah had the altar made by the time King Ahaz got back. Evidently, while in

Damascus, Ahaz saw an altar, probably to a false god, that caught his admiration. He had a duplicate made in Jerusalem and set aside the great altar in the temple to use the new one in its place (compare with 2 Chronicles 28:23–5).

(12-14) 2 Kings 16:18. What Is a “Covert for the Sabbath”?

The covert for the Sabbath may have been a shelter or an awning where the royal family sat to hear the law on the Sabbath. Some suppose it was a covered passageway to the temple from the royal house. (See Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:534; Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. “covert for the Sabbath.”)

(12-15) 2 Kings 17:6. Destruction of Samaria

Samaria was destroyed in the first or second year of the reign of Sargon, who took his official name from a king of about twenty-two hundred years before whom he claimed as an ancestor. He finished the capture of Samaria his predecessors had started. The date is thought to be 721 B.C., but it may have been 722.

The destruction of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, was foretold by Hosea and Micah (see Hosea 13:16; Micah 1:6) and is treated in more detail in Enrichment D.

(12-16) 2 Kings 17:9. What Does the Expression “from the Tower of the Watchmen to the Fenced City” Mean?

Towers were built by owners of vineyards (see 2 Chronicles 26:10) so they could observe the countryside and protect their possessions. The expression “from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city” simply means from thinly populated areas to heavily populated areas. It is another way of saying that all Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had turned to the worship of idols.

(12-17) 2 Kings 17:16. What Is Meant by the Worship of the “Host of Heaven”?

This is the first time this form of idolatry is mentioned in the Northern Kingdom. To worship the host of heaven was to worship the sun, moon, and stars—something that Moses had forbidden the people to do (see Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3).



The fortified city of Samaria was destroyed.

(12-18) 2 Kings 17:18. What Tribes Were Carried Away and What Tribes Were Left?

The statement that “there was none left but the tribe of Judah only” can be understood correctly only if one realizes that at this time Benjamin, Levi, and all other Israelites who had left the nation of Israel and joined Judah were included under the title of Judah. The ten tribes carried into captivity at this time were Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Ephraim, and Manasseh. The three remaining tribes were Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. Some of the tribe of Levi were still with Israel (the ten tribes), however, and some of Ephraim, Manasseh, and other tribes were with Judah. So, the division is not as clear as a superficial reading might indicate.

(12-19) 2 Kings 17:24–41. The Beginnings of the Samaritans

Some time after the ten tribes of Israel were taken into captivity, Assyria moved some of its own people into the area formerly occupied by the Israelites. When the new residents failed to prosper, the king of Assyria sent an Israelite priest to the area to instruct the people in the worship of Jehovah, though it was liberally mixed with the paganism of Assyria (vv. 28–29). Living as they did in Samaria and its environs, these new occupants of the land became known as Samaritans. Eventually, intermarriage of the Assyrian settlers with those stragglers who had survived the captivity (not all Israelites were removed) caused the Samaritans to claim Israelite covenant blessings. The Jews of later years refused to accept this claim because of the Samaritans’ gentile blood and pagan religious tendencies. This refusal led to the increasing hostility between the Jews and Samaritans that was evident in the time of Jesus (see Notes and Commentary on Ezra 4–5). The Jews simply refused to associate with their Samaritan neighbors (see John 4:9).

(12-20) 2 Kings 18:4. Why Did Hezekiah Destroy the Brazen Serpent?

During their forty-year journey in the desert, the ancient Israelites often murmured against God and His prophet, Moses. The Lord sent among the people “fiery serpents” that threatened great destruction as a punishment. As a means of physical salvation and as a type of the spiritual salvation to be wrought by Jesus Christ (see John 3:14–15; 2 Nephi 25:20; Helaman 8:13–15), Moses made a serpent of brass, placed it on a pole, and taught his people that if they would gaze upon the serpent when they were bitten, physical healing would follow (see Numbers 21:4–9). The brass serpent was preserved in Israel and, in time, became an object of adoration and was worshiped by the Israelites much as they worshiped idols. In his zeal to eradicate all forms of idolatry in Judah, King Hezekiah had the brazen serpent destroyed along with the idols.

The word *nehushtan* comes from the Hebrew and means an object made of brass. The implication may be that Hezekiah was speaking contemptuously of the object being worshiped, saying it was merely a “thing of brass” and nothing more.



Tel Lachish

(12-21) 2 Kings 18:13. What Is Known about Sennacherib, King of Assyria?

The account in 2 Kings 18:13–19:37 is very similar to the account in Isaiah 36–37. Sennacherib was the son of Sargon II and had numerous conquests to his credit. Clay tablets recording his various campaigns have been preserved and deciphered. The portion of one tablet that relates to the partial conquest of Judah reads as follows: “As for Hezekiah the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, forty-six of his strong, walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighborhood, which were without number—by constructing a rampart out of trampled earth and by bringing up battering-rams, by the attack of infantry, by tunnels, breaches, and [the use of] axes, I besieged and took [those cities]. Two hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty people, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle, and sheep without number, I brought away from them and counted as spoil. Himself like a caged bird I shut in Jerusalem his royal city. Earthworks I threw up against him; the one coming out of the city gate I turned back to his misery.” (In Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Sennacherib.”)

Sennacherib’s account squares very well with the accounts given in 2 Kings 18:13–19:37 and Isaiah 36–37.

(12-22) 2 Kings 18:14. How Important Was Lachish?

Lachish was a fortified city in the land of Judah that guarded the main highway to Jerusalem from the south. By destroying Lachish, the Assyrians would deprive Judah of any support from Egypt as well as depriving them of one of their strongest fortifications (see 2 Chronicles 32:9).

(12-23) 2 Kings 18:17. Who Were Tartan, Rabсарis, and Rabshakeh?

The King James Version of the Bible treats these as personal names, but scholars now think that they were the titles of Assyrian officials appointed by Sennacherib to conclude terms for the surrender of Jerusalem (see *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 3:293).

(12-24) 2 Kings 18:17. What Were the “Conduit of the Upper Pool” and the “Highway of the Fuller’s Field”?

A fuller was one who cleaned, pressed, bleached, and dyed cloth for a living. Since this work required a great deal of water, the “fuller’s field” or place of work was always near a pool or spring of water. The Spring of Gihon was a natural water source in the Kidron Valley. In early times, before Israelite occupation, the inhabitants of Jerusalem sent their women to the spring for water. Standing on an elevated platform, the women let their leather buckets down a forty-foot shaft, or conduit, that led to the spring below and hauled up their water. Some think this was the “conduit of the Upper Pool.” Located nearby was the “fuller’s field.” (See Miller and Miller, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Gihon.”) Remains of a large, man-made pool west of the city have been found, however, and some scholars think that may have been the location.

(12-25) 2 Kings 18:26. Why Did the Jewish Leaders Want to Speak in the Syrian Language?

The Jews were under siege, with a large population shut up in Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders did not want their people to hear the Assyrian conditions for fear that the people would panic and give in to their demands. Rabshakeh ignored their request and only cried louder (see 2 Kings 18:28).

(12-26) 2 Kings 18:34. To What Do the Words *Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah* Refer?

These are the names of various cities conquered by Sennacherib during his numerous military campaigns. Many cities in ancient times had their own idols upon whom they relied in times of stress (see *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 3:296). Rabshakeh contemptuously dismissed the main consolation of the Jews (the idea that their God, Jehovah, would save them) by noting how unsuccessful other gods had been in defending their cities.

(12-27) 2 Kings 19:3. What Does the Expression “for the Children Are Come to the Birth, and There Is Not Strength to Bring Forth” Mean?

“A figure denoting extreme danger, the most desperate circumstances. If the woman in travail has not strength to bring forth the child which has come to the mouth of the womb, both the life of the child and that of the mother are exposed to the greatest danger; and this was the condition of the people here (see the similar figure in [Hosea 13:13]).” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:442.)

(12-28) 2 Kings 19. Hezekiah Prayed for Deliverance, and Isaiah Brought the Lord’s Answer

In these verses and the parallel account in Isaiah 37 is found one of the most remarkable stories in scriptural history. The Assyrian army, with all its might and power, encircled Jerusalem. The Northern Kingdom had already fallen; all of Judah except Jerusalem itself was in Assyrian hands. There was no cause to hope that they could successfully resist. No cause but one.

Hezekiah had been a righteous king (see 2 Kings 18:4–6), and now he trusted in God again. In deep and pleading prayer, he asked Him for the solution. The

Lord answered through His servant Isaiah, although the answer must have tested the faith of Hezekiah. While Assyrian campfires could be seen on all sides, Isaiah promised that not even an arrow would be shot against Jerusalem, for the Lord Himself would defend the city (see 2 Kings 19:32–34).



A rendering of the ark of the covenant at Capernaum

That very night Isaiah’s promise was fulfilled. Some mysterious plague struck the Assyrian camp, and in the morning 185,000 Assyrians lay dead. Assyria’s remnant left the scene like a dog with its tail tucked between its legs. (See vv. 35–36.) Judah could say, as did Elisha, “They that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16).

(12-29) 2 Kings 19:15. Does God Dwell “between the Cherubims”?

This imagery is taken from the ark of the covenant (see Exodus 25:22).

(12-30) 2 Kings 19:22–28

The Lord addressed Assyria through Isaiah. Though Assyria had taken credit for all she had done, the Lord set the record straight: Assyria was but a tool in His hands. Since she was only a tool, He still controlled her, and she was at His mercy.

(12-31) 2 Kings 19:35

The Joseph Smith Translation corrects this verse to read that “they *who were left* arose” to find that those smitten had died.

(12-32) 2 Kings 20:5–6. Is There a Time Appointed to Die?

President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

“Just as Ecclesiastes (3:2) says, I am confident that there is a time to die, but I believe also that many people die before ‘their time’ because they are careless, abuse their bodies, take unnecessary chances, or expose themselves to hazards, accidents, and sickness.

“Of the antediluvians, we read:

“Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?

“Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood.” (Job 22:15–16.)

In Ecclesiastes 7:17 we find this statement:

“Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?”

“I believe we may die prematurely but seldom exceed our time very much. One exception was Hezekiah, 25-year-old king of Judah who was far more godly than his successors or predecessors.

“In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah . . . came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.’

“Hezekiah, loving life as we do, turned his face to the wall and wept bitterly, saying:

“ . . . remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. . . .’

“The Lord yielded unto his prayers.

“ . . . I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will heal thee. . . .

“And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria. . . .’ (2 Kings 20:1, 3, 5–6.)

“A modern illustration of this exceptional extension of life took place in November, 1881.

“My uncle, David Patten Kimball, left his home in Arizona on a trip across the Salt River desert. He had fixed up his books and settled accounts and had told his wife of a premonition that he would not return. He was lost on the desert for two days and three nights, suffering untold agonies of thirst and pain. He passed into the spirit world and described later, in a letter of January 8, 1882, to his sister, what happened there. He had seen his parents. ‘My father . . . told me I could remain there if I chose to do so, but I pled with him that I might stay with my family long enough to make them comfortable, to repent of my sins, and more fully prepare myself for the change. Had it not been for this, I never should have returned home, except as a corpse. Father finally told me I could remain two years and to do all the good I could during that time, after which he would come for me. . . . He mentioned four others that he would come for also. . . .’ Two years to the day from that experience on the desert he died easily and apparently without pain. Shortly before he died he looked up and called, ‘Father, Father.’ Within approximately a year of his death the other four men named were also dead.” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, pp. 103–5; see also D&C 42:48.)

(12-33) 2 Kings 20:11. What Is the “Dial of Ahaz”?

Ahaz was the father of King Hezekiah. In his lifetime he invented a special mechanism for telling time. The instrument appears to have consisted of a series of graduated lines, or steps, over which a column towered. As the earth moved, the sun would cast a shadow at a certain angle and thus measure the passing of the hours. (See William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “dial.”)

POINTS TO PONDER

(12-34) A Lesson from History

There are few more dramatic contrasts in the history of the world than the one you have just studied in these chapters. Within a twenty-year period the mighty Assyrian army encircled the capitals of both Israel and Judah. In the first instance, the Assyrians went home victorious, laden with the spoils of war and herding the sorry remnants of a once-proud people before them. Behind them a nation lay smoldering in ruins. In the second instance, the same Assyrian army went home stunned and decimated. They took no booty and no captives and left behind 185,000 of their troops lying dead on the hillsides of Jerusalem.

There are many profound lessons to be learned from this. Read the following references and answer the questions as you ponder the lessons you could learn from this contrast.

1. Read Leviticus 26:3–8 and Deuteronomy 28:7, 10. How were these prophecies fulfilled in Judah’s case?
2. Read Leviticus 26:14, 17, 37–39 and Deuteronomy 28:20, 25, 33, 36, 41. How were these prophecies fulfilled in the case of the Northern Kingdom of Israel?
3. As you studied these chapters, what one factor seems to you to have made the difference between Judah’s and Israel’s experience with Assyria? (See 2 Kings 17:6–18; 18:1–7.)
4. Read Doctrine and Covenants 54:10; 88:83; Proverbs 8:17. How are these scriptures related to Hezekiah’s prayers for deliverance?
5. If you were asked to give a sacrament meeting talk on what Latter-day Saints can learn from this period of Israelite history, what would you say?



Understanding Isaiah

(E-1) The Importance of Isaiah's Writings

Isaiah's name means "Jehovah saves" or "the Lord is salvation." His life and teachings proclaim the message of Christ and the way of salvation Christ provided. John wrote that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). Using that statement as a criterion to evaluate, we must classify Isaiah among the greatest of the prophets, because he powerfully and eloquently testified of Christ and His work.

The Savior Himself affirmed the importance of Isaiah's writings when, in His visit to the Nephites, He commanded them to search diligently the words of Isaiah (see 3 Nephi 20:11). The Lord said, "Great are the words of Isaiah. For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 23:1-2). The words Jacob spoke to his people can also be applied to us. Jacob said, "There are many things which have been spoken by Isaiah which may be likened unto you, because ye are of the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 6:5). We also are of the house of Israel.

The writings of Isaiah are quoted extensively in other scripture. In fact, Isaiah is quoted in other scriptures more often than any other prophet. There are sixty-six chapters in the book of Isaiah, making a total of 1,292 verses. The prophets in the Book of Mormon quoted 414 of those verses (32 percent of the book of Isaiah). They paraphrased at least another 34 verses (3 percent). The Nephite prophets considered Isaiah's writings to be of such great worth that they put approximately 35 percent of the book of Isaiah in the valuable space they had on the plates. The writers of the New Testament had a similar respect for Isaiah's teachings and prophecies. In the New Testament, Isaiah is quoted at least fifty-seven times.

In latter-day revelation there is a similar emphasis on the words of Isaiah. The Doctrine and Covenants makes approximately one hundred references to Isaiah's writings by quoting, paraphrasing, or interpreting his teachings. The close connection between Isaiah's words and those of the Doctrine and Covenants is apparent in Doctrine and Covenants 113, which contains inspired interpretations of chapters 11 and 52 of Isaiah. The key to understanding Isaiah 65 is in Doctrine and Covenants 101; Doctrine and Covenants 133 opens up an understanding of Isaiah 35, 51, 63, and 64. Numerous examples of Isaiah's phraseology can be found in the Doctrine and Covenants; compare Doctrine and Covenants 133:3, 15, 27, 40-53, 67-70 with Isaiah 52:10, 12; 51:10; 64:1-4; 63:1-9; 50:2-3, 11.

The prophet Nephi said that Isaiah spoke many things that were hard for his people to understand (see 2 Nephi 25:1). The same is true of people today. Even among the Saints who have the gift of the Holy Ghost there are many who understand very little of what Isaiah taught. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

"If, as many suppose, Isaiah ranks with the most difficult of the prophets to understand, his words are also among the most important for us to know and ponder. . . .

" . . . His prophetic words can and should shine brightly in the heart of every member of the Church." ("Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, p. 80.)

Nephi studied, expounded upon, and loved the writings of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 11:8; 12-24; 25:1-5). Concerning our need to understand Isaiah as Nephi did, Elder McConkie said: "It just may be that my salvation (and yours also!) does in fact depend upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understood them" ("Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," p. 78).

Elder McConkie explained that if we desire to go where Isaiah and Nephi have gone, then we must believe, think, know, teach, and live as they did. Certainly the writings of Isaiah deserve our careful and prayerful study. They can be understood by those who sincerely desire to do so.

(E-2) Keys to Understanding Isaiah

For those who sincerely desire to understand the writings of Isaiah, several keys are helpful. Through the use of these keys, individuals can gain great insight into Isaiah's teachings and can grow in the knowledge of the truth until the writings of Isaiah become as clear to them as they were to Nephi. These keys are discussed below.

(E-3) Pay the Price in Study and Effort

Isaiah's writings could properly be called an advanced level of scripture. He seldom explained his doctrine but assumed that the reader already had a knowledge of the gospel and the Lord's plan of salvation. Isaiah's book is written in a poetic, literary style that makes extensive use of symbolism to communicate to those who are spiritually mature.

Isaiah's words are similar to the parables of Jesus in their manner of teaching. When Jesus' disciples asked Him why He taught in parables, He said: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the people in general] it is not given. . . . Therefore I speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. . . . For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart. . . . But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." (Matthew 13:11, 13, 15-16.)

Many of the people of Jesus' time were spiritually immature and unprepared to receive the doctrines He taught. Through parables He was able to teach the more spiritually mature and at the same time veil His

teachings from those who were not prepared to understand or follow them. In that manner He kept many from being condemned for having a knowledge of principles they were unable to live (see Alma 12:9–11; Jacob 4:14). A similar charge in teaching was given to Isaiah (see Isaiah 6:9–10). For this reason, Isaiah also veiled his teachings in language that preserved his teachings for those who would understand with their heart. Spiritually speaking, Isaiah's writings are meat, not milk (see 1 Corinthians 3:1–3; Hebrews 5:13–14; Isaiah 28:9). It requires spiritual maturity to understand them.

When the Lord commanded the Nephites to study Isaiah's words, He told them how to study those words. He said, "*Search* these things *diligently*" (3 Nephi 23:1; emphasis added). It is not sufficient to merely read Isaiah's writings. To come to an understanding of the book of Isaiah, one must diligently study and search by prayerfully pondering Isaiah's teachings, analyzing them, and relating them to other scriptures. Individual phrases and verses must be studied carefully in the broad context of the gospel and the prophecies of the latter days.

(E-4) Have the "Spirit of Prophecy"

Nephi taught that the words of Isaiah "are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy" (2 Nephi 25:4). The "testimony of Jesus [which comes by the power of the Holy Ghost] is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). The spirit of prophecy, however, is far more than just a belief that Jesus lives. It includes an understanding that Jesus is the literal Son of God. It includes a correct knowledge of His purpose in coming into mortality and of the significance and nature of His mission. It includes an understanding of the gospel plan for His children, particularly those who spiritually become His sons and daughters through the covenant of baptism. All of this comes through the power of the Holy Ghost. The prophet Isaiah wrote under the influence of the spirit of prophecy. His writings must be interpreted under the influence of that same spirit. Those who desire to understand Isaiah should learn of Christ and seek the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Peter made it clear that since prophets deliver their message through inspiration from the Holy Ghost, a correct understanding of their message must come from the same source (see 2 Peter 1:20–21; D&C 50:17–22). The Book of Mormon teaches the way to obtain the spirit of prophecy. Righteous people who are serving the Lord and seeking to do His will can obtain the spirit of prophecy by searching the scriptures diligently and giving themselves "to much prayer, and fasting" (Alma 17:3). The Lord will give knowledge to those who prepare themselves and sincerely seek it.

The Prophet Joseph Smith once said, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 149). This truth, of course, also applies to gaining an understanding of the writings of Isaiah.

(E-5) Understand the Manner of Prophesying of the Jews

One reason the prophet Nephi gave for his people being unable to understand the writings of Isaiah was

that they "[knew] not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews" (2 Nephi 25:1). This manner of prophesying includes several elements.

The Law of Moses. The house of Israel in Old Testament times lived under the law of Moses, which is found in the first five books of the Old Testament. One of Isaiah's main objectives in his writings was to bring the people to a consciousness of, and conformity to, the covenants of the law. The law, in turn, was designed to teach them of Christ, to keep them in remembrance of Him, and bring them to Him (see Mosiah 3:15; 13:31; 16:14; Alma 25:15–16; 34:14). The law of Moses was the root from which the prophesying of the Jews sprang. To understand the manner of their prophesying, one must understand their law.

Isaiah began his book with a quotation from the song of Moses, which is contained in the law (compare Isaiah 1:2 with Deuteronomy 32:1). This song was immediately recognizable to the Hebrew people, for it was very familiar to them. A word or phrase from the law, which was thoroughly known by most Hebrews, brought to their minds much more than was on the written page. Isaiah was able to communicate very effectively with those who knew the law, for he did not need to explain in detail what he meant by each word or phrase. This phenomenon should not seem strange to the Latter-day Saints. They, too, experience it. No doubt a majority of active members of the Church could complete the statement of President David O. McKay, "No success can compensate. . . ." When the reader and the writer are dealing with material familiar to both of them, much can be assumed that otherwise would have to be explained. Such was the case with Isaiah and his Hebrew audience.

Imagery and figurative language. Isaiah used in his writing images and figures of speech that were well understood by the Hebrew people. For those with other backgrounds, understanding the Hebrew manner of writing is often difficult. Isaiah did not intend for every word he used to be interpreted in its most literal sense. He made constant use of metaphors, similes, analogies, parables, types, and shadows. The following are some examples:

In Isaiah 1:1 the prophet said that he was speaking about Judah and Jerusalem, yet in Isaiah 1:10 he said, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; . . . ye people of Gomorrah." He could not literally be speaking to Sodom and Gomorrah, for they were destroyed in the time of Abraham because of their wickedness (see Genesis 19:24–25). Isaiah used the names *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* to tell Judah even more forcefully that they were very wicked and were close to being destroyed, just as Sodom and Gomorrah had been.

The passage in Isaiah 28:23–29 illustrates the need for understanding Isaiah's writings in the context of his cultural background and writing style. To one who is familiar with the agricultural lifestyle of the people in Isaiah's day, his description of preparing the ground for planting, of sowing the seeds, and of threshing the crop paints a very clear mental picture. Someone who is unfamiliar with those processes would have difficulty understanding the simile Isaiah uses in verse 29. There he likens the sowing and harvesting of crops to the Lord's dealings with His people and the threshing of the world in which He will separate the righteous from the wicked. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch explain

the passage this way: "The expression is one of such grandeur, that we perceive at once that the prophet has in his mind the wisdom of God in a higher sphere. The wise, divinely inspired course adopted by the husbandman in the treatment of the field and fruit, is a type of the wise course adopted by the divine Teacher Himself in the treatment of His nation. Israel is Jehovah's field. The punishments and chastisements of Jehovah are the ploughshare and harrow, with which He forcibly breaks up, turns over, and furrows this field. But this does not last for ever. When the field has been thus loosened, smoothed, and rendered fertile once more, the painful process of ploughing is followed by a beneficent sowing and planting in a multi-form and wisely ordered fulness of grace. Again, Israel is Jehovah's child of the threshing-floor (see [Isaiah 21:10]). He threshes it; but He does not thresh it only; He also knocks; and when He threshes, He does not continue threshing for ever, *i.e.* as Caspari has well explained it, 'He does not punish all the members of the nation with the same severity; and those whom He punishes with greater severity than others He does not punish incessantly, but as soon as His end is attained, and the husks of sin are separated from those that have been punished, the punishment ceases, and only the worst in the nation, who are nothing but husks, and the husks on the nation itself, are swept away by the punishments' (compare [Isaiah 1:25; 29:20–21]). This is the solemn lesson and affectionate consolation hidden behind the veil of the parable." (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 7:2:16.)

In chapter 48 Isaiah used the metaphor "thy neck is an iron sinew" (v. 4) to show the stubbornness of the people. In verse 10 the Lord alluded to the "furnace of affliction" in which He would purify and refine His people. Verse 18 uses the simile "thy peace . . . as a river" to convey the idea of peace of mind that comes to the righteous. Verse 19, in simile, says "thy seed . . . as the sand" to indicate the multitude of descendants (as numerous as grains of sand) that could be theirs if Israel hearkened to the Lord. Such use of imagery adds power, beauty, and life to the message of the writer.

In Isaiah 44:13–20 the prophet poetically described the idolatry of Israel. In describing how some wood from trees was made into gods to be worshiped, while other wood from the same source was used to serve domestic purposes, Isaiah created a mental image which powerfully illustrated the foolishness of worshiping idols. This manner of speaking was much more convincing than if he had just told the people not to worship idols.

Dualism and esoteric terms. As is often the case in prophetic declarations, some of Isaiah's writings have a dual meaning. That is, they can apply to more than one situation or may be fulfilled at more than one time. He also at times combined dualistic phrases with terms that were intended for or understood by only a certain group. Such *esoteric language* brings to mind religious concepts that only those who have the proper religious background readily understand without further explanation. For example, Isaiah 2:2 refers to the "mountain of the Lord's house" being "established in the top of the mountains." President Harold B. Lee said that the phrase "mountain of the Lord's house"

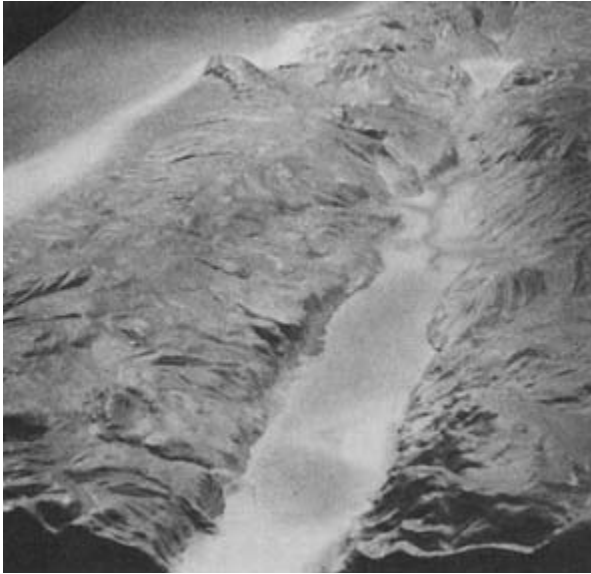
referred to both "a place as well as a definition of a righteous people" ("The Way to Eternal Life," *Ensign*, Nov. 1971, p. 15). The establishment of the "mountain of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains" has been fulfilled by the coming of the pioneers to establish the Church and temple in the tops of the mountains in Utah (see Lee, "The Way to Eternal Life," p. 15) and will be further fulfilled by the return of Judah to Jerusalem, where the Lord's house will be built (see D&C 133:13). It applies generally to those places where God's power and authority reside and where He communicates with His people. The phrase "all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2) can refer both to the early gathering of the Saints to the valleys of the mountains in Utah and also to the general gathering of Saints to Zion. The term *Zion* (v. 3), as well, has several applications. It refers to the New Jerusalem in America, the Jerusalem of Judah, and also the Lord's people or their places of gathering in all parts of the world. By using such terms as these, Isaiah conveys profound spiritual meaning to those who understand the special significance of his language.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters, Isaiah wrote of the gathering of Israel and their eventual triumph over Babylon. This figure is an excellent example of dualism. *Babylon* is used to refer both to the nation of Babylon as it existed at the time of Isaiah and also to the wickedness of the world and the dominions of Satan in the world, which the nation of Babylon epitomized. In his writings about Babylon in these chapters, Isaiah used concepts that applied to the future fall of Babylon (as a nation and as the symbol of the world), to the triumph of Israel, and to the pre-mortal overthrow of Lucifer and his hosts (see Isaiah 14:4–23). His words are not only dualistic but esoteric as well, for only those who understand the Lord's plan of salvation can grasp the full message Isaiah presented. Many of Isaiah's chapters are dualistic in the sense that the message fulfilled in Isaiah's time is a type or shadow of events to take place in the last days.

This richness of language and meaning seems to be what Nephi meant when he spoke of the manner of prophesying among the Jews. There is frequent reference to the law of Moses and extensive use of imagery, figurative language, and phrases that have dualistic and esoteric meanings. Though modern readers cannot fully grasp the culture and times of ancient Israel, understanding the methods Isaiah used to convey his meaning can give the reader a far greater understanding of Isaiah.

(E-6) Become Familiar with the Geography of the Holy Land and Regions Surrounding It

Isaiah frequently referred to cities and towns of the Holy Land as well as to neighboring nations. To one who knows the geography of the areas of which Isaiah spoke, his writings are much more clear and have greater impact. A good example of this kind of reference is found in Isaiah 10:24–34. Isaiah spoke of the Lord's using His protective power on Israel's behalf in the face of the advancing armies of Assyria. In verses 28–32 he mentioned several towns that lie near Jerusalem and said that though the Assyrians would pass through them overthrowing them one by one until they came to Nob, the Lord would preserve the



Understanding the topography and the geography of the land is useful in understanding Isaiah.

inhabitants of Jerusalem. To know that the towns mentioned lie in a ten-mile path north of Jerusalem, with the little settlement of Nob right outside the walls of Jerusalem overlooking the eastern gates of the temple, gives this passage great significance.

Isaiah also used geography figuratively, a technique which, if understood, adds great depth to his message. As mentioned above, Babylon was a symbol of wickedness and corruption. Egypt, Assyria, and other unrighteous nations were also used by Isaiah as symbols of wickedness. The wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah similarly represented unrighteousness. The names of idolatrous people such as the Canaanites, Philistines, and Amorites, that surrounded Israel were often used to represent the practice of idolatry in Israel during times of apostasy. Idumea typified the world or worldliness (see D&C 1:36). Lebanon and Bashan with their northern mountains and lofty cedars connoted pride and haughtiness. Ephraim, the leading tribe of the Northern Kingdom, and its capital in Samaria are commonly mentioned to represent the whole Northern Kingdom. In many cases where geographical figures are used, their meaning is dualistic, referring to the actual place as well as to the concept they typified.

(E-7) Learn of the Judgments of God and the Fulfillment of His Prophecies

The Lord is consistent in His dealings with His children in all ages of the world. "God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round" (D&C 3:2). This consistency is of the greatest importance to His children as they seek to work out their salvation. It is also very helpful to them in seeking to understand and follow the counsel He gives through His prophets. To understand Isaiah's writings, one should know of the Lord's teachings and workings given through other prophets. Blessings and cursings came to the people of Isaiah's time according to the same principles that

have been set down in any age of the world. As one learns of the patterns of actions that cause people to withdraw from God and of the actions that bring down the Lord's wrath upon them, the warnings and pronouncements of Isaiah can be better understood. That which was condemned by Isaiah is treated similarly by the Lord in all ages. The Lord's message in all dispensations is that there are laws upon which all consequences are based. To know the Lord's laws provides a framework from which to interpret the writings of Isaiah or any other prophet.

The Lord has revealed to many prophets the grand panorama of the earth's history. By learning of what they have written, it is possible to see where Isaiah's writings fit into the Lord's overall plan. For example, a greater understanding of Isaiah's writings can be gained by looking at them in the light of the allegory of Zenos about the olive trees (see Jacob 5). In the allegory a delineation of the history and destiny of the house of Israel is given. With a knowledge of the scatterings, nurturings, gatherings, and ultimate destiny of Israel, as taught by Zenos and cited by Jacob, Isaiah's writings can be viewed from the proper perspective. Frequently the prophecies of one prophet help one to properly view the prophecies and writings of another. Nephi prophesied that "in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass . . . for . . . they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days; for in that day shall they understand them" (2 Nephi 25:7-8). One can look for the fulfillment of many of Isaiah's words in the events that are transpiring in this dispensation. Nephi knew that those who saw Isaiah's prophecies come to pass could understand them (see, for example, Isaiah 29).

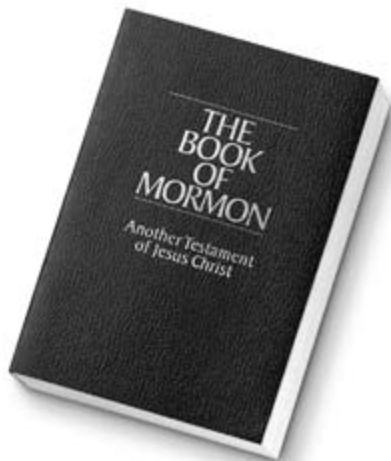
(E-8) Understand the Historical Setting of Isaiah's Writings

To understand Isaiah one needs also to understand the historical background of the people among whom he ministered. It is valuable to gain an overall view of the exodus of Israel from Egypt and their wanderings in the wilderness, their covenants with God, their conquest of Canaan, the reigns of the judges and the birth of the kingdom of Israel, the golden age of the great King David, and the division of Israel into two kingdoms. One should learn of Israel's apostasies and the struggle they had with the influence of the nations that surrounded them and by which they were often led from God. Isaiah used numerous concepts and figures of speech that came directly from that history. It is often necessary to be familiar with Israel's history to see the point that Isaiah was trying to make. It is imperative to view the writings of Isaiah in their proper context, for he often spoke of the conditions of his time and their effect on the Lord's people (see Enrichment F.)

(E-9) Use the Book of Mormon

"The Book of Mormon is the world's greatest commentary on the book of Isaiah" (McConkie, "Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," p. 81). The Book of Mormon prophets loved the writings of Isaiah and quoted from them often. Large blocks of material are found in the Book of Mormon with inspired commentary

and explanations. The Book of Mormon prophets obtained this material from the brass plates, which were written before 600 B.C. The Isaiah material in the Book of Mormon is, therefore, the oldest and most accurate available and provides commentary by prophets who, in some cases, had the same historical and cultural background as Isaiah had. The Lord Himself swore to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and, thus, to the truthfulness of Isaiah's writings that are found therein (see D&C 17:6).



The Book of Mormon provides commentary on the book of Isaiah.

(E-10) Study All Scriptures and Learn Them Thoroughly

Passages from Isaiah are quoted and explained in the Book of Mormon, and New Testament writers gave many interpretations of Isaiah as well. In the Doctrine and Covenants, specific passages of Isaiah are explained (see D&C 113), and many others are quoted in a context that sheds light on their meaning.

The more one knows of the scriptures, the better one can understand Isaiah. All elements of the gospel plan are interrelated. The consistency of the gospel enables gospel writers of all ages to speak with common terms and connected ideas. It is possible to draw from the latest scriptural sources to understand teachings of the earliest available scriptures.

As you learn more and more from the scriptures, the pieces come together as in a puzzle and begin to form one great and beautiful whole.

(E-11) The Church Has Published Bible Study Aids with the Scriptures

The Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible contains many aids to help in one's understanding of the writings of the prophets. It can be a very helpful study resource. Its footnote system contains references to the Topical Guide and cross-references to all four of the standard works. This system provides ready access to many helpful, related scriptures. The footnotes also contain alternate translations of words from Hebrew, explanations of idioms and difficult constructions, and explanations of archaic words. In addition, the inspired translations of passages made by Joseph Smith in his work on the Bible are cited. The headings provided at the beginning of each chapter of the Bible contain helpful summaries of the contents. There is a maps section in the back that is helpful in determining geographical relationships. A Bible Dictionary gives clear and concise definitions and explanations of terms in light of Latter-day Saint doctrine. Similar Bible study aids are found in triple combinations published by the Church in dozens of the world's languages.

(E-12) Isaiah Is Understood "Line upon Line"

The Lord always provides a way for His children to fulfill His commandments (see 1 Nephi 3:7). When He gave instructions to study the words of Isaiah, He fully intended that those who followed His instructions would be able to understand Isaiah's message and be positively affected by it. To those who are willing to pay the price, Isaiah can become an open book. Its greatest message is for the Saints of today, who live in an era when one can see the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies. For all who seek, Isaiah provides enlightenment that will be of great value in their efforts to perfect their lives and to contribute to the building up of the Lord's kingdom. Understanding will come, though not all at once. It will come "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30), according to the efforts of the seekers of truth.

Isaiah

The Book of

ISAIAH



The Establishment of Zion

(13-1) Introduction

Has someone ever recommended a book to you? Did it make any difference *who* recommended it? Did the recommendation influence your feelings toward the book? Ponder the following recommendation given the writings of Isaiah: “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.” (3 Nephi 23:1). This instruction was given by the Savior to the Nephites, but the commandment to “search these things diligently” forms a challenge that continues for us today. Isaiah had a wide perspective of God’s workings with His children. He understood the power and principles of the Zion society and saw their application for his day and for the future. While strengthening the spiritual of his own day, he prophesied of the establishment of Zion for those who would be called to carry it out. The first part of his writings contains many references to this great event.

The book of Isaiah is a compilation of the prophet’s writings, possibly even an abridgment of some of his work. Chapters 1 through 39 deal with the ministry of Isaiah, and chapters 40 through 66 with his visions and revelations of the future. Chronological order is not always adhered to; therefore each chapter should be examined carefully within its own historical context.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Isaiah 1–12. Refer to Enrichment E throughout your study of the book of Isaiah. Enrichment F will provide an overview of the historical setting of the prophet Isaiah’s ministry.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1–12

(13-2) Isaiah 1:1. “The Vision of Isaiah”

Great prophetic insight to the problems of the world in which he lived and into the challenges of the future came about through the revelation (“vision”) the prophet Isaiah received. The kings, the times of these kings and their people, and the prophet Isaiah’s labor with them are discussed in Enrichment F.

(13-3) Isaiah 1:1–9. Rebellion against the Lord

“Israel’s rebellion is evidence of the highest degree of sin” (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Spirit of the Old Testament*,

p. 175). Jehovah had nourished and brought them up as children (in Egypt and the wilderness), and now in their adulthood (in the promised land) they had turned against the Lord. Their affliction is like wounds or sores that have not healed. The totality of their rebellion is illustrated by the references to head and heart, to the whole person from foot to head. In other words, the spiritual cancer had infested the whole body of Israel. Little spiritual health was left in the nation. That was why the land would be left utterly desolate.

(13-4) Isaiah 1:4. “Holy One of Israel”

This sacred title of the Savior appears about thirty times in the writings of Isaiah but only twice in Jeremiah, once in Ezekiel, and three times in Psalms. It is not used elsewhere in the Old Testament, except in 2 Kings 19:22, which is Isaiah speaking. The Book of Mormon prophets Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob used this expression thirty-nine times, only four of which are passages from Isaiah.

(13-5) Isaiah 1:8. What Is a “Cottage in a Vineyard”?

When the vineyard and the cucumber crops were ready to harvest, small booths, or huts, were built in the fields so the owner or his servants could watch over the harvest and protect it from thieves or animals. These huts were generally crudely made and hastily erected. After the harvest, they were abandoned and quickly became dilapidated and forlorn relics of the harvest. Jerusalem was to be like that—once proud and useful, but now, through her own spiritual neglect, an empty and forlorn relic. (See Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:55–56.)

(13-6) Isaiah 1:9. “Left unto Us a Very Small Remnant”

The prophetic declaration promises the preservation of the lineage of Judah for future time. Paul cited this passage in this same context (see Romans 9:29; Isaiah 10:22).

(13-7) Isaiah 1:10–15. The Hypocrisy of Insincere Worship

These verses do not mean that the Lord rejected the law of Moses, particularly the performances and ordinances of the law. The condemnation here is of the hypocritical fulfillment of the Mosaic offerings and feasts. Israel misused these religious activities because they fulfilled only the outward requirements and did not worship with full purpose of heart, turning their worship toward the Savior. (See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 58–59; Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:61–62). To refer to the people of Israel as Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 10) vividly depicts how deeply the people had sunk into sin and depravity.

(13-8) Isaiah 1:16–20. Call to Repentance, Promise of Forgiveness

In the midst of a scathing denunciation of the house of Israel, the Lord reminded them that they could be saved as a nation if they would truly repent. This scripture is often used to encourage individuals to repent and seek forgiveness, but it was originally given to a nation, not a person. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

“This is not an individual promise, but one to a rebellious nation. No matter how many prophets the Lord sent to Israel and Judah, and how many times he pleaded with them, all through their history they were rebellious.

“Here we find a promise that if they would return to the Lord, their past sins would be forgotten, and he would again receive them as his people and bless them abundantly, and they should continue to be his covenant people.” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:180.)

Nephi, however, said that he took the words of Isaiah and “did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). Certainly this beautiful promise, though originally given to Israel as a nation, can be “likened” to individuals. Elder Charles W. Penrose applied Isaiah’s promise from the Lord to all who meet certain requirements: “Now here is the pattern: Those who believe and repent must be taken down into the water and be buried from their old lives, must put off the old man with his deeds, must be buried in the likeness of Christ’s burial and raised up again in the likeness of Christ’s resurrection. Then, when they come forth from the water, if they have believed, repented, and been baptized by a man sent of God to baptize—then, ‘though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ They are cleansed, they come forth to a new birth, they are born of the water, and every time they partake of the holy sacrament they witness to God that they will continue in his ways, and walk in his paths, that they have put on Christ, and that they will remember him to keep his commandments in all things. Now when people are thus properly cleansed, and purified and made white, like unto newborn babes on entering into the world, without blemish or spot, then their tabernacles are fit to receive the Holy Ghost.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 22:91.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith suggested that the washing mentioned in verse 16 could be baptism (see *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:51). From the Book of Mormon it is known that Isaiah taught baptism at least one other time (see 1 Nephi 20:1).

(13-9) Isaiah 1:19–20. A Blessing or a Curse

This same conditional promise and warning was given to the Saints of the latter days (see D&C 64:34–35).

(13-10) Isaiah 2:1–5. “In the Last Days . . . the Mountain of the Lord’s House Shall Be Established”

These same verses appear in Micah 4:1–5. It is not known whether they were revealed first to Isaiah or to Micah.

The “mountain of the Lord” in the last dispensation refers to the restoration of the Church. President Harold B. Lee said: “The coming forth of his church in these days was the beginning of the fulfillment of the



The Salt Lake Temple at Church headquarters

ancient prophecy when ‘the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 5).

On another occasion President Lee observed that “with the coming of the pioneers to establish the Church in the tops of the mountains, our early leaders declared this to be the beginning of the fulfillment of that prophecy” (“The Way to Eternal Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1971, p. 15).

The establishment of the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City is only a beginning of the fulfillment of that inspired declaration. Obviously, the effect of the Church center in Utah has been great. Elder LeGrand Richards said: “How literally [Isaiah 2:3] has been fulfilled, in my way of thinking, in this very house of the God of Jacob right here on this block! This temple [Salt Lake], more than any other building of which we have any record, has brought people from every land to learn of his ways and walk in his paths.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 143.)

But this scriptural statement extends far beyond Salt Lake City. Verse 3 suggests that eventually other world centers will be included. Then this prophetic statement will reach its fulfillment.

(13-11) Isaiah 2:3. “Out of Zion Shall Go Forth the Law . . . the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem”

President Joseph Fielding Smith gave the following explanation of this prophetic statement of Isaiah:

“We are informed in the revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, that the city of Zion and the New Jerusalem is one and the same. [D&C 28:9; 42:9; 45:66–67; 57:2; 58:7.] . . .

“Jerusalem of old, after the Jews have been cleansed and sanctified from all their sin, shall become a holy city where the Lord shall dwell and from whence he shall send forth his word unto all people. Likewise, on

this continent, the city of Zion, New Jerusalem, shall be built, and from it the law of God shall also go forth. There will be no conflict, for each city shall be headquarters for the Redeemer of the world, and from each he shall send forth his proclamations as occasion may require. Jerusalem shall be the gathering place of Judah and his fellows of the house of Israel, and Zion shall be the gathering place of Ephraim and his fellows, upon whose heads shall be conferred 'the richer blessings.' . . .

"These two cities, one in the land of Zion and one in Palestine, are to become *capitals for the kingdom of God during the millennium*.

"In the meantime, while the work of preparation is going on and Israel is being gathered, many people are coming to the land of Zion saying: 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.' The Latter-day Saints are fulfilling this prediction, since they are being gathered from all parts of the earth and are coming to the house of the Lord in these valleys of the mountains. Here they are being taught in the ways of the Lord through the restoration of the gospel and by receiving blessings in the temples now erected. Moreover, before many years have passed away, the Lord will command the building of the City Zion, and Jerusalem in Palestine will in due time be cleansed and become a holy city and the habitation of the Jews after they are cleansed and are willing to accept Jesus Christ as their Redeemer." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:69–71.)

While the Saints await the time of the establishment of these world centers, the principle of sending forth the law has been associated not only with the spread of the gospel and its blessings, but also with the providing of a climate in which the gospel work can grow.

President Harold B. Lee said:

"I have often wondered what that expression meant, that out of Zion shall go forth the law. Years ago I went with the brethren to the Idaho Falls Temple, and I heard in that inspired prayer of the First Presidency a definition of the meaning of that term 'out of Zion shall go forth the law.' Note what they said: 'We thank thee that thou hast revealed to us that those who gave us our constitutional form of government were men wise in thy sight and that thou didst raise them up for the very purpose of putting forth that sacred document [the Constitution of the United States—see D&C 101:80]. . . .

"We pray that kings and rulers and the peoples of all nations under heaven may be persuaded of the blessings enjoyed by the people of this land by reason of their freedom and under thy guidance and be constrained to adopt similar governmental systems, thus to fulfill the ancient prophecy of Isaiah and Micah that ". . . out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'" (*Improvement Era*, October 1945, p. 564.)" ("The Way to Eternal Life," p. 15).

(13-12) Isaiah 2:4–5. Establishment of the Millennium

These verses deal with the ushering in of the millennial era and with the changes that will accompany it. The writings of Isaiah as found in the Book of Mormon show the following additional phrase in verse 5: "Yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways" (2 Nephi 12:5). This verse indicates a widespread apostasy in Israel and the return of Israel to the Lord before the Second Coming.

(13-13) Isaiah 2:6–22. The Proud and the Wicked to Be Brought Low

Isaiah 2 summarizes the basic spiritual problems that troubled Israel in Isaiah's day and that will prevail again among the people before the Second Coming. This passage is another excellent example of dualistic prophecy (see Enrichment E for a discussion of prophetic dualism). Though Isaiah's prophecy was given "concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (v. 1), it is obviously also related to the last days and the Second Coming of Jesus.

Verse 6. They were "replenished from the east," or in other words, they looked to the religious philosophies and the gods of the Assyrians and other heathen countries for power and sustenance. Today people look to many other religions and philosophies of men for wisdom and guidance instead of to the gospel.

Verse 6. They "hearken unto soothsayers" (2 Nephi 12:6), those false prophets who claimed to be able to foretell the future. Today, true prophets are largely ignored, and all kinds of false religionists and counselors are looked to for guidance.

Verse 6. "They please themselves in the children of strangers" or, as C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch translated the phrase, "and with the children of foreigners they go hand in hand" (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 7:1:118). In short, ancient Israel was joining the heathen nations in all their wickedness, and modern society is joining with the influences of the world rather than looking to the Lord.

Verse 7. The land was "full of silver and gold," that is, the people were wealthy and materialistic. Their hearts were set on the things of the world. Again in the last days, materialism runs rampant.

Verse 7. The land was "full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." The horse was a symbol of warfare, as was the chariot. Today is an age characterized by "wars and rumors of war" (see JS—M 1:28.)

Verse 8. The land was filled with idolatry then, and people still turn to false gods today, though not necessarily to idols made of wood or stone.

Verse 9. The "mean man boweth *not* down, and the great man humbleth himself *not*" (2 Nephi 12:9; emphasis added). The differences in the Book of Mormon account of Isaiah's writings, noted by the italics, show that Isaiah was not making further reference to idolatry but was referring to the fact that men would not worship the true God. In the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord indicated this failure would be a major concern of the last days. (See D&C 1:16.)

Because of her sins, ancient Israel brought upon herself the judgments of God, and because of the same problems the people of the last days will likewise bring sorrow and problems upon themselves.

The brass plates contained other differences that clarify Isaiah's meaning. Compare Isaiah 2:10, 12–14, 16, 19, 21 with 2 Nephi 12:10, 12–14, 16, 19, 21.

(13-14) Isaiah 2:13. What Were the "Cedars of Lebanon" and the "Oaks of Bashan"?

They were the loftiest and most impressive trees in the ancient Middle East. They therefore symbolized not only the great beauty of the land that would be destroyed but also the proud and lofty people of the earth (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:122–23).

(13-15) Isaiah 2:16. What Is Meant by the Phrase “Ships of Tarshish”?

Trade with other nations would cease. Such trade had been established and had prospered during the reign of kings Uzziah and Jotham (see Enrichment F; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:124).

Again the Book of Mormon affirms the completeness of the record from which its Isaiah citations were taken. Sperry illustrated this contribution:

“In 2 Nephi 12:16 (cf. Isaiah 2:16) the Book of Mormon has a reading of remarkable interest. It prefixes a phrase of eight words not found in the Hebrew or King James versions. Since the ancient Septuagint (Greek) Version concurs with the added phrase in the Book of Mormon, let us exhibit the readings of the Book of Mormon (B.M.), the King James Version (K.J.), and the Septuagint (LXX) as follows:

B.M.	And upon all the ships of the sea,
K. J.	_____
LXX	And upon every ship of the sea,
	and upon all the ships of Tarshish
	And upon all the ships of Tarshish

and upon all pleasant pictures.
and upon all pleasant pictures.
and upon every display of fine ships.

“The Book of Mormon suggests that the original text of this verse contained three phrases, all of which commenced with the same opening words, ‘and upon all.’ By a common accident, the original Hebrew (and hence the King James) text lost the first phrase, which was, however, preserved by the Septuagint. The latter lost the second phrase and seems to have corrupted the third phrase. The Book of Mormon preserved all three phrases. Scholars may suggest that Joseph Smith took the first phrase from the Septuagint. The prophet did not know Greek, and there is no evidence that he had access to a copy of the Septuagint in 1829–30 when he translated the Book of Mormon.” (*The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 90–91.)

(13-16) Isaiah 2:22. “Cease Ye from Man”

This expression is a warning about the weaknesses of trusting merely in man (see also 2 Nephi 4:34; 28:31; Topical Guide, s.v. “trust not in the arm of flesh”).

(13-17) Isaiah 3:1–8. Prophetic Declaration of the Fall of Judah

Isaiah described the eventual fall of Judah and Jerusalem in terms of the noted officials and respected persons of his day. These included government, military, educational, and religious leaders. With the loss of such individuals, the nation would fall under despotic reign at the hands of youthful puppets. Finally, it would rush toward anarchy as the last struggles for power were exercised within the ruling family. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:130–35.) The people would be so desperate for leadership that they would select rulers because they were able to dress decently, but even family leaders would refuse to help. The Book of Mormon provides textual clarification for verse 6, showing that the people pleaded that the ruler *not* let ruin come upon them (see 2 Nephi 13:6).

(13-18) Isaiah 3:9. “The Shew of Their Countenance Doth Witness against Them”

The Book of Mormon clarifies the meaning of this significant verse (see 2 Nephi 13:9). Individuals radiate the quality of their spirit and attitude. They manifest the real person—good or evil. Isaiah warned that the disobedient cannot hide the effects of their transgressions from others. President David O. McKay provided the following insights into this principle:

“Every man and every person who lives in this world wields an influence, whether for good or for evil. It is not what he says alone; it is not alone what he does. It is what he is. Every man, every person radiates what he or she really is. . . . It is what we are and what we *radiate* that affects the people around us.

“As individuals, we must think nobler thoughts. We must not encourage vile thoughts or low aspirations. We shall radiate them if we do. If we think noble thoughts; if we encourage and cherish noble aspirations, there will be that radiation when we meet people, especially when we associate with them.” (*Man May Know for Himself*, p. 108.)

(13-19) Isaiah 3:14. Why Should the Lord Be Upset Because the People Have “Eaten Up the Vineyard”?

The vineyard is a symbol of the chosen people (see Isaiah 5:7), and the rulers of Israel were called to be watchmen over the vineyard. Instead of guarding the Lord’s vineyard they had oppressed the people and consumed the vineyard (compare Matthew 21:33–40).

(13-20) Isaiah 3:16–24. The “Daughters of Zion” to Succumb to Worldliness in the Latter Days

In these verses one can see a good example of dualism (see Enrichment E). Isaiah shows that the wickedness prevailing in Israel and Judah included the women, who were proud, arrogant, and more concerned with their clothing, jewels, and personal appearance than with righteousness. But these verses can also be applied in the latter days, when women will once more lose sight of proper priorities. President Joseph Fielding Smith said of this passage:

“Isaiah, one of the great prophets of early times, saw our day, and he described the conditions that would prevail among the ‘daughters of Zion’ in these latter days. . . .

“Now, in this modern day, Isaiah’s prophecy has been and is being fulfilled. . . .

“The standards expressed by the General Authorities of the Church are that women, as well as men, should dress modestly. They are taught proper deportment and modesty at all times. It is, in my judgment, a sad reflection on the ‘daughters of Zion’ when they dress immodestly. Moreover, this remark pertains to the men as well as to the women. The Lord gave commandments to ancient Israel that both men and women should cover their bodies and observe the law of chastity at all times.” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:172–74.)

(13-21) Isaiah 3:16–24. Difficult Idioms and Archaic Expressions

The following explanations may be helpful in understanding the power of Isaiah’s condemnation of the women’s apostasy.

Verse 16. "Stretched forth necks" is an idiom describing haughtiness—pride in self and scorn toward others (see Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:162).

Verse 16. "Mincing . . . and making a tinkling with their feet." The women wore costly ornamental chains connecting rings about the ankles. These were often adorned with bells. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:143.)

Verse 17. "Discover their secret parts" is an idiom meaning that they would be put to shame (see Isaiah 3:17a).

Verse 18. "Cauls . . . round tires like the moon" were ornamental jewelry in the shape of suns and moons according to the fashions of that day (see Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:165).

Verses 19–23. These terms describe fashions that were popular among the worldly women in Isaiah's day: "muffler"—veil; "bonnet"—headdress; "tablets"—perfume boxes; "earrings"—charms or amulets; "nose jewels"—nose rings; "changeable suits of apparel"—clothing for festivals only; "mantle"—overcloak; "wimples"—a type of shawl or veil worn over the head; "crisping pins"—erroneously rendered as hair curling implements. The Hebrew suggests a bag, like modern purses or handbags; "glasses"—most authorities translate as a metal mirror, although some suggest transparent clothing, "hoods"—turbans, head cover wrapped by hand. (See Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:165–66; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:144–47.)

(13-22) Isaiah 3:24–26. The Fruits of Transgression upon the Daughters of Zion

The prophet contrasts their former beauty with the results of judgment. Because of their wickedness, the beauty, the pride, and the fashion will become tragedy, disaster, and slavery. The girdle in verse 24 was the sash used to fasten the outer clothing. Keil and Delitzsch showed that the "rent" which was to replace it was the rope used to bind slaves. Sackcloth was black goat's hair worn at times of great mourning. The "burning" refers to the branding that often accompanied one's being made a slave. Thus Keil and Delitzsch translated this verse: "And instead of balmy scent there will be mouldiness, and instead of the sash, a rope, and instead of artistic ringlets a baldness, and instead of the dress cloak a frock of sackcloth, branding instead of beauty" (*Commentary*, 7:1:147).

(13-23) Isaiah 4:1. "Take Away Our Reproach"

Verse 1 of chapter four seems to continue the thought of chapter three rather than to begin a new thought. This phrase suggests that the condition mentioned in verse 1 is caused by the scarcity of men, a result of the devastation of war mentioned in Isaiah 3:25–26. The conditions under which these women would accept this marriage ("eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel") are contrary to the Lord's order of marriage (see Exodus 21:10; D&C 132:58–61). To be unmarried and childless in ancient Israel was a disgrace (see Genesis 30:23; Luke 1:25). So terrible would conditions in those times be that women would offer to share a husband with others and expect no material support from him, if they could claim they were married to him.

(13-24) Isaiah 4:2. What Is the "Branch of the Lord"?

See Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1.

(13-25) Isaiah 4:4. "Washed . . . Purged . . . Burning"

This passage describes the purification of Zion in preparation for the establishment of God's kingdom in the last days (see also Isaiah 4:4a). Through chastisement and various judgments, Israel will finally be purged of wickedness and turn back to God (compare Isaiah 5:16; Zechariah 13:9; Helaman 12:1–3).

(13-26) Isaiah 4:5–6. Zion to Be a Place of Refuge

In Doctrine and Covenants 45:66–72, the sacred and protected status of "Zion" for the gathered Israel in the latter days is described. Doctrine and Covenants 105:31–32 speaks of how the glory of Zion shall be her defense. Isaiah compared the protecting divine influence with that experienced by Moses (see Exodus 14:19–20; Deuteronomy 1:33). Elder Orson Pratt suggested that the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy would be literal:

"The time is to come when God will meet with all the congregation of his Saints, and to show his approval, and that he does love them, he will work a miracle by covering them in the cloud of his glory. I do not mean something that is invisible, but I mean that same order of things which once existed on the earth so far as the tabernacle of Moses was concerned, which was carried in the midst of the children of Israel as they journeyed in the wilderness. . . . But in the latter days there will be people so pure in Mount Zion, with a house established upon the tops of the mountains, that God will manifest himself, not only in their Temple and upon all their assemblies, with a visible cloud during the day, but when the night shall come, if they shall be assembled for worship, God will meet with them by his pillar of fire; and when they retire to their habitations, behold each habitation will be lighted up by the glory of God,—a pillar of flaming fire by night.

"Did you ever hear of any city that was thus favored and blessed since the day that Isaiah delivered this prophecy? No, it is a latter-day work, one that God must consummate in the latter times when he begins to reveal himself, and show forth his power among the nations." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 16:82.)

(13-27) Isaiah 5:1–7. Isaiah's Parable of the Vineyard

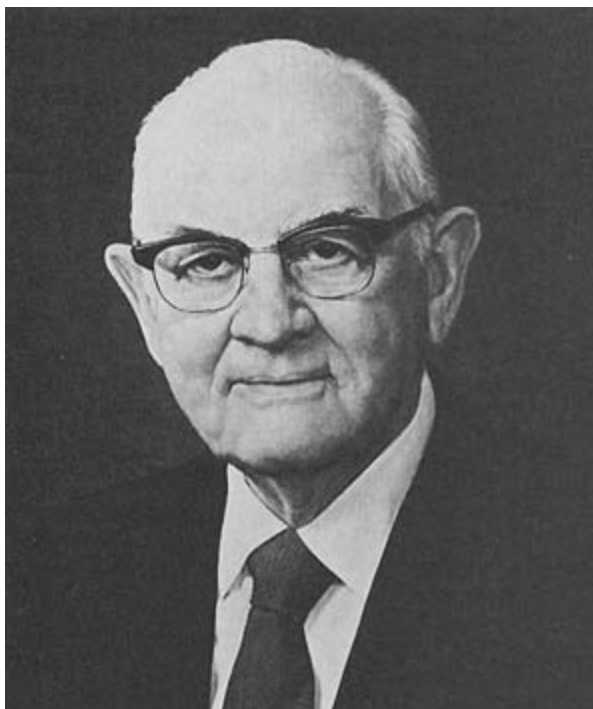
The prophet used the parable of the vineyard to illustrate the impending destruction and scattering of Israel (Judah). For additional examples of similar applications of this parable see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 541–42.

The loss of protection for the vineyard, the neglect, and the effects of famine would result from Israel's transgression (see vv. 5–7).

(13-28) Isaiah 5:8–25. Warning of the Consequences of Apostasy and Transgression

After the parable that introduces this chapter, the prophet Isaiah gave many examples of the wickedness of the people of his day.

Verse 8. They built up great estates through wickedness. Keil and Delitzsch explained: "'They, the insatiable, would not rest till, after every smaller piece of landed property had been swallowed by them, the



President Spencer W. Kimball

whole land had come into their possession, and no one beside themselves was settled in the land' [Job 22:8]. Such covetousness was all the more reprehensible, because the law of Israel had provided so very stringently and carefully, that as far as possible there should be an equal distribution of the soil, and that hereditary family property should be inalienable." (Commentary, 7:1:166.)

An *acre* is the amount a yoke of oxen could plow in a day. A *bath* is about 5.5 gallons. A *homer* is about 6.5 bushels, and an *ephah* is one tenth of a homer. These measurements show how unproductive the land would become because of this wickedness.

Verse 11. Drunkenness and partying prevail, with no regard for God.

Verse 12. There is no knowledge of truth and true principles. Ignorance is a hindrance in any field of endeavor, but especially in spiritual things. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave instruction on this important principle: "The Church must be cleansed, and I proclaim against all iniquity. A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God." (Teachings, p. 217.)

Verse 18. They draw sin and iniquity with ropes of vanity. Isaiah 5:18c helps explain Isaiah's idiomatic expressions: "They are tied to their sins like beasts to their burdens."

Verse 20. They pervert righteousness and goodness, calling them evil, and try to pass off evil things as good. It is the nature of sinners to reject the reality of the consequences of their transgressions, and so they attempt to explain them away.

Verse 21. They are "wise in their own eyes." President N. Eldon Tanner illustrated the necessity of heeding this warning. He noted that when people "become learned in the worldly things such as science and philosophy, [they] become self-sufficient and are prepared to lean unto their own understanding, even to the point where they think they are independent of God; and because of their worldly learning they feel that if they cannot prove physically, mathematically, or scientifically that God lives, they can and should feel free to question and even to deny God and Jesus Christ. Then many of our professors begin to teach perverse things, to lead away disciples after them; and our youth whom we send to them for learning accept them as authority, and many are caused to lose their faith in God. . . .

"How much wiser and better it is for man to accept the simple truths of the gospel and to accept as authority God, the Creator of the world, and his Son Jesus Christ, and to accept by faith those things which he cannot disprove and for which he cannot give a better explanation. He must be prepared to acknowledge that there are certain things—many, many things—that he cannot understand." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, pp. 48–49.)

Verse 23. They "justify the wicked for reward." Those who were guilty of crimes were declared innocent by bribed judges and other officials, whereas the innocent were found guilty so that they could be silenced or their property exploited. Obviously the dark evils that prevailed among the Israelites of the ancient kingdom of Judah help modern readers understand why the judgments of God come upon them. But today's world can also learn a great lesson, for one need only look to see the same evils prevailing on many sides. The effects of sin today are as devastating as they were anciently. That is the message of Isaiah for today.

(13-29) Isaiah 5:26–30. "He Will Lift Up an Ensign to the Nations" in the Latter Days

The gathering of Israel in haste and with means not known in Isaiah's day is portrayed in the conclusion of this chapter. Elder LeGrand Richards provided this modern-day application of the prophet's words:

"Since there were neither trains nor airplanes in that day, Isaiah could hardly have mentioned them by name. However, he seems to have described them in unmistakable words. How better could 'their horses' hoofs be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind' than in the modern train? How better could 'their roaring . . . be like a lion' than in the roar of the airplane? Trains and airplanes do not stop for night. Therefore, was not Isaiah justified in saying: 'none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken'? With this manner of transportation the Lord can really 'hiss unto them from the end of the earth,' that 'they shall come with speed swiftly.'" (Israel! Do You Know?, p. 182.)

The expression "ensign to the nations" is discussed in Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:10, 12.

(13-30) Isaiah 5:26. What Does It Mean to "Hiss" to the Nations?

This expression describes a signal, such as a whistle, to summon or alert someone to an event. (See Isaiah 5:26b and Isaiah 7:18a.)

(13-31) Isaiah 6:1–4. Vision of the Lord and the Celestial Realms

A vision of the celestial sphere would be difficult if not impossible to describe. That was the dilemma of the prophet Isaiah. He endeavored in these verses to portray something of the power and glory of his experience, using images and terms with which his readers could identify. Even then he sensed how much he fell short of communicating the reality of the experience. Later in his writing, Isaiah described the inadequacy of words and even of the senses of mortal man to comprehend heavenly things. He wrote: “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” (Isaiah 64:4).

Others who have experienced visions of the celestial realms have cited Isaiah in an attempt to explain their limited ability to tell of what they had been shown (see 1 Corinthians 2:9; D&C 76:10). The Prophet Joseph Smith provided a perspective on such experiences when he said: “Could we read and comprehend all that has been written from the days of Adam, on the relation of man to God and angels in a future state, we should know very little about it. Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.” (*Teachings*, p. 324.)

(13-32) Isaiah 6:1. “In the Year That King Uzziah Died”

The approximate year of King Uzziah’s death was 740 B.C. The events preceding it and following it can be reviewed in Enrichment F.

(13-33) Isaiah 6:1. “I Saw . . . the Lord”

Both John and Nephi testified that the Lord whom Isaiah saw was the premortal Jesus Christ (see John 12:41; 2 Nephi 11:2–3). In addition, some have witnessed a similar scene (see Revelation 4:1–11).

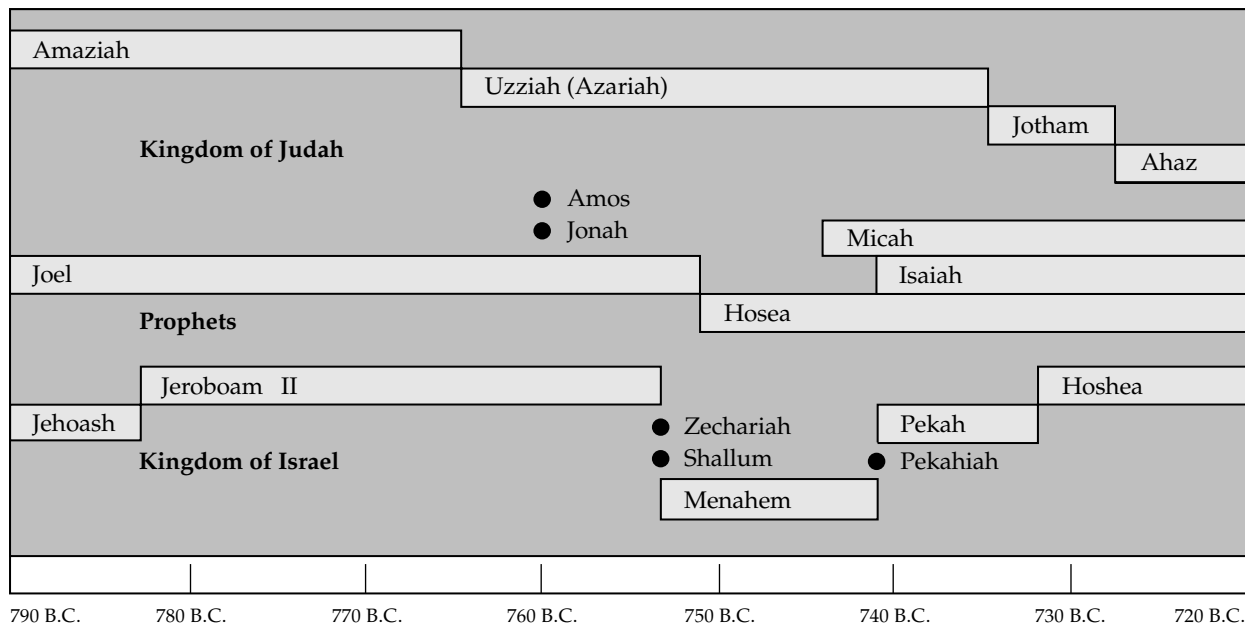
(13-34) Isaiah 6:2. What Are Seraphim?

“*Seraphs* are angels who reside in the presence of God, giving continual glory, honor, and adoration to him. ‘Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.’ (Ps. 148:2.) It is clear that seraphs include the unembodied spirits of pre-existence, for our Lord ‘looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and *all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made.*’ (D. & C. 38:1.) Whether the name seraphs also applies to perfected and resurrected angels is not clear. While petitioning on behalf of the saints, the Prophet prayed that ‘we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!’ (D. & C. 109:79.)

“In Hebrew the plural of seraph is *seraphim* or, as incorrectly recorded in the King James Version of the Bible, *seraphims*. Isaiah saw seraphim in vision and heard them cry one to another ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ (JST, Isa. 6:1–8.) The fact that these holy beings were shown to him as having wings was simply to symbolize their ‘power, to move, to act, etc.’ as was the case also in visions others had received. (D. & C. 77:4.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 702–3.)

(13-35) Isaiah 6:4. “The Posts of the Door Moved . . . , and the House Was Filled with Smoke”

Another rendering of the first phrase from the Hebrew suggests more clearly what was intended: “the foundations of the thresholds trembled” (Isaiah 6:4a).



Contemporaries of King Uzziah

The presence of smoke was symbolic of the presence and glory of God (see Exodus 19:18; Revelation 15:8). Fire and smoke are frequently used to depict the glory of celestial realms. In the language of Joseph Smith:

“God Almighty Himself dwells in eternal fire; flesh and blood cannot go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire. ‘Our God is a consuming fire. [Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29].’ When our flesh is quickened by the Spirit, there will be no blood in this tabernacle. Some dwell in higher glory than others.

“. . . Immortality dwells in everlasting burnings.”
(*Teachings*, p. 367.)

(13-36) Isaiah 6:5–8. The Prophet Received Forgiveness

The expression “Woe is me! For I am undone” is an idiom declaring Isaiah’s overwhelming feeling of unworthiness before God. (See Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:247–48). Likewise, the purging by a live coal is symbolic of purifying, cleansing, and forgiveness (see Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:250–51). Joseph Smith had similar experiences in connection with his call and the carrying forth of his ministry (see JS—H 1:29; D&C 29:3; 36:1; 50:36; 60:7).

(13-37) Isaiah 6:9–13. Prophecy of the Rejection of Spiritual Things

The words the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to deliver were in part to bring the people to a full accountability for their choices, so that they would be left without excuse. The Book of Mormon rendering of verse 9 shows that the Lord was telling Isaiah the people would for the most part reject his words: “And he said: Go and tell this people—Hear ye indeed, but *they understood* not; and see ye indeed, but *they perceived* not” (2 Nephi 16:9; emphasis indicates differences from the King James Version).

The people claimed to hear and see, but they did not understand the spirit of the message.

The command to “make the heart of this people fat, . . . their ears heavy, and shut their eyes” is used to describe the process of making the people accountable. The command, of course, refers to “their spiritual sight, spiritual hearing, and spiritual feeling.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:200). “There is a self-hardening in evil. . . . Sin from its very nature bears its own punishment. . . . An evil act in itself is the result of self-determination proceeding from a man’s own will.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:201). An individual cannot resist or reject the truth without eventually becoming spiritually hardened (see *History of the Church*, 4:264). Isaiah’s indictment of the kingdom of Judah was cited again in the New Testament to show that the people of that time were no different. The inability of many to understand the parables is a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (see Matthew 13:10–17; Luke 8:9–10). The significance of many of the miracles was also misunderstood (see John 12:37–41). The testimony of the Messiah and His Sonship was understood, at least in part, by the disciples, but it was rejected by others (see Luke 10:21–24).

The prophet Isaiah asked the Lord how long some men would be hardened against truth (v. 11); the answer—until mortal man no longer exists (see Isaiah 6:11a).

(13-38) Isaiah 6:13. Scattering and Gathering of the Remnant of Judah

This verse records the prophecy that the house of Israel would survive the coming devastation as does a tree that is stripped of its leaves in winter but still remains alive (see Isaiah 6:13b).

(13-39) Isaiah 7:1–9. A Prophetic Warning against an Alliance between Israel (Ephraim) and Syria

The kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) in the north had formed an alliance with Syria for mutual strength and protection against the conquering empire of Assyria. When Judah refused to join the alliance, they threatened to subjugate Judah and attacked their southern foe. (See 2 Kings 15:36–38; 16:1–6).

Isaiah was directed to warn King Ahaz against seeking political alliances for Judah in order to defend his people. The king, the third of the kings of Judah that Isaiah was sent to counsel, eventually rejected the Lord’s warning (see 2 Kings 16:7–20; see also Enrichment F).

(13-40) Isaiah 7:3. Who Was Shear-jashub?

He was one of the sons of the prophet Isaiah who accompanied his father in visiting the king. His name was a prophetic one that meant “the remnant shall return” (Isaiah 7:3a; see also Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 8:18).

(13-41) Isaiah 7:3. What Was the “Conduit of the Upper Pool”?

See Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 18:17.

(13-42) Isaiah 7:4. Why Were Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel Called “Smoking Firebrands”?

The image is that of a torch that has burned out. The charred pieces of wood have no strength and carry no real threat (see Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:273).

(13-43) Isaiah 7:8. “Within Threescore and Five Years”

Because the chronologies of biblical and contemporary texts are neither complete nor in harmony, it is difficult to review the history with year-to-year precision. The fulfillment of this prophecy, however, is generally regarded as extending past the initial invasions of both Tiglath-pileser III and Shalmaneser V to the final conquest and displacement of the majority of the population under the Assyrian king Esarhaddon. Throughout the period of disruption and migrations, Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom, was able to maintain some identity until the final deportation. (See Enrichment F; see also Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:211–12; Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:275–76.)

(13-44) Isaiah 7:10–16. The Messianic Promise a Protection

King Ahaz was reluctant to accept counsel, so the prophet challenged him to seek the confirming witness of the Lord: “ask a sign” (v. 11). Still the king refused, not because he was unwilling to tempt God as he said (v. 12), but because he did not want the Lord interfering in his plans to make an alliance with other nations. But the Lord revealed the sign anyway, confirming the



Isaiah's vision of the birth of Christ

prophetic promise that the Messiah would be born of the remnant of Judah and that Judah would not totally perish. In contrast to the promise to Judah, the writer prophesied the fall of the Northern Kingdom, "the land thou abhorrest" (v. 16), which opposed King Ahaz. The two kings who reigned in the north at that time were put to death by the Assyrians. (See Monte S. Nyman, "Great Are the Words of Isaiah," pp. 58–59; Enrichment F).

(13-45) Isaiah 7:14. "A Virgin Shall . . . Bear a Son"

This passage is cited in the New Testament as being fulfilled by the birth of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 1:25). Some commentators point out that the word translated *virgin* means only a young woman and not someone who has never had sexual relations. They do this in an attempt to refute this passage as proof of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. But it can be shown that the term is properly translated and did mean an unmarried woman (see Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:286–88).

The Book of Mormon, likewise, testifies of Mary's virginity at the time of Christ's conception (see 1 Nephi 11:13, 15, 18, 20–21). Thus, the vision of Nephi affirms Isaiah's ancient prophecy that it was indeed a virgin who would conceive.

President Marion G. Romney spoke of the importance of spiritual direction in understanding the prophet Isaiah's declaration:

"Here is another example in which men revise the scriptures without the inspiration of the Spirit. Isaiah, in predicting the birth of Christ, said: 'Behold, a *virgin* shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14. Italics added.) When Isaiah used the word *virgin*, he was saying that a woman who had not known a man should bear a son.

"The modern translators say: 'Behold, a *young woman* shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' (Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version [1952], Isaiah 7:14. Italics added.) You see, they do not believe that Christ was divine, so it does not make any difference to them whether they say a 'young woman' or a 'virgin.'" (In Conference Report, Tokyo Japan Area Conference 1975, p. 46.)

(13-46) Isaiah 7:14. What Is the Meaning of the Name Immanuel?

This name is also a title that describes Jehovah's mission in mortality. The New Testament provides a correct interpretation of its meaning in Hebrew. Matthew recorded: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:22–23).

(13-47) Isaiah 8. Warning of the Impending Assyrian Invasion

The chapter is a continuation of the historical events introduced in chapter 7 (see Enrichment F). The prophet Isaiah is again to warn Judah against alliances, for, as he prophesies, they will be ineffective. The Messianic promise of Immanuel ("God is with us") would prevail in their behalf. The Assyrian invasion would come, but Judah would still survive. Isaiah concluded his writing with a warning against the false teachings and practices that would pull Judah away from the law and testimony that had been revealed to them.

(13-48) Isaiah 8:1–4. Who Was "Maher-shalal-hash-baz"?

This is the longest proper name in the Bible, and in the Hebrew it has a meaning that was a message of warning to Judah. The name means "to speed the spoil, he hasteneth the prey" (see Isaiah 8:1*d*). The Lord commanded the prophet to give this name to his newborn son. The expression "prophetess" is used here only to designate the prophet's wife, not a prophetic office or gift (see Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:303). This son and Shear-jashub were both given prophetic names to dramatize Isaiah's message. (See also Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 7:3 and 8:18.)

(13-49) Isaiah 8:14. "A Stone of Stumbling and . . . a Rock of Offense"

The Messiah is referred to in the scriptures as a "stone" (see Genesis 49:24; Psalm 118:22) and also as a "rock" (see Deuteronomy 32:4, 15; 1 Samuel 2:2). The prophet here uses this expression to describe the rejection of the Savior, the stumbling and offense, by the unbelieving of Israel and Judah. The New Testament writers also cited this passage in showing how the Jews for the most part rejected the Savior (see Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:8).

(13-50) Isaiah 8:18. "I and the Children Whom the Lord Hath Given Me Are for Signs and for Wonders in Israel"

The name *Isaiah* means "Jehovah saves." The names of his two known sons, Shear-jashub (Isaiah 7:3) and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 8:1), also convey a message to the people in Judah. (See Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 7:3; 8:1–4.) Whenever anyone saw or heard Isaiah and his sons, he was given a message through their names, which were a sign or witness against the people.

(13-51) Isaiah 8:19. Warning against Familiar Spirits, Peepers, and Mutterers

The expression “familiar spirits” is not an accurate term to convey the significance of the Hebrew term used anciently. The Hebrew word *’ob* means “a leather bottle or bag” (see William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 15). This object was used by the practitioners of necromancy, a deceptive craft of pretended communication with the dead. The art involved a kind of ventriloquism wherein the voice or message of the “departed spirits” was called forth from the bag or sometimes a pit. (See G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 1:131, 133–34.) The peeping (chirping) and muttering (twittering) somewhat like birds was intended to invoke the departed spirits or to convey the pretended message (see Young, *Book of Isaiah*, 1:318). The Lord warned Israel and Judah of such deceptions early in their history (see Leviticus 19:31; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10–11). President Joseph Fielding Smith in commenting on these ancient practices gave this warning that applies even today:

“To seek for information through . . . any way contrary to the instruction the Lord has given is a sin. The Lord gave positive instruction to Israel when they were in the land of their inheritance that they were to go to him for revelation and to avoid the devices prevalent among the heathen nations who occupied their lands. . . .

“All through the Bible, the New Testament as well as the Old, the Lord and his prophets have expressed their displeasure when the people turned from the Lord to ‘familiar spirits.’” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:33.)

(13-52) Isaiah 9:1–7. The Messianic Promise Reaffirmed

As the Assyrians swept down against the alliance of Israel (Ephraim) and the Syrians, they destroyed Damascus and captured the northern region of Israel, later called the Galilee (see 2 Kings 15:27–31; Enrichment F). In spite of this invasion and the threat it posed for the rest of Israel and for Judah in the south, Isaiah prophesied of the coming of the Messiah as the coming of a light. The lands inherited by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were in northern Israel, or the Galilee, where Jesus was raised and spent most of His ministry. The Keil and Delitzsch translation of verse 1 shows more clearly what is promised: “For it does not remain dark where there is now distress: in the first time He brought into disgrace the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and in the last He brings to honour the road by the sea, the other side of Jordan, the circle of the Gentiles” (*Commentary*, 7:1:243).

They added this explanation: “The reason assigned for the fact that the unbelieving people of Judah had fallen into a night without morning, is, that there was a morning coming, whose light, however, would not rise upon the land of Judah first, but upon other parts of the land. . . . The meaning is, There is not, *i.e.* there will not remain; a state of darkness over the land, . . . which is now in a state of distress; but those very districts which God has hitherto caused to suffer deep humiliation He will bring to honour by and by. . . . The height of the glorification would correspond to the depth of the disgrace.” (*Commentary*, 7:1:243.)

Matthew saw the fact that the Messiah dwelt in the area of Galilee as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (see Matthew 4:12–16).

The inconsistency of verse 3 is corrected when the purer Book of Mormon text is used. The word *not* does not appear (see 2 Nephi 19:3).

(13-53) Isaiah 9:5. “Every Battle . . . Shall Be with Burning”

The prophet wrote in this chapter of Christ’s coming as “a great light” (v. 2), His first appearance, and as a “burning” (v. 5), the cleansing and destruction by fire that will accompany His coming in glory (see Isaiah 9:5b).

(13-54) Isaiah 9:6. “Unto Us a Son Is Given . . . and His Name Shall Be Called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father”

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote about the Savior’s various titles:

“Isaiah . . . speaks of Christ as ‘Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.’ (Is. 9:6)

“These titles, and the sayings that Jesus was the Creator and all things were made by him, have proved to be a stumbling block to some who are not well informed. The question arises, ‘How could he, if he had not body and flesh and bones, before he was born of Mary, accomplish these things as a spirit?’ Jesus had no body of flesh and bones until he was born at Bethlehem. This he fully explained to the brother of Jared. The answer to this question is simply that he did these wonderful works because of the glory his Father had given him before he was born (John 17:5–24) and because at that time he was God. In an epistle issued by the First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles in 1916, these matters are clearly explained. (See *Era*, Vol. 19:34.) From this epistle the following is taken:

“ . . . scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and in the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.



President Joseph Fielding Smith

“With this meaning, as the context shows in every case, Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of Elohim, is called “the Father,” and even “the very eternal Father of heaven and earth.” (See . . . Mosiah 16:15.) With analogous meaning, Jesus Christ is called “The Everlasting Father,” (Isaiah 9:6; compare 2 Nephi 19:6.) The descriptive titles “Everything” and “eternal” in the foregoing texts are synonymous.

“That Jesus Christ who we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book *Jesus the Christ*, Chap. 4. Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is constantly called the Father of heaven and earth in the sense explained above; and since his creations are of eternal quality, he is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth.” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:168).

(13-55) Isaiah 9:6. “The Prince of Peace”

The angels at the time of the Messiah’s birth declared “peace on earth” with His coming (see Luke 2:14). President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., discussed this important title and its meaning:

“Heralded centuries before his birth as the ‘Prince of Peace’ (Isaiah 9:6), heavenly angels announced his coming. . . .

“Modern man sometimes vainly thinks that Jesus’ mission was to wipe out war; and scoffers have cried that since war still curses the earth, Christ’s mission has failed and Christianity is a blight.

“Yet Christ himself sent forth his Twelve, saying:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” (Matt. 10:34.)

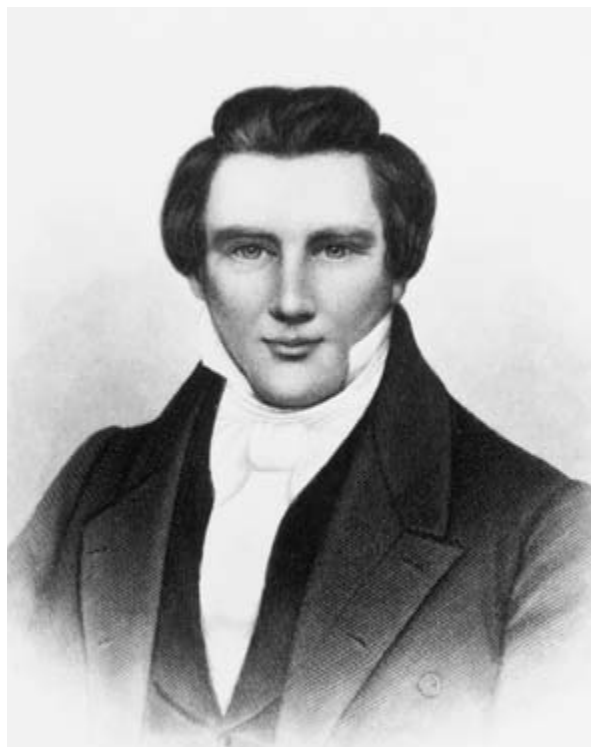
“Christ did proclaim a peace—the peace of everlasting righteousness, which is the eternal and mortal enemy of sin. Between righteousness and sin, in whatever form, there can only be unceasing war, whether in one man, among the people, or between nations in armed conflict. This war is the sword of Christ; whatever its form this war cannot end until sin is crushed and Christ brings all flesh under his dominion. Righteousness is peace wherever it abides; sin in itself is war wherever it is found.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1939, pp. 104–5).

(13-56) Isaiah 10:1–19, 24–34. The Destruction of Assyria—the Wicked

Immediately after the prophecy of the destruction of Israel, Isaiah gave a prophecy concerning the destiny of Assyria lest anyone conclude that this heathen nation was righteous and noble because of its success against Israel and Judah. The fulfillment of this detailed prophecy has been historically confirmed. Isaiah mentioned some of the successful military campaigns of Assyria (see v. 9) and prophesied of the eventual intrusion and success against Judah, even listing the names of many of the cities of Judah that would fall to Assyria (see vv. 28–32). The destruction both of Israel and of Assyria is described as complete (vv. 15–19). The destruction of Israel and Assyria is also a type of the destruction of the wicked in any age and has its prophesied parallel even for the latter days.

(13-57) Isaiah 11:1. Who Was the “Stem of Jesse” and the “Rod out of the Stem of Jesse”?

The Doctrine and Covenants provides the interpretation for this verse (see D&C 113:1–6). The



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stem of Jesse is stated to be Christ. The rod out of the stem of Jesse was said to be “a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power” (D&C 113:4). This scripture seems to be a reference to the Prophet Joseph Smith and to Ephraim’s leadership in the restoration in the last days. President Joseph Fielding Smith summarized Ephraim’s role when he wrote: “It is Ephraim, today, who holds the priesthood. It is with Ephraim that the Lord has made covenant and has revealed the fulness of the everlasting gospel. It is Ephraim who is building temples and performing the ordinances in them for both the living and for the dead. When the ‘lost tribes’ come—and it will be a most wonderful sight and a marvelous thing when they do come to Zion—in fulfillment of the promises made through Isaiah and Jeremiah, they will have to receive the crowning blessings from their brother Ephraim, the ‘firstborn’ in Israel.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:252–53).

President Brigham Young affirmed the place of Ephraim and the Prophet Joseph Smith in bringing to pass the purposes of this dispensation: “It is the house of Israel we are after, and we care not whether they come from the east, the west, the north, or the south; from China, Russia, England, California, North or South America, or some other locality; and it is the very lad on whom father Jacob laid his hands, that will save the house of Israel. The Book of Mormon came to Ephraim, for Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite, and the Book of Mormon was revealed to him, and while he lived he made it his business to search for those who believed the Gospel.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 2:268–69.)

(13-58) Isaiah 11:1. Who Is the “Branch”?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following analysis of the meaning of the *Branch*:

“Since it takes a first and a second coming to fulfill many Messianic prophecies, we of necessity must consider them here, and in the case of the Davidic-Messianic utterances show also how they apply to our Lord’s Second Coming. Christ is the Son of David, the Seed of David, the inheritor, through Mary his mother, of the blood of the great king. He is also called the Stem of Jesse and the Branch, meaning Branch of David. Messianic prophecies under these headings deal with the power and dominion he shall wield as he sits on David’s throne, and have reference almost exclusively to his second sojourn on planet earth.

“Jesse was the father of David. Isaiah speaks of the Stem of Jesse, whom he also designates as a branch growing out of the root of that ancient worthy. He recites how the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; how he shall be mighty in judgment; how he shall smite the earth and slay the wicked; and how the lamb and the lion shall lie down together in that day—all of which has reference to the Second Coming and the millennial era thereby ushered in. (Isa. 11.) As to the identity of the Stem of Jesse, the revealed word says: ‘Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ.’ (D&C 113:1–2.) This also means that the Branch is Christ, as we shall now see from other related scriptures.

“By the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord foretells the ancient scattering and the latter-day gathering of his chosen Israel. After they have been gathered ‘out of all countries whither I have driven them,’ after the kingdom has been restored to Israel as desired by the ancient apostles in Acts 1:6, then this eventuality, yet future and millennial in nature, shall be fulfilled: ‘Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ (Jer. 23:3–6.) That is to say, the King who shall reign personally upon the earth during the Millennium shall be the Branch who grew out of the house of David. He shall execute judgment and justice in all the earth because he is the Lord Jehovah, even him whom we call Christ.

“Through Zechariah the Lord spoke similarly: ‘Thus saith the Lord of hosts: . . . I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. . . . I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day [meaning that the wicked shall be destroyed and the millennial era of peace and righteousness commence]. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.’ (Zech. 3:7–10.) Of that glorious millennial day the Lord says also: ‘Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne.’ (Zech. 6:12–13.)

“That the Branch of David is Christ is perfectly clear. We shall now see that he is also called David, that he is a new David, an Eternal David, who shall reign forever on the throne of his ancient ancestor. ‘It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, ‘that

is, in the great millennial day of gathering, that ‘they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.’ (Jer. 30:8–9.)

“‘In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness,’ which is to say that because the Great King himself reigns in her midst, even the city shall be called after him. ‘For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel. . . . If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne.’ (Jer. 33:15–21.) David’s temporal throne fell long centuries before our Lord was born, and that portion of Israel which had not been scattered to the ends of the earth was in bondage to the iron yoke of Rome. But the promises remain. The eternal throne shall be restored in due course with a new David sitting thereon, and he shall reign forever and ever. . . .

“Through Ezekiel, the Lord speaks of this One Shepherd in this way: ‘I will save my flock. . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them.’ When that day comes, ‘I will make with them a covenant of peace,’ the Lord says, meaning they shall have again the fulness of the everlasting gospel. Then ‘there shall be showers of blessing’; all Israel shall dwell safely and know that the Lord is their God. (Ezek. 34:22–31.)

“Through Ezekiel, the Lord also tells of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which becomes the instrument in his hands to bring to pass the gathering of Israel. Of that day of gathering he says, ‘I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all.’ In that day he promises to ‘cleanse them,’ by baptism, ‘so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.’

“Then the Lord restates that his gathered people shall have his everlasting gospel with all its blessings; that he will set his sanctuary, meaning his temple, in their midst forevermore (as Zechariah recorded); and all Israel shall know that the Lord is their God. (Ezek. 37:15–28.)

“How glorious shall be the coming day when the second David, who is Christ, reigns on the throne of the first David; when all men shall dwell safely; when the earth shall be dotted with temples; and when the gospel covenant shall have full force and validity in all the earth!” (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 192–95).

(13-59) Isaiah 11:9. "The Earth Shall Be Full of the Knowledge of the Lord"

The sacred knowledge of God will prevail on earth (see Smith, *Teachings*, p. 93), truth from which no one can hide. Elder Orson Pratt wrote: "The knowledge of God will then cover the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep. There will be no place of ignorance, no place of darkness, no place for those that will not serve God. Why? Because Jesus, the Great Creator, and also the Great Redeemer, will be himself on the earth, and his holy angels will be on the earth, and all the resurrected Saints that have died in former dispensations will all come forth, and they will be on the earth. What a happy earth this creation will be, when this purifying process shall come, and the earth be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the great deep! What a change! Travel, then, from one end of the earth to another, you can find no wicked man, no drunken man, no man to blaspheme the name of the Great Creator, no one to lay hold on his neighbor's goods, and steal them, no one to commit whoredoms—for all who commit whoredoms will be thrust down to hell, saith the Lord God Almighty, and all persons who commit sin will be speedily visited by the judgments of the Almighty!" (In *Journal of Discourses*, 21:325.)

The promises of revelation for this great era are outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 101:32–34).

(13-60) Isaiah 11:10–16. The Gathering of Israel from the World

Elder Wilford Woodruff summarized the spirit of this gathering in light of Isaiah's words when he said:

"Isaiah's soul seemed to be on fire, and his mind wrapt in the visions of the Almighty, while he declared, in the name of the Lord, that it should come to pass in the last days that God should set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, assemble the outcasts of Israel, gather together the dispersed of Judah, destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea and make men go over dry-shod, gather them to Jerusalem on horses, mules, swift beasts, and in chariots, and rebuild Jerusalem upon her own heaps; while, at the same time, the destroyer of the Gentiles will be on his way; and while God was turning the captivity of Israel, he would put all their curses and afflictions upon the heads of the Gentiles, their enemies, who had not sought to recover, but to destroy them, and had trodden them under foot from generation to generation.

"At the same time the standard should be lifted up, that the honest in heart, the meek of the earth among the Gentiles, should seek unto it; and that Zion should be redeemed and be built up a holy city, that the glory and power of God should rest upon her, and be seen upon her; that the watchman upon Mount Ephraim might cry—'Arise ye, and let us go up unto Zion, the city of the Lord our God;' that the Gentiles might come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; that the Saints of God may have a place to flee to and stand in holy places while judgment works in the earth; that when the sword of God that is bathed in heaven falls upon Idumea, or the world,—when the Lord pleads with all flesh by sword and by fire, and the slain of the Lord are many, the Saints may escape these calamities

by fleeing to the places of refuge, like Lot and Noah." (*History of the Church*, 6:26).

(13-61) Isaiah 11:10, 12. "An Ensign of the People"

President Joseph Fielding Smith described the ensign and its significance:

"Over 125 years ago, in the little town of Fayette, Seneca County, New York, the Lord set up an ensign to the nations. It was in fulfilment of the prediction made by the Prophet Isaiah, which I have read. That ensign was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which was established for the last time, never again to be destroyed or given to other people. It was the greatest event the world has seen since the day that the Redeemer was lifted upon the cross and worked out the infinite and eternal atonement. It meant more to mankind than anything else that has occurred since that day. . . .

"Following the raising of this ensign, the Lord sent forth his elders clothed with the priesthood and with power and authority, among the nations of the earth, bearing witness unto all peoples of the restoration of his Church, and calling upon the children of men to repent and receive the gospel; for now it was being preached in all the world as a witness before the end should come, that is, the end of the reign of wickedness and the establishment of the millennial reign of peace. The elders went forth as they were commanded, and are still preaching the gospel and gathering out from the nations the seed of Israel unto whom the promise was made." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:254–55; see also Isaiah 5:26.)

(13-62) Isaiah 11:11. "The Lord Shall Set His Hand Again the Second Time to Recover the Remnant of His People"

Elder LeGrand Richards commented on this scripture as follows:

"From this scripture we learn that the events described were to be in the future: 'The Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people.' There could not be a 'second time' unless there had been a first. The first time was when the Lord led Israel out of Egyptian bondage and captivity. When did the Lord set his hand the 'second time' to recover the remnant of his people? This we will now consider. From the above scripture we learn that three important events were to transpire: (1) He shall set up an ensign for the nations; (2) he shall assemble the outcasts of Israel; (3) he shall gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

"It is clear there are to be two gathering places—one for Israel and one for Judah. . . .

"Since Moses was the prophet the Lord raised up to lead Israel out of the land of Egypt and gave him power to perform such mighty miracles before Pharaoh, even to the leading of the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry land, it seems very appropriate that Moses should hold the keys of the gathering of Israel when the Lord would 'set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people.' These were the keys Moses committed to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

“When speaking of Israel, most people have the Jews in mind, and when referring to the gathering of Israel, they have in mind the return of the Jews to the land of Jerusalem. It should be remembered that the Jews, the descendants of Judah, represent but one of the twelve branches, or tribes, of the house of Israel—the family of Jacob.” (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, pp. 207–9).

(13-63) Isaiah 11:13–14. “Ephraim Shall Not Envy Judah, and Judah Shall Not Vex Ephraim”

Anciently, during the days of the divided kingdoms, Judah (the leading tribe of the Southern Kingdom) and Ephraim (the leading tribe of the Northern Kingdom) were often in competition. Sometimes they were even at war with each other. Isaiah prophesied that in the last days that conflict would come to an end. Ezekiel, in a similar prophecy, promised that the house of Israel would no longer be divided, but under their true king, the New David (see Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1) there would be one united nation again. (See Ezekiel 37:15–25.) Jeremiah and Zechariah also spoke of the future reuniting of the house of Israel (see Jeremiah 3:18; Zechariah 10:6–7).

Elder LeGrand Richards explained how this prophecy must be fulfilled:

“We are from Ephraim. The Lord expects us, since we are the custodians of his gospel as restored in these latter days, according to my understanding, to extend the hand of friendship to Judah, because after all we are all descendants of the prophets Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we come under the promises that through their descendants should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

“I do not know how the enmity and the envy between Ephraim and Judah can disappear except that we of the house of Ephraim, who have the custody of the gospel, should lead out in trying to bring to this branch of the house of Israel the blessings of the restored gospel. . . .

“And it seems to me that the only way that the tribe of Judah can be sanctified to dwell in his presence forever and ever will be when we bring to them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior promised them it would be brought in the latter days.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1956, pp. 23–24.)

(13-64) Isaiah 11:15–16. “The Lord Shall Utterly Destroy the Tongue of the Egyptian Sea . . . and There Shall Be an Highway”

Elder Parley P. Pratt describes the literal meaning of the verses as a part of this gathering of Israel: “We have also presented before us, in verse 15, the marvelous

power of God, which will be displayed in the destruction of a small branch of the Red Sea, called the tongue of the Egyptian Sea, and also the dividing of the seven streams of some river [perhaps the Nile], and causing men to go over dryshod; and lest any should not understand it literally, verse 16 says that ‘there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.’ Now we have only to ask whether, in the days of Moses, the Red Sea was literally divided or whether it was only a figure? for as it was then, so it shall be again.” (*Voice of Warning*, p. 35).

(13-65) Isaiah 12. A Millennial Hymn

This brief chapter is a hymn of praise for the great millennial era when the Lord will reign “in the midst” of His people (Isaiah 12:6).

(13-66) Isaiah 12:2. “God Is My Salvation . . . the Lord Jehovah Is My Strength”

A literal translation of this verse reveals the sacred names and name-titles of Deity as they are used scripturally.

“Behold *El* is my salvation,
I shall trust and not be afraid;
For my strength and my song is *Yah*, Jehovah,
And he has become my salvation.’

“*El*’ is the singular of *Elohim*. It seldom occurs in the Bible in singular. In the English Bible both singular and plural are rendered by the word ‘God.’ ‘*Yah*’ is a contracted form of *Jehovah* or *Yehovah*, which in the Bible is usually rendered in English as ‘LORD.’ In the King James Version here, to avoid LORD LORD, they have rendered it as LORD JEHOVAH. This is one of the few times the name is written out fully as *Jehovah* in the King James translation. [See also: Exodus 6:3; Ps. 83:18; Isa. 26:4.] The short form *Yah* occurs in Hebrew also in Exodus 15:2 and Psalms 118:14.” (Ellis T. Rasmussen, *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings*, 2:46.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(13-67) The Significance of Isaiah

Once you have carefully read and studied these chapters of Isaiah and the interpretive commentary on them, write on a separate sheet of paper the things Isaiah said that have significance and application for Latter-day Saints and the world today.



A Voice of Warning to the Wicked

(14-1) Introduction

Isaiah 13–23 contains a collection of “burdens” or pronouncements upon nations of Isaiah’s time. Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus (Syria), Egypt, and others all came under the prophet’s gloomy oracles of judgment. These chapters may seem like a vengeful series of pronouncements, but in context, these burdens provide significant insights into both the ancient and modern worlds.

In Isaiah 14 the Lord condemned the wickedness of the house of Israel and prophesied that it would be brought into great judgments because of its evils. Generally these judgments were to be carried out by other nations. We could say: “Granted that Israel was wicked, but even at her worst she was no worse than her heathen neighbors, and often was much better. Why should she be destroyed and the others escape?”

The Lord showed through these burdens that the world too would be brought to judgment. Here, as in the previous chapters, Isaiah often used dualism to prophesy simultaneously to his own people and to us in modern times. Though chapters 13–23 were given to nine different nations, giving them notice that the divine timetable for their repentance had run out and that they were to reap the judgments of God, each nation was also a symbol of the modern world. You may feel a spirit of doom associated with the condition and future of Babylon and the other nations, but you should also realize that ancient Babylon with its evil and judgment was a shadow and a type of present-day Babylon, or the world. It is to present-day Babylon that Isaiah delivered the sharpest warnings.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Isaiah 13–23. Refer to Enrichment E throughout your study of the book of Isaiah. Enrichment F will provide an overview of the historical setting of the prophet Isaiah’s ministry.

2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 13–23

(14-2) Isaiah 13. *Babylon* Is a Term Used by the Lord to Typify Wickedness in the Latter-day World

Isaiah foresaw the graphic destruction of Babylon, the degradation of its nobility, and the universal wickedness of its masses. In his characteristic way he also uses the term *Babylon* to typify a latter-day

condition and judgment. Each era of the earth has known its own Babylon, but the Babylon of the latter days was seen by the prophets as being among the most wicked of any era and the object of destruction at the coming of the Lord.

Though at the time Babylon was only a province in the mighty Assyrian Empire, Isaiah accurately foresaw that Babylon and not Assyria would bring judgments upon the kingdom of Judah. He prophesied that Babylon would eventually come into a judgment of its own. At the same time Isaiah used Babylon as a symbol of the world and its wickedness. So when Isaiah speaks of Babylon he refers to both the empire of that name and spiritual Babylon.

God issued a call for His forces to gather together to overthrow Babylon. In this case, these forces were the Medes (see Isaiah 13:17). The call was answered about 130 years later when an alliance of Medes and Persians under Cyrus the Great dammed the Euphrates River and marched through the riverbed and under the walls of Babylon to capture the city and overthrow the empire. The significance of the incident is more clearly indicated by considering the imagery of the term *Babylon* in a spiritual sense. The call is for the “sanctified ones” (Isaiah 13:3), the Saints of the latter days, to gather together and join with God in overthrowing wickedness (*Babylon*) from the world.

In this chapter of Isaiah one can see an excellent example of the Jewish dualism so frequently found in Isaiah and in other Old Testament writings (see Enrichment E).

(14-3) Isaiah 13. Notable Changes in the Text of Isaiah

Nephi quoted Isaiah 13 in its entirety (see 2 Nephi 23), but it is somewhat different from the King James text. The most significant differences are found in verses 3, 8, and 22. Compare the two versions carefully to see what has been lost from the King James Version.

(14-4) Isaiah 13:1. What Was the Burden of Babylon?

Since Babylon is a scriptural symbol for the peoples and governments that oppose the kingdom of God, the “burden” of Babylon refers to the weighty judgments that inevitably await it. Indeed, the threshing floors of Babylon will be fanned and its chaff burned. (See Jeremiah 51:1–2; Matthew 3:12.)

(14-5) Isaiah 13:2, 4–5. What Were the Banner, the Mountain, and the Multitude?

In a beautiful metaphor Isaiah 13 refers to the gospel standard or ensign being lifted up in the last days as a “banner” (v. 2) to which the world may gather (compare Isaiah 5:26; 62:10; 2 Nephi 15:26).

The “mountain” (Isaiah 13:2) is discussed in Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 2:1–5.

The “multitude” is “a great people” (Isaiah 13:4) who come together, mustered by the Lord of Hosts,

ready to do battle (compare 2 Nephi 23:3–5). These multitudes are the Saints who will be gathered from every nation in the last days and enlisted in the army of the living God to wage war against wickedness. (Compare D&C 10:64–67; 29:7–11; 45:66–71; 76:28–29; 84:2; 103:22–25; Matthew 24:30–31.)

(14-6) Isaiah 13:9–10. Many Prophets Have Spoken of the Signs in the Heavens

A very dramatic sign of the coming of the Lord will be the great wonders to be manifest in the heavens (compare D&C 29:14; 34:9; 45:42; 88:87; 133:49; Joel 2:31; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12–17).

(14-7) Isaiah 13:11–12. What Was Implied by a Man Being More Precious Than Gold?

In chapter 13, verses 11–12, Isaiah repeats a refrain used earlier (see Isaiah 4:1–4), that righteous men will become as difficult to find as precious gold and will be treasured as highly. The wicked will be cleansed from the earth, and the worthy righteous will remain to become the precious jewels in the royal diadem of the Lord (see D&C 60:4; Isaiah 62:1–3). Indeed, the treasure of “the golden wedge of Ophir” (Isaiah 13:12), the rich, gold-producing province of India, is insignificant compared to the worth of one righteous man (compare D&C 18:10).

(14-8) Isaiah 13:13. What Was Meant by the Heavens Being Shaken and the Earth Being Removed?

To have the heavens shaken and the earth removed was a Jewish figure of speech suggesting a time of great calamity and disaster. Such would be the fall of Babylon. The whole political climate and circumstances of the world would be shaken.

The prophecy also has a literal fulfillment in the latter days. All things are to be restored. The heavens will flee as the earth is brought back to a condition it once enjoyed. The earth will then receive its paradisiacal glory. Its paradisiacal glory is not to be confused with the celestial state that is the eventual destiny of this sphere; it is, rather, the millennial condition wherein all life will enjoy continual peace. (See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Signs of the Times*, pp. 34–38.)

(14-9) Isaiah 13:14–18. What Was Meant by the Medes Destroying Babylon?

Isaiah declared that as the Medes, those of the higher mountainous country above Babylon, would descend upon the worldly gem of the Euphrates and decimate it, so in a spiritual sense a higher power, not interested in wealth, would come upon the Babylon of the latter days and destroy its proud, its wicked, and its confederates (see 2 Nephi 23:15).

(14-10) Isaiah 13:19–22. Was Babylon’s Curse to Extinction?

Isaiah’s description of Babylon in these verses was literally fulfilled. (Remember that at the time Isaiah wrote, Babylonia was not a world empire.) Under Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonia overthrew Assyria and took over the reins of world power. Nebuchadnezzar



Ruins of Babylon

undertook a building program which made Babylon one of the most remarkable cities of the ancient world (see Enrichment G). To predict the total devastation and desolation of such a city was remarkable, for some ancient cities, such as Jerusalem, Damascus, and Jericho, have continued through the centuries and still exist today. But after its conquest by Cyrus, Babylon steadily declined. Several hundred years passed before Babylon was abandoned, but by the first century after Christ it lay deserted and in ruins, and so it has remained. The silent ruins stand as an eloquent witness that Isaiah spoke with divine accuracy.

Spiritual Babylon shall likewise become a waste and desolation when God comes upon the world in judgment and ushers in the millennial reign of Christ. (See Revelation 18.)

(14-11) Isaiah 14. Notable Changes in the Text of Isaiah

The entire chapter of Isaiah was quoted by Nephi with two important changes. Compare verses 2 and 4 in both versions.

(14-12) Isaiah 14:2. What Was the Relationship of Israel to the People Spoken of Here?

The gathering process that restores Israel to her promised lands will be facilitated by other nations (people) who will assist in Israel’s return from the ends of the earth. Then these other nations will espouse Israel’s cause, and the captive (Israel) will become a ruler over her captors. This favored condition will be fully realized in the glorious millennial peace enjoyed by the faithful who have truly conquered Babylon (the world). (See Isaiah 14:3.) In other words, as C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch put it, “Babylon falls that Israel may rise” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 7:1:306).

(14-13) Isaiah 14:4–21. Isaiah Sang a Song for Babylon

This satirical or taunting song, given in Isaiah’s own beautiful poetry, is a song of judgment against the Babylon of unrighteousness. Isaiah strides through the future in this powerful Hebrew meter, leaving Babylon trodden down and vanquished in the triumph of Israel.

(14-14) Isaiah 14:12–15. Who Was “Lucifer, Son of the Morning”?

Isaiah again used dualism. Chapters 13 and 14 describe the downfall of Babylon, both of Babylon as an empire and of Babylon as the symbol of the world (see D&C 133:14). Thus, most scholars think “Lucifer, son of the morning” is the king of Babylon, probably Nebuchadnezzar. In the symbolic use of *Babylon*, (Babylon as spiritual wickedness and the kingdom of Satan), Lucifer is Satan. This interpretation is confirmed in latter-day revelation (see D&C 76:26–8). Satan and Babylon’s prince (both represented by Lucifer in this passage) aspire to take kingly glory to themselves, but in fact will be thrust into hell where there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Compare Isaiah 13:13–14 with Moses 4:1–4, where Lucifer’s conditions for saving all men are given. What adds to the power of the imagery is the fact that the word *congregation* (v. 13) is translated by Keil and Delitzsch as the “assembly of gods” (*Commentary*, 7:1:312).

In still another example of Isaiah’s beautiful dualism, even the kings of the world lie in their tombs (house) in respect (see vv. 18–19), but Babylon’s king was to be cast aside and trodden under foot. This reward was literally visited upon the city of the Chaldees, and though Nebuchadnezzar was certainly buried in great splendor, there is no grave found for him today in the ruins of Babylon. Think for a moment of Satan’s “grave.” Never having received a body, he shall never have a tomb or monument of any kind, though he was king and ruler of the great world-wide and history-wide empire of spiritual Babylon. No wonder the kings of the earth, who, though wicked in mortality, could still inherit the celestial kingdom, would marvel at his demise.

(14-15) Isaiah 14:24–27. Assyria Was Like Babylon

In addition to his use of the Babylonian Empire as a symbol of spiritual Babylon, Isaiah also sketches the demise of the great Assyrian Empire, which in the days of Hezekiah met crushing defeat upon the hills of Jerusalem at the hands of an angel of destruction (see Isaiah 37:33–38). Assyria also served as a type of the world. In like manner will all evil nations feel the hand of God’s judgments (see Isaiah 14:26).

(14-16) Isaiah 14:28–32. The Burden of Philistia

These verses reveal the judgment of destruction, which Isaiah lived to witness, against Philistia. The Philistines were long-time enemies of Israel, and warfare between the two peoples had gone on for centuries. (See Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Philistines.”) They controlled parts of the Holy Land’s coastal regions, though their power waned considerably from the time of David on. In Roman times, the Holy Land was known as Judea until the Jewish revolt of A.D. 132–35, after which the Emperor Hadrian changed the name to Syria Palaestina to show the Jews that they had no claim there any longer.

The King James Version used the Latin form and called it “Palestina,” but what is meant is the Philistines, not Palestine, as the terms are used today.

The Assyrian emperor Tiglath-pileser captured the Philistines about the time of the death of Ahaz, king of

Judah, who had made an alliance with him. In spite of the hatred of the Philistines and their persecution of Israel, the Lord’s people were established in the land. In like manner will Zion be established while all her enemies (Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, and so on) will be powerless to make it otherwise, but they will fall.

(14-17) Isaiah 15–16. The Lord’s Judgment against Moab

Moab was the eldest son of Lot’s older daughter (see Genesis 19:37). His people settled east of the Dead Sea from the Zered River northward. The Moabites were cousins of the Israelites; but there was continual strife between them, and the Lord used them as His chastening rod against Israel. Nevertheless, lest Israel feel that the wickedness of the Moabites was preferred before the Lord, Isaiah revealed the Moabites’ destiny in these two chapters. Isaiah promised that some day the Lord would remember His covenants with Israel and gather them from the world and establish His covenant with them forever, while Moab would receive the sentence of destruction. In this sense Moab was also a symbol for the wicked world, and none of her powerful cities nor her lucrative trade routes nor her prominence among her sister nations would be able to stand in that day, but all would be destroyed.



Cities of Moab and neighboring nations

(14-18) Isaiah 15:2-3. What Did Baldness Have to Do with the Lord's Judgment against Moab?

The clipping of the hair and beard was an indication of great shame in ancient Israel and in this verse means that Moab's supposed pride and prominence would turn to shame and reproach. The sorrow of the wicked is portrayed by Isaiah in his use of "sackcloth" and his reference to the professional howling and weeping that was the custom in the Middle East in times of grief (see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 324-25).

(14-19) Isaiah 15:5. What Was Meant by Moab Being a Heifer of Three Years Old?

Isaiah recognized that Moab was a youthful, vibrant nation. "A three-year-old ox, is one that is still in all the freshness and fulness of its strength" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:326). In spite of Moab's vigor and strength, Isaiah foretold that powerful forces from the north countries would destroy her only three years hence (see Isaiah 16:14). This prophecy was fulfilled with the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib (see Enrichment F).

(14-20) Isaiah 15:8-9. Moab's Destruction Was Universal

The cry of destruction of Moab is universal, even beyond her borders to Eglaim (En-Eglaim) northwest of the Salt Sea. To show the extent of the tragedy that Moab would experience, Isaiah prophesied that the heart of the rich pastoral land around Dibon would have its waters (called Dimon) stained with the blood of the people. In other words, there would be widespread slaughter and destruction of the people, the enemy penetrating even the very heart of Moab.

In the Hebrew text, the word translated "lion" is actually a single lion. Isaiah revealed that the relationship of Judah and Moab would change, for the "lion," Judah, would come upon the remnant of Moab that was spared and make them her vassal.

(14-21) Isaiah 16:6-11. Calamity of Mourning Would Visit Moab Throughout

The nations of the earth who are likened to Moab are high and mighty forces but will be brought to howl and mourn. Their defenses will come to naught, their wealth and abundance of food will fail, and in place of their joy, as they suppose, they will be pierced with sorrow to the center. At that day all the world will finally come to understand that wickedness never was happiness.

Although Moab was Israel's bitter enemy, Isaiah still wept over the great tragedy of her sin and resulting destruction.

(14-22) Isaiah 16:12-14. Moab's Days Are Numbered

Isaiah simply reaffirmed what he said earlier (see Isaiah 15:5), that the trans-Jordan Moab would see destruction within three years.

(14-23) Isaiah 17. Power and Might, As the World Knows It, Are Destined for Destruction

All the powers of the world, including the neighbors of Judah as well as the nations of the world that despoiled the Lord's people, will themselves be

destroyed by the mighty judgments of God. (Syria is represented by "Damascus," and the Northern Kingdom of Israel is represented by the mountain defense of Ephraim.) Both Israel and the nations of the world are humbled by the hand of God. Yet the Lord promises, in Isaiah 17:6-8, that a remnant of these nations, like the Israelites, will also be preserved. "Gleaning grapes" (v. 6) are those few missed by the harvesters, and olives were harvested by shaking the branches, which always left a few scattered fruits in the topmost branches (see v. 6). Also like Israel, this remnant of the Gentiles will turn to God and forsake their false religions (see vv. 7-8).

(14-24) Isaiah 18. Isaiah Saw the Gospel Taken to the Nations from America

President Joseph Fielding Smith commented that Isaiah 18:1 "is a mistranslation. In the Catholic Bible it reads: 'Ah, land of the whirring of wings, beyond the rivers of Cush,' and in Smith and Goodspeed's translation it reads: 'Ah! Land of the buzzing of wings, which lies beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.' The chapter shows clearly that no woe was intended, but rather a greeting, as indicated in these other translations. A correct translation would be, 'Hail to the land in the shape of wings.' Now, do you know of any land in the shape of wings? Think of your map. About twenty-five years ago one of the current magazines printed on the cover the American continents in the shape of wings, with the body of the bird between. I have always regretted that I did not preserve this magazine. Does not this hemisphere take the shape of wings; the spread out wings of a bird?" (*Signs of the Times*, p. 51; see also *History of the Church*, 6:322; Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:84-85; Spencer W. Kimball, "Why Call Me Lord, Lord and Do Not the Things Which I Say?" *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 4.)

President Smith went on to say that the vessels are vessels of speed; that the nation scattered and peeled refers to the land of Israel, which was denuded of its forests; that the ensign refers to the restoration of the gospel that is published as a standard before the nations; that the missionaries are going to gather Israel who were scattered; and that only the Latter-day Saints can fully understand this chapter because it deals with the great work of gathering, in which they are engaged (see *Signs of the Times*, pp. 51-55).

(14-25) Isaiah 18:7. What Gift Will the Saints Present to the Lord?

The Saints are so determined to offer to the Lord a worthy gift of gathered Israel that, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, they "have labored without pay, to instruct the United States [and now the world] that the gathering had commenced in the western boundaries of Missouri, to build a holy city, where, as may be seen in the eighteenth chapter of Isaiah, the present should 'be brought unto the Lord of Hosts.'" (*History of the Church*, 2:132.) Mount Zion is identified in modern revelation as the New Jerusalem (see D&C 84:2). Thus, once the Church is restored and Ephraim begins the work of gathering Israel from their scattered and peeled condition (see Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:13-14), they can present a *restored house of Jacob* to the Lord as a gift that will delight Him.

The Jerusalem Bible renders the phrase in Isaiah 18, “a people terrible from their beginning,” as “the nation always feared”; and it renders the phrase “whose land the rivers have spoiled” as “the country criss-crossed with rivers.” These passages seem to refer to America, where the Restoration was to take place.

(14-26) Isaiah 19:3. What Was a Wizard That Dealt with Familiar Spirits?

“One of the most evil and wicked sects supported by Satan is that which practices *witchcraft*, such craft involving as it does actual intercourse with evil spirits. A *witch* is one who engages in this craft, who practices the black art of magic, who has entered into a compact with Satan, who is a sorcerer or sorceress. Modernly the term witch has been limited in application to women.

“There are no witches, of course, in the sense of old hags flying on broomsticks through October skies; such mythology is a modernistic spoofing of a little understood practice that prevailed in all the apostate kingdoms of the past and which even now is found among many peoples.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 840.)

(14-27) Isaiah 19:8–9. What Was the Significance of Fishing, Fine Flax, and Weaving?

These three things represent the major industries of Egypt for which she had gained a fine reputation. Fishing was universally important in this river-nation. The fine flax represents the fine-twined linen that was world renowned. It was the white material used in the sacred coverings of the tabernacle of Moses (see Exodus 25:4). The “network” weaving is the process of making the cotton garment common in Egypt. To have all three fail would be a national calamity.

(14-28) Isaiah 19:11–25. Was This Burden More Than a Judgment against Egypt?

Once again Isaiah used prophetic dualism. His “burden” on Egypt has (1) a physical fulfillment experienced by the nation and her people both in Isaiah’s time and in future times, and (2) a spiritual fulfillment that pertains to the world of the latter days.

Isaiah used a phrase to signal to the reader the parts of his vision that pertained to the last days. “In that day,” in verses 16, 18, 19, 23, and 24, suggests future fulfillment. (For other uses of this phrase and its meaning see Isaiah 2–4, 11.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie used a quotation that shows why Isaiah may have used such neighbors as Egypt, Moab, and Babylon to describe the wicked of latter days. Speaking of the world, he said: “Babylon marks its idolatry, Egypt its tyranny, Sodom its desperate corruption, Jerusalem its pretensions to sanctity on the ground of spiritual privileges, whilst all the while it is the murderer of Christ in the person of his members.” ([Robert Jamieson and others, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*,] p. 577.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:510.)

(14-29) Isaiah 19:11–25. What Are Some Possible Fulfillments of This Prophecy?

Isaiah 19:11–14 clearly promises that the leaders of Egypt’s major centers would be as fools and unable to

save their nation. Zoan was Tanis, Noph was Memphis, and No was Thebes. The prophecy in verses 16–17 that in the latter days Judah would strike terror in the hearts of the Egyptians may have been partially fulfilled in some of the battles of those two nations during the 20th century. Verses 24–25 are of particular interest to Latter-day Saints, for they promise that Egypt and other nations of that part of the world will embrace the restored gospel.

(14-30) Isaiah 19:23–25. What Might Be Some Spiritual Fulfillments of the Prophecy?

The meaning of Isaiah 19:23–25 is not clear. These verses seem to suggest some future alliance among Israel, Egypt, and Assyria (or the nations that inhabit those ancient territories). Keil and Delitzsch explained the alliance in this way: “Israel has now reached the great end of its calling—to be a blessing in ‘the midst of the earth’ . . . all nations being here represented by Egypt and Assyria. Hitherto it had been only to the disadvantage of Israel to be situated between Egypt and Assyria. The history of the Ephraimitish kingdom, as well as that of Judah, clearly proves this. If Israel relied upon Egypt, it deceived itself, and was deceived; and if it relied on Assyria, it only became the slave of Assyria, and had Egypt for a foe. Thus Israel was in a most painful vise between the two great powers of the earth, the western and the eastern powers. But how will all this be altered now! Egypt and Assyria become one in Jehovah, and Israel the third in the covenant. Israel is no longer the only nation of God, the creation of God, the heir of God; but all this applies to Egypt and Assyria now, as well as to Israel.” (*Commentary*, 7:1:368.)

(14-31) Isaiah 20:1. Who Was Tartan?

Tartan was the cupbearer, the most trusted servant of Sargon (see the Jerusalem Bible). Tartan probably became the chief captain of Sennacherib at the siege of Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 18:17; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:370).

(14-32) Isaiah 20:2. What Was Meant by Isaiah Walking “Naked and Barefoot”?

“With the great importance attached to the clothing in the East, where the feelings upon this point are peculiarly sensitive and modest, a person was looked upon as stripped and naked if he had only taken off his upper garment. What Isaiah was directed to do, therefore, was simply opposed to common custom, and not to moral decency. He was to lay aside the dress of a mourner and preacher of repentance, and to have nothing on but his tunic (*setoneth*); and in this, as well as barefooted, he was to show himself in public.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:372.)

(14-33) Isaiah 21:1–2. What Was the “Desert of the Sea”?

The use of this phrase has puzzled many commentators. Specific countries have received the burden, yet no known country is named. Keil and Delitzsch believed Isaiah used a symbolic name, and they believe it alluded to Babylon. That city sat on a hot and dusty plain in the Euphrates valley, but anciently, before flood control dams were built, the



The Euphrates River Valley

whole plain was flooded each spring during the high water runoff of the Euphrates. Thus, Babylon sat both in a desert and on a sea. (See *Commentary*, 7:1:377.) This interpretation seems to be supported by Jeremiah's description of Babylon as she that "dwellest upon many waters" (Jeremiah 51:13) and his promise that her waters would be "dried up" (Jeremiah 50:38).

Spiritually or symbolically, John described Babylon as sitting upon many waters. He then explained that the waters represent the nations and peoples of the earth. (See Revelation 17:1, 15.) If Isaiah used the same concept, then the sea would represent Babylon's dominion and the desert, the coming loss of those dominions.

(14-34) Isaiah 21:3–10. Why Was Isaiah Made So Sorrowful by His Vision?

The pain caused by the vision given to Isaiah was so intense that its descriptive words in Hebrew portray his condition to be more than mere sorrow: "*Chalchalah* is the contortion produced by cramp, as in Nahum ii. 11; *tzirim* is the word properly applied to the pains of childbirth; *na avah* means to bend, or bow one's self, and is also used to denote a convulsive utterance of pain; *ta ah*, which is used in a different sense from Ps. xcv. 10 (compare, however, Ps. xxxviii. 11), denotes a feverish and irregular beating of the pulse. The darkness of evening and night, which the prophet loved so much (*cheshek*, a desire arising from inclination, 1 Kings ix. 1, 19), and always longed for, either that he might give himself up to contemplation, or that he might rest from outward and inward labour, had been changed into quaking by the horrible vision." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:379.)

The destruction of Babylon was not a pleasant thing to behold. But some commentators believe that here again Isaiah saw another destruction, the destruction of the Babylon of the world before the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ in the last days. Although necessary, this destruction would be a great tragedy.

The description of the many asses and camels and horsemen seems to refer to the physical trappings of the Persian Army. The animals provided useful carriage for food and implements of war but were also effectively used by the Persians "to throw the enemy into confusion" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:381).

(14-35) Isaiah 21:10. What Did the Reference to Threshing Mean?

Israel was threshed: mowed off its own field, beaten, and carried captive into Babylon. This verse seems to be a foreshadowing of the event that is portrayed in some detail in Isaiah 22 (see especially the "threshing" language in vv. 3–4).

(14-36) Isaiah 21:11–17. What Significance Was Attached to the Mention of the Arabians and Edomites?

As Isaiah used the destruction of every major sister nation to Israel as a type of the judgment that is to be administered to the wicked and their organizations in the last day, so he here, almost parenthetically, prophesied the destruction of even the minor nations of the east. Dumah is located in the northern heart of the Arabian Desert; Dedanim identifies the residents of Dedan, which is southeast of the gulf of Aqaba along the coast of the Red Sea; and Kedar is the region eastward from Mount Hermon that includes the area called Bashan.

(14-37) Isaiah 22:1–7. What Was Meant by the "Valley of Vision"?

Undoubtedly Isaiah here refers to Jerusalem (see Isaiah 22:9). Because it was his home, and therefore the place where he received his visions and revelations, it is not surprising that he would call it the place of vision.

After making it clear that the enemies of Israel would not go unpunished by revealing the various "burdens" upon them (see Isaiah 13–21), the Lord had Isaiah return to the theme he was developing before—that Israel and Judah faced the judgments of God. Thus, following the pronouncements on the world, a pronouncement was added for Jerusalem, who had become part of the world.

(14-38) Isaiah 22:8. What Was the House of the Forest?

"The forest-house [was] built by Solomon upon Zion for the storing and display of valuable arms and utensils . . . and so called because it rested upon four rows of cedar columns that ran all round (it was in the centre of the fore-court of the royal palace . . .)" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:1:394).

(14-39) Isaiah 22:12–13. A Call to Sorrow and Mourning

The descriptive terms used here by Isaiah are clearly signs of great sorrow and grief. Baldness (not natural baldness, but the shaving of the hair) was a great shame and signified great calamity (compare Isaiah 3:24). The Lord suggests that when Judah saw their impending doom they should have seen it as a call to deep repentance and clothed themselves with sackcloth and baldness. Instead, they acted as though they had been called to a joyous feast, and they were singing the refrain of the world: "let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die" (Isaiah 22:13). As is typical of the wicked in a time of crisis, they would prefer to indulge their passions than to repent (see vv. 17–19).

(14-40) Isaiah 22:15–25. Types of Christ

Shebna, a leading official in the royal courts of Judah, had become proud and wicked (see Isaiah 22:15–16) and thus had been rejected by the Lord (see vv. 17–19).

Eliakim was the righteous son of Hilkiah the priest. Though the Lord described Eliakim's power and authority and the position which he would be given (see Isaiah 36:3; 37:2), as used in these last verses of this chapter, Eliakim is clearly a type for the Savior. The description may have accurately described the actual authority of Eliakim, but it is also a powerful description of Jesus Christ, who will ultimately replace the rulers of Israel who, like Shebna, had become full of pride.

"Eliakim signifies *The resurrection of the Lord; or, My God, he shall arise.*" Thus, even the name typified Christ, "for the hope of salvation and eternal life comes only through *Eliakim*, the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the *dead.*" (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:107.)

When the patriarch Israel gave his son Judah his blessings, he said, among other things: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:10). Thereafter, the ruling power in Israel was enjoyed by Judah and was particularly evident in the reign of King David. The key of the house of David, the right to rule, was a symbol for the real right to rule, which is only enjoyed through the holy priesthood of God. This power was focused upon and centered in the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom was given power to "shut" and to "open" with no one who could override that power. John and Isaiah both clearly show that the key of David, or the government, was to be upon the shoulders of the Savior of the world (see Isaiah 9:6; Revelation 3:7).

The "nail in a sure place" (Isaiah 22:23) is messianic and symbolizes the terrible reality of the cross, though only a part of the total suffering of the Lord that caused Him to "tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18). Just as the nail of the cross that was driven in the sure place secured the body of the one being crucified, so the Savior Himself is, to all who will, a nail in a sure place, for He has given them power so that none need be lost (see John 17:12). As Christ brings the redeemed to the Father, the glory becomes His own, and the redeemed and their offspring will become part of the family of heaven under the throne of Christ (see D&C 19:2; Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:27–28; Philippians 2:5–11; 3:21).

(14-41) Isaiah 23. The Lord's Hard Line against Tyre

This chapter closes one phase of Isaiah's prophecies against Israel's heathen neighbors and their types of wickedness. Even though Babylon would have possession of the world's imperial power in the near future, Tyre had control of, and was the commercial center of, that contemporary world. Therefore, holding a grasp upon the traffic in the world's wealth, it was fitting that the Lord address them with a separate warning. (Compare Ezekiel 26–28.)

(14-42) Isaiah 23:1. Where Were Tarshish and the Land of Chittim?

Tarshish may have been Tartessus in Spain, a sister merchant to Tyre in shipping and trade. Chittim was an early name for present-day Cyprus. Phoenicia should properly be seen as the center of world trade during this period.

(14-43) Isaiah 23:2–3. Zidon, a City-State

Sidon (Zidon) was the older city of the Phoenicians, whereas Tyre was the newer site that had gained supremacy during the Assyrian era. Sidon received her revenue from the grain (seed) of Sihor (the Nile waters of Egypt). So renowned had the merchants become that they were honored by their national associates as great ones. (Compare Revelation 18:23; Isaiah 23:8.)

(14-44) Isaiah 23:14–18. Why Was Tyre Called a Harlot?

Like Babylon, Tyre represented the world and so eventually would come under the judgments of God. Like Babylon, she was seen as a harlot committing fornication (joining in wickedness) with the kingdoms of the world (see Isaiah 23:15, 17–18; compare Revelation 17:1–2). The seventy years may refer to her coming judgments. Isaiah 23:18 shows that eventually the merchandise of Tyre (the world) will be put to proper use in building the kingdom of Jehovah.

POINTS TO PONDER

(14-45) The "Burden" Prophecies

Suppose someone told you that the so-called "burden" chapters of Isaiah (chapters 13–23) were valuable for Isaiah's day, but they have little application for modern times. How would you respond? What specific verses could you use to refute that statement? Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.



Ancient Tarshish may have been in present-day Spain.



Prophecies of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

(15-1) Introduction

Isaiah was not only a prophet but also a seer. “A seer,” said Ammon, “is greater than a prophet,” for a “seer is a revelator and a prophet also” (Mosiah 8:15–16). Ammon continued: “A seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light” (Mosiah 8:17).

Isaiah was one of the mightiest seers of all time. Undoubtedly he was one of those the Prophet Joseph Smith had in mind when he said: “Search the revelations of God; study the prophecies, and rejoice that God grants unto the world Seers and Prophets. They are they who saw the mysteries of godliness; they saw the flood before it came; they saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder that reached from earth to heaven; they saw the stone cut out of the mountain, which filled the whole earth; they saw the son of God come from the regions of bliss and dwell with men on earth; they saw the deliverer come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob; they saw the glory of the Lord when he showed the transfiguration of the earth on the mount; they saw every mountain laid low and every valley exalted when the Lord was taking vengeance upon the wicked; they saw truth spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven in the last days, before the Lord came the second time to gather his elect; they saw the end of wickedness on earth, and the Sabbath of creation crowned with peace; they saw the end of the glorious thousand years, when Satan was loosed for a little season; they saw the day of judgment when all men received according to their works, and they saw the heaven and the earth flee away to make room for the city of God, when the righteous receive an inheritance in eternity. And, fellow sojourners upon earth, it is your privilege to purify yourselves and come up to the same glory, and see for yourselves, and know yourselves.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 12–13.)

A clear and dramatic shift in emphasis takes place in Isaiah 24. There, Isaiah’s seership becomes profoundly evident as he looks forward in time to the final dispensation.

When you consider the scope of Isaiah’s vision and its application for all generations of men, it is not surprising that Jesus Himself said, “Great are the words of Isaiah” and commanded that we should “search these things diligently” (3 Nephi 23:1).

Did you notice Joseph Smith’s final statement in the quotation above? He said, “It is your privilege to . . . see for yourselves, and know for yourselves” all the things the seers have seen. One way to do that is by carefully studying the writings of the seers. Strive to see what Isaiah saw as you study this very significant part of his words.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Isaiah 24–35. Refer to Enrichment E throughout your study of the book of Isaiah. Enrichment F will provide an overview of the historical setting of the prophet Isaiah’s ministry.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 24–35

(15-2) Isaiah 24:1–6. Of What Period or People Was the Lord Speaking?

In one sense, Isaiah 24:1–6 could be used to speak of apostasy in any day. The passage speaks of a time when the Lord will make the earth “empty” (v. 1) and will scatter its inhabitants abroad because the people have defiled the earth. “They have transgressed the laws [of God], changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant” (v. 5). As a result the earth will be “burned, and few men left” (v. 6).

(15-3) Isaiah 24:2. “As with the People, So with the Priest”

President Spencer W. Kimball said:

“The term *priest* is here used to denote all religious leaders of any faith. Isaiah said: ‘The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.’ (Isa. 24:5.) From among the discordant voices we are shocked at those of many priests who encourage the defilement of men and wink at the eroding trends and who deny the omniscience of God. Certainly these men should be holding firm, yet some yield to popular clamor.

“I give some quotes from the press:

“‘Many churchmen are reluctant to give a definite yes or no to marijuana.’ ‘It depends upon circumstances.’ (*Time*, August 16, 1968.)

“They have developed ‘situation ethics,’ which seem to cover all sins.

“Other religious leaders are saying: ‘. . . precise rules of Christian conduct should not necessarily apply to problems of sexuality.’ (London—British Council of Churches.)

“In contrast hear the strong voice of a prophet. Peter prophesied:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. . . .

“And many shall follow their pernicious ways. . . .’ (2 Pet. 2:1–2.)” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 9.)

(15-4) Isaiah 24:5. Why Was Changing the Ordinances So Serious?

The gospel ordinances are part of the specific means outlined by the Lord whereby one can overcome his natural state, receive a spiritual rebirth, and become like God. Each ordinance was designed by God to teach spiritual truths and move His children toward godliness. When the ordinances are changed, their power to save is lost. The Prophet Joseph Smith said of the ordinances: “If there is no change of ordinances, there is no change of Priesthood. Wherever the ordinances of the Gospel are administered, there is the Priesthood.” (*Teachings*, p. 158.)

(15-5) Isaiah 24:6–12. The Result of Apostasy

The punishment decreed for breaking God’s everlasting covenant is to be burned with fire. These verses describe the great mourning that will accompany the destruction.

(15-6) Isaiah 24:19–23. Great Physical Changes Will Attend the Second Coming of the Lord

Isaiah 24:19–23 describes events and conditions as they will be just before or in conjunction with the Second Coming of the Lord. A more penetrating description of these same events is found in Doctrine and Covenants 88:86–94. The “prisoners . . . gathered in the pit” and those “shut up in the prison” (Isaiah 24:22) are those locked in the spirit world awaiting the preaching of the gospel (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:155). According to Elder Orson Pratt, the moon will be confounded and the sun will be ashamed because the brilliance which attends Christ in His return to earth will be a “superior light,” one which will make all else seem dark by comparison (in *Journal of Discourses*, 20:12).

(15-7) Isaiah 25:1–11. The Second Coming Will Be a Time of Great Rejoicing for the Righteous

Though he spoke of great destruction and judgments, Isaiah was filled not with despair but with joy. Here he burst into a hymn of exultation because the Lord would finally come and reign in Zion and Jerusalem (see Isaiah 24:23).

The Second Coming will be a time of great rejoicing that follows “much tribulation” (D&C 58:3–4). A great “feast of fat things” (Isaiah 25:6) will also attend the Lord’s return, meaning that men will feast upon the fruits of the gospel until they are full (compare D&C 58:8). The Lord’s coming will help to dispel “the veil that is spread over all nations” (Isaiah 25:7). This veil may be the “dark veil of unbelief” (Alma 19:6; see also Ether 4:15) which characterizes those of the latter days who reject the gospel. Or, it could be a more literal “veil of darkness,” such as that described in Moses 7:61 when the heavens shall be darkened and “shall shake, and also the earth.” But great joy will also follow, for the time will come when “the Lord God will wipe away

tears from off all faces” (Isaiah 25:8). This figure is used twice in the book of Revelation (Revelation 7:17; 21:4) and obviously represents a millennial condition.

(15-8) Isaiah 26. “In the Way of Thy Judgments, O Lord, Have We Waited for Thee”

Isaiah 26 is a song, or psalm, of praise that gives tribute to the Lord. It appears to be a response to God’s release of Israel from her scattered condition in the earth (see v. 15). Isaiah rejoiced that the righteous are highly blessed of God and observed that wicked are those who do not respond to the Lord’s opportunities (see vv. 10–11). In typical fashion, Israel turned unto the Lord for help only when they were in great pain. In the same way a woman struggling to give birth is delivered of pain only when her child is born, so Israel will be free of pain when the Lord restores Zion once again (see vv. 16–18). Verse 18 is a clear statement of the fact of resurrection, the Lord’s and our own.

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch said of the song of Isaiah: “The prophet, whom we already know as a psalmist from [Isaiah 12], now acts as choral leader of the church of the future, and praises Jehovah for having destroyed the mighty imperial city, and proved Himself a defence and shield against its tyranny towards His oppressed church” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 7:1:436–37).

(15-9) Isaiah 27:1–6. What Are the Meanings of Leviathan, Dragon, and Serpent?

When Israel is restored, she “shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isaiah 27:6). That fruit is the gospel of peace (see vv. 5–6). At the same time the Lord “shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, . . . and he shall slay the dragon” (v. 1). Both dragon and serpent are scriptural terms for Satan, the common enemy of God and all mankind (see Revelation 12:9). Thus, *leviathan* probably includes not only Satan personally but all who serve him. In other words, what Isaiah saw is the necessary destruction of Babylon, or the world, before Zion can be fully established. Here again, as in chapter 26, Isaiah is so taken with the joy of that future day that he couches his words in a hymn of praise.

(15-10) Isaiah 27:7–13. What Did Isaiah See in Store for Jerusalem?

Before Jacob shall be restored, “the defenced city [Jerusalem] shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken” (Isaiah 27:10), because “when the boughs thereof are withered [when the tribes of Israel become wicked], they shall be broken off” and cast into the fire, that is, they shall come into judgments (v. 11). Later, they shall “be gathered one by one” back to their holy city, Jerusalem (v. 12; see also v. 13).

The allegory of Zenos in Jacob 5 contains similar imagery and may be studied profitably in connection with this chapter.

(15-11) Isaiah 28:1–8. “Woe to the Crown of Pride, to the Drunkards of Ephraim”

Here Isaiah continues the theme that Israel (both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms) must face judgments before Jacob’s final restoration. Isaiah, chapter 28, speaks of the rebellion of the ten tribes inhabiting northern Israel, of which Ephraim was the acknowledged leader.

"The Lord hath a mighty and strong" nation, Assyria, waiting like "a flood of mighty waters" to humble Israel by casting her "down to the earth" (v. 2). Then, like a flower that fades in the hot sun (see v. 4), or a drunken man who staggers under wine (see v. 7), Israel will be removed from her promised land. In 724 B.C., Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, besieged Samaria. The siege ended after three years with Sargon II finally carrying the ten tribes away into captivity.

(15-12) Isaiah 28:14–15. In What Way Had Judah "Made a Covenant with Death, and with Hell"?

"The prophet confronts the rulers of Jerusalem with the assertion that their policy and behavior are bringing inevitable ruin. This time the fault is that they have deliberately entered into a covenant to serve, in return for protection, a god or gods other than their own. Death, *maweth*, is here the god of the underworld, Sheol or hell. Perhaps the Canaanite god of the underworld, Mot, is intended, or the reference may be to the Egyptian Osiris. It was customary for the prophets to speak of the alien deities as lies and falsehood (compare Amos 2:4; Jer. 10:14). In contrast to this act of panic by the rulers, Isaiah declares that faith in God is the only secure foundation of Zion's security, and that his justice and righteousness alone can erect a building that will stand. Those who in fright have sought to secure themselves by worshiping other gods as well, will experience in sheer terror the effects of Yahweh's decree of destruction." (*The Interpreter's Bible*, 5:317.)

Of course, the phrase may have a spiritual meaning as well. Israel made a covenant with death because that is what "the wages of sin" are—death (Romans 6:23).

For other references to the overflowing scourge in modern times, see Doctrine and Covenants 29:17–19; 45:31; 84:96–97; 97:22–26; 105:15.

(15-13) Isaiah 28:16. What Is the Tried and "Precious Corner Stone"?

The tried and precious cornerstone is Jesus Christ Himself. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: "One of Isaiah's great Messianic prophecies was that the promised Messiah would be 'for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.' (Isa. 8:14–15.) Both Paul (Rom. 9:33) and Peter (1 Pet. 2:7–8) record the fulfilment of this prophecy." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 657.)

Jacob referred to this figure when he said that "by the stumbling of the Jews they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation" (Jacob 4:15).

Paul also used the same imagery when he said the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ was Apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (see Ephesians 2:19–20).

(15-14) Isaiah 28:17–22. What Was Meant by "Righteousness to the Plummet" and a "Bed . . . Shorter Than That a Man Can Stretch Himself" Upon?

With Christ as the chief cornerstone in our spiritual "house," we are prepared to face the justice of the Lord with equity and faith. Jesus Christ becomes our

advocate and pleads our case with the Father (see D&C 45:2–5).

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet" alludes to the building trades and continues the imagery. Christ is the cornerstone from which all other stones are laid. When something plummets, it drops straight down. A builder uses a plumb bob to find a straight vertical line. The plumb bob is a weight attached to a cord that, when extended, hangs perpendicular to its beginning point. Thus the builder knows he has a straight line. With righteousness and justice as His measuring tools, the Savior starts with the chief cornerstone (Himself) and lays out a perfect and firmly built house, one which can resist any storm that would sweep away a house reared through other means, especially one reared through the "covenant with death" (Isaiah 28:18).

The imagery of the bed and the inadequate covers is more easily understood than the imagery of the plummet. Obviously, if we are not covered by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, we will find ourself like a man in a bed too short for him with a blanket that is too small to cover him. No matter how appealing sin may look at first, it can never satisfy our inner needs. The sinful person will be ever like the man in a short bed with inadequate covers. He will twist and turn and constantly seek comfort, but he cannot find it. The Atonement of Christ for sin covers, or is efficacious for, only those who trust in God with all their hearts and keep His holy commandments.



A threshing scene

(15-15) Isaiah 28:23–29. What Was the Significance of the Parable of Sowing and Threshing?

Keil and Delitzsch explained the beauty and power of Isaiah's parable, noting that "fitches" (Isaiah 28:25) were probably the black poppy, and cummin (see v. 25) the same as modern cummin. Both are herbs derived from the seeds of the plants mentioned.

"The ploughing . . . which opens the soil, *i.e.* turns it up in furrows, and the harrowing . . . which breaks the clods, take place to prepare for the sowing, and therefore not interminably, but only so long as is necessary to prepare the soil to receive the seed. When the seed-furrows have been drawn in the levelled surface of the ground . . . , then the sowing and planting begin; and this also takes place in various ways, according to the different kinds of fruit. . . . The wheat he sows carefully

in rows . . . , *i.e.* he does not scatter it about carelessly, like the other two, but lays the grains carefully in the furrows, because otherwise when they sprang up they would get massed together, and choke one another . . . the barley is sown in a piece of the field specially marked off for it, or specially furnished with signs . . . ; and . . . , the spelt [rye] . . . , along the edge of it, so that spelt forms the rim of the barley field. It is by a divine instinct that the husbandman acts in this manner; for God, who established agriculture at the creation . . . , has also given men understanding. . . .

“ . . . (For) [v. 27] introduces another proof that the husbandman is instructed by God, from what he still further does. He does not use the threshing machine . . . which would entirely destroy the more tender kinds of fruit, but knocks them out with a staff. . . . Is bread corn crushed? Oh no, he does not crush it. This would be the case if he were to cause the wheel . . . of the threshing cart with the horses harnessed in front to rattle over it with all their might. . . . The wise, divinely inspired course adopted by the husbandman in the treatment of the field and fruit, is a type of the wise course adopted by the divine Teacher Himself in the treatment of His nation. Israel is Jehovah’s field. The punishments and chastisements of Jehovah are the ploughshare and harrow, with which He forcibly breaks up, turns over, and furrows this field. But this does not last for ever. When the field has been thus loosened, smoothed, and rendered fertile once more, the painful process of ploughing is followed by a beneficent sowing and planting in a multi-form and wisely ordered fulness of grace. Again, Israel is Jehovah’s child of the threshing-floor [see Isaiah 21:10]. He threshes it; but He does not thresh it only: He also knocks; and when He threshes, He does not continue threshing for ever, *i.e.* as Caspari has well explained it, He does not punish all the members of the nation with the same severity; and those whom He punishes with greater severity than others He does not punish incessantly, but as soon as His end is attained, and the husks of sin are separated from those that have been punished, the punishment ceases, and only the worst in the nation, who are nothing but husks, and the husks on the nation itself, are swept away by the punishments’ [compare Isaiah 1:25; 29:20–21]. This is the solemn lesson and affectionate consolation hidden behind the veil of the parable. Jehovah punishes, but it is in order that He may be able to bless. He sifts, but He does not destroy. He does not thresh His own people, but He knocks them; and even when He threshes, they may console themselves in the face of the approaching period of judgment, that they are never crushed or injured.” (*Commentary*, 7:2:14–17.)

(15-16) Isaiah 29:1–4. What Does the Phrase “It Shall Be unto Me As Ariel” Mean?

David dwelt in Jerusalem, and Ariel is another name for that city. In typical prophetic fashion this prophecy has a multiple application. It could be applied to any time when Jerusalem faced a major catastrophe because of its apostasy. Also, Jerusalem is sometimes used as a generic name, not just for the city but for the entire nation, much as people say Washington and mean the United States or Moscow and mean Russia. Elder LeGrand Richards noted the dualism of the prophecy:

“If you will read [Isaiah 29:1–2] thoughtfully, you will know that [Isaiah] not only saw the destruction of Jerusalem, but he saw the destruction of another great center like unto Jerusalem. Then he adds:

“‘And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.’ [Isaiah 29:4.]

“Nobody in this world could explain that intelligently or know what people Isaiah saw like unto Jerusalem without the Book of Mormon. Here is the explanation in the Book of Mormon. ‘After my seed and the seed of my brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief, and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles; yea, after the Lord God shall have camped against them round about, and shall have laid siege against them with a mount, and raised forts against them; and after they shall have been brought down low in the dust, even that they are not, yet the words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten.

“‘For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground, and their speech shall whisper out of the dust.

“‘For thus saith the Lord God: They shall write the things which shall be done among them, and they shall be written and sealed up in a book, and those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not have them, for they seek to destroy the things of God.’ (2 Nephi 26:15–17.)

“How could Joseph Smith have known these things when the Book of Mormon was published even before this Church was organized, except for the fact that the Book of Mormon is the promised record that God said he would bring forth and join to the record of Judah. How could anyone understand this prophecy of Isaiah without the explanation contained in the Book of Mormon.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1963, p. 118.)

The Book of Mormon is truly the voice of a people brought low, speaking from the dust, for the book was in fact taken from the ground, just as Isaiah prophesied.

(15-17) Isaiah 29:11–12. What Was the “Book That Is Sealed” and to Whom Were Its “Words” Delivered?

Early in the process of translating the Book of Mormon, Martin Harris desired proof that the translation Joseph Smith was making was genuine. He obtained permission to carry a copy of several of the “words” from the plates, together with their translation, to some learned men. Martin Harris’s account given to the Prophet Joseph Smith states that he took the copy to Professor Charles Anthon of New York City, who certified that the characters were real and correctly translated. But when Professor Anthon discovered that the record from which the characters were obtained was itself received by supernatural means, he retracted his statement by asking for his certificate back and tearing it to bits. Martin Harris reports that Anthon said that “if I would bring the plates to him he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates

were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, 'I cannot read a sealed book.' I left him, and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation." (Joseph Smith—History 1:65.)

The unlearned man to whom the book was delivered was, of course, Joseph Smith. Elder Orson Pratt once said: "Now in regard to Joseph Smith's qualifications or attainments in learning, they were very ordinary. He had received a little education in the common country schools in the vicinity in which he had lived. He could read a little, and could write, but it was in such an ordinary hand that he did not venture to act as his own scribe, but had to employ sometimes one and sometimes another to write as he translated. This unlearned man did not make the same reply that the learned man did. For when the book was delivered to this unlearned youth and he was requested to read it, he replied, 'I am not learned.' I suppose he felt his weakness when the Lord told him to read this book; for he thought it was a great work." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 15:186.)

(15-18) Isaiah 29:14. What Is the "Marvellous Work and a Wonder" of Which Isaiah Prophesied?

While the Book of Mormon can accurately be described as a marvelous work and a wonder, Isaiah's prophecy includes more than the book. Elder LeGrand Richards exclaimed:

"What would really constitute a marvelous work and a wonder? Why should not honest lovers of truth welcome the pronouncement of such a work? Should any generation reject revealed truth when sent from heaven, even as they rejected the Christ when he came among men? Why does it seem so much easier to accept and believe in the dead prophets than in living prophets?

"In the accomplishment of this promised marvelous work and a wonder, the Lord had in mind a 'restitution of all things' and moved upon Peter to so prophesy to those who had crucified his Lord: [Acts 3:19-21]." (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, pp. 34-35.)

Thus the entire restoration of the priesthood—the Church, the ordinances, the gospel truths—constitute the marvelous work and a wonder that Isaiah foretold.

(15-19) Isaiah 29:17. What Relationship Does This Verse Have to the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon?

Elder Mark E. Petersen said:

"The gathering of the Jews to Palestine is one of the most outstanding and significant of all the signs of the times. The Lord said through Jeremiah: '... I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.' (Jer. 30:3.) Isaiah indicated that Palestine, long languishing in the grip of the desert, was destined to be turned into a fruitful field in connection with the gathering of the Jews to their homeland. . . .

"A sacred book was to come forth before that time—one which was new to the world, one that told of a fallen nation which was destroyed suddenly—a book to be offered in the latter days to a learned man who would reject it, but to be given by divine means to an unlettered man through whom it was to be given to the world. . . .



Moroni buried the plates.

"Where is that book? It is one of the signs of the times.

"Not only did the prophets predict its appearance, but Isaiah set a limit on the time of its publication. That time limit was related to the period when fertility would return to Palestine. Isaiah said that the book would come forth first, and then added that in 'a very little while . . . Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.' (Isa. 29:17.)

"The time limit has expired. This new volume of scripture must have come forth before now or Isaiah was not a true prophet, for Palestine is fruitful again." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1965, p. 61.)

The Book of Mormon came first, just as Isaiah foresaw it would.

(15-20) Isaiah 29:18-19. What Do the Allusions to the Deaf and Blind Mean?

One can be either spiritually or physically deaf or blind, or both. Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined *spiritual deafness* as "the state of those who are lacking in spirituality, whose spirit ears are not attuned to the whisperings of the still small voice of the Spirit. Similarly, *spiritual blindness* is the identifying mark which singles out those who are unable to see the hand of God manifest in the affairs of men. Such have 'unbelief and blindness of heart' (D. & C. 58:15); they are 'hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds.' (3 Ne. 2:1.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 184.)

(15-21) Isaiah 29:24. To Whom Does the Phrase “They Also That Erred in Spirit Shall Come to Understanding” Refer?

Many in the Christian world are sincere, and their false doctrinal conclusions are not their own fault. Elder Orson Pratt, who commented extensively on Isaiah 29, explained:

“Oh, how my heart has been pained within me when I have seen the blindness of the Christian world, and I knew that many of them were sincere! I knew they desired to know the truth, but they scarcely knew whether to turn to the right or to the left, so great were the errors that were taught in their midst, and so strong the traditions which they had imbibed, the fear of the Lord being taught them by the precepts of men instead of by inspiration and the power of the Holy Ghost. ‘They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding’ when this book comes forth, and ‘they that murmur shall learn doctrine.’

“... But those who have read this book will bear me record that their minds have been forever set at rest in regard to doctrine, so far as the ordinances of the kingdom of God are concerned. Those who erred, and did not know whether sprinkling, pouring or immersion was the true method of baptism, now know? Why? Because the Book of Mormon reveals the mode as it was given to the ancient Nephites on this continent. So in regard to every other principle of the doctrine of Christ—it is set forth in such great plainness that it is impossible for any two persons to form different ideas in relation to it, after reading the Book of Mormon.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 15:188–89.)

(15-22) Isaiah 30. “Woe to the Rebellious Children”

Israel and Judah had been cautioned by the Lord not to put their trust in other nations. But this people refused to hearken, and they turned to Egypt for protection from the Assyrians (see Enrichment F). The Lord berated them for seeking to “strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt” (Isaiah 30:2). All of this, Isaiah said, “shall help in vain, and to no purpose” (v. 7). As a result, Israel would be broken as easily as a clay pot (see v. 14).

But God will be gracious to Israel. Although He feeds them for a time with “the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction” (v. 20), yet in the last days their teachers shall once again teach the true gospel and show them how to walk in it (see v. 21). Not only will prophets return, but great temporal blessings will be restored. The earth “shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures” (v. 23). In the end the Lord will redeem Israel. Even “the Assyrians” who carried away the ten tribes into captivity shall eventually “be beaten down” (v. 31).

The theme of Isaiah 30 is that men trust in the wisdom of other men instead of looking to God for counsel (see vv. 1–2) or to His prophets for instruction (see vv. 9–11). The Lord stated that this rejection of God’s word is the direct cause of their destruction (see vv. 12–14).

Monte S. Nyman wrote: “The warning in verses 1 through 7 is here extended to our day by the Lord’s commanding Isaiah to record it as a witness for the latter days (verse 8); a marginal note in the KJV

identifies the ‘latter day’” (*Great Are the Words of Isaiah*,” p. 121).

(15-23) Isaiah 31. Trust in the Lord Instead of in the “Arm of Flesh”

This chapter follows a theme similar to that of the chapter preceding it. However, “the first warning speaks against trusting the *wisdom* of man, and the second against trusting the *power* of man” (Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah*,” p. 118). “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help,” for there is none there (Isaiah 31:1). “The Egyptians are men, and not God”; they themselves and those they help “shall fall together” (v. 3). Only the Lord can save Israel. Isaiah said, “Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted,” and “then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man,” but of the Lord (vv. 6, 8). The “Egyptian” and the “Assyrian” of the latter days may be those in whom a modern people trust rather than in the Lord.

(15-24) Isaiah 32. Israel Will Be a Desolation until the Messiah Begins the Preparation for His Return

Orson Pratt saw this scripture as applying not only to ancient Israel but also to the Latter-day Saints, who were driven from their homes in the East to the deserts of the Rocky Mountains.

“Did you see it, Isaiah, as well as the people that live in our day? Did you see a people go into the desert and offer up thanksgiving and the voice of melody? Did you see that desert and wilderness redeemed from its sterile condition and become like the garden of Eden? ‘O yes,’ says Isaiah, ‘I saw it all, and I left it on record for the benefit of the generation that should live some two or three thousand years after my day.’ But Isaiah, are we to understand that the people are to be gathered together in that desert, and that the gathered people are to be instrumental in the hands of God, in redeeming that desert? Yes, Isaiah has told us all this. We will go back to what we read in his thirty-second chapter—‘Until the spirit be poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.’ What fruitful field? Why, the wilderness that will be converted into a fruitful field. ‘The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever; and my people shall dwell in peaceable habitations, and in sure dwellings and in quiet resting places.’

“Was that the way we dwelt in Missouri or Illinois? Did we live in quietness and with assurance continually in those States? Oh, no, we were tossed about; as Isaiah says—‘tossed to and fro and not comforted.’ That was the case with Zion while down in the States, and that was in accordance with a modern revelation, in which, speaking of Zion, the Lord says—‘You shall be persecuted from city to city and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall stand to receive their inheritance’ [D&C 63:31]. But when the time should come for Zion to go up into the wilderness things would be changed; then my people shall dwell in peaceable habitations, in sure dwelling places, and in quietness and assurance.

“Will they have any capital city when they get up into the mountain desert? O, yes. Isaiah says here—‘When it shall hail, coming down on the forest, the city shall be low in a low place.’ How often have I thought of this since we laid out this great city, twenty-eight years ago! How often have this people reflected in their meditations upon the fulfillment of this prophecy! they have seen, on this eastern range of mountains and on the range of mountains to the west of this valley, snow and storms pelting down with great fury, as though winter in all its rigor and ferocity had overtaken the mountain territory, and at the same time, here, ‘low in a low place,’ was a city, organized at the very base of these mountains, enjoying all the blessings of a spring temperature, the blessings of a temperature not sufficient to cut off our vegetation. What a contrast! ‘When it shall hail, coming down on the forest, the city shall be low in a low place.’ That could not be Jerusalem, no such contrast in the land of Palestine round about Jerusalem! It had reference to the latter-day Zion, the Zion of the mountains.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 18:148–49.)

(15-25) Isaiah 33:14–15. “Who . . . Shall Dwell with Everlasting Burnings?”

Joseph Smith taught that some men “shall rise to the everlasting burnings of God; for God dwells in everlasting burnings, and some shall rise to the damnation of their own filthiness, which is as exquisite a torment as the lake of fire and brimstone” (*Teachings*, p. 361; compare D&C 128:24; 130:7; 133:41; Hebrews 12:29). In one of the most beautiful scriptures of the Old Testament, the Lord asked who would be able to abide this devouring fire, and then described the kind of person that would be able to abide it (see vv. 14–15).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie discussed Isaiah’s question of “who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (v. 14):

“That is, who in the Church shall gain an inheritance in the celestial kingdom? Who will go where God and Christ and holy beings are? Who will overcome the world, work the works of righteousness, and enduring in faith and devotion to the end hear the blessed benediction, ‘Come, and inherit the kingdom of my Father.’

“Isaiah answers: [Isaiah 33:15–16.]” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1973, p. 55.)

Elder McConkie continued:

“Now if I may, I shall take these words of Isaiah, spoken by the power of the Holy Ghost in the first instance, and give some indication as to how they apply to us and our circumstances.

“First, ‘He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly.’ That is, building on the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must keep the commandments. We must speak the truth, and work the works of righteousness. We shall be judged by our thoughts, our words and our deeds.

“Second, ‘. . . he that despiseth the gain of oppressions.’ That is, we must act with equity and justice toward our fellowmen. It is the Lord himself who said that he, at the day of his coming, will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages.

“Third, ‘. . . he that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes.’ That is, we must reject every effort to buy

influence, and instead deal fairly and impartially with our fellowmen. God is no respecter of persons. He esteemeth all flesh alike; and those only who keep his commandments find special favor with him. Salvation is free; it cannot be purchased with money; and those only are saved who abide the law upon which its receipt is predicated. Bribery is of the world.

“Fourth, he ‘. . . that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.’

That is, we must not center our attention on evil and wickedness. We must cease to find fault and look for good in government and in the world. We must take an affirmative, wholesome approach to all things.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 55–56.)

(15-26) Isaiah 33:20–24. What Is Known of Zion’s Future?

In its redeemed condition, Zion will be a place of singular beauty and righteousness. Therefore, “look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities” (Isaiah 33:20), that is, consider what it will be like to live in Zion. “There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; . . . he will save us” (vv. 21–22). Then too, “the inhabitant [of Zion] shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity” (v. 24). Clearly, these are those who have applied the atoning blood of Christ in their own behalf.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said of the word *stakes*:

“In prophetic imagery, Zion is pictured as a great tent upheld by cords fastened securely to *stakes*. Thus Isaiah, envisioning the latter-day glory of Israel, gathered to her restored Zion, proclaimed: ‘Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left. . . . For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.’ (Isa. 54:2–7.) And of the millennial Zion, Isaiah exulted: ‘Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.’ (Isa. 33:20.)

“In keeping with this symbolism, the great areas of church population and strength, which sustain and uphold the restored Zion, are called *stakes*. They are the rallying points and the gathering centers for the remnants of scattered Israel. (D. & C. 68:25–26; 82:13–14; 101:17–21; 115:6, 18; 124:134; 133:9.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 764.)

(15-27) Isaiah 34:1–10. What Does the Term *Idumea* Mean and Why Is It Used?

The Second Coming of Christ will be a day of vengeance and recompense. As formerly seen, “the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations,” for “he hath delivered them to the slaughter” (Isaiah 34:2). Moreover, the heavenly bodies, those luminaries such as the sun, stars, and moon, “shall be dissolved,” that is, “shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine” while “the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll” (v. 4). Isaiah’s description is reminiscent of a similar one in Doctrine and Covenants 88:95 in which we are taught that when the Lord returns, “the curtain of heaven shall be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be

unveiled." Then the sword of the Lord, which represents His power and judgment, "shall come down upon Idumea," or the world (Isaiah 34:5).

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "Now, some Bible commentators, because of the name of Idumea, a little country east of the Jordan, is mentioned, have an idea that this had reference to that little country; but the term Idumea is one that the Lord uses to mean the world. You will find it so recorded in Section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants. He is speaking of the world." (*The Signs of the Times*, p. 150.)

Blood is a biblical symbol of wickedness. The whole earth, stained with blood, will experience a "great slaughter" at the time of the Second Coming, for "it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion" (Isaiah 34:6, 8).

President Joseph Fielding Smith again: "That is to take place in the dispensation of the Fulness of Times, and this prophecy had nothing to do with that little country called Idumea but to the nations of the earth" (*Signs of the Times*, p. 151).

Isaiah seems to parallel passages in Ezekiel, Joel, and Jeremiah where the great battle of Armageddon is foretold. This parallelism explains the reference to the "armies" (Isaiah 34:2) and the vast slaughter that will take place (see vv. 3, 5–7). The "pitch" and "brimstone" and "smoke" of verses 9 and 10 suggest the results of nuclear warfare, which could logically accompany the last great wars. (See Enrichment I for more detail on the battle of Armageddon.)

(15-28) Isaiah 34:16–17. What Is the "Book of the Lord"?

Not all people, of course, are wicked, and those who are not will be saved from the destroying fire—both the spiritual (hell) and the physical (see 1 Nephi 22:15–17). The names of the children of the Lord who have kept their covenants are enrolled in a special book known as "the book of the Lord" (Isaiah 34:16), "the book of the law of God" (D&C 85:5; see also vv. 9, 11), or "the book of life" (Revelation 20:12). Records of our works are kept on earth by the Lord's clerks, but the book of life is the record kept in heaven. Both records should agree (see D&C 128:6–9). Of those whose names are recorded in the heavenly book, "no one of these shall fail" (Isaiah 34:16). The promise that "none shall want [lack] their mate" (JST, Isaiah 34:16) is particularly interesting to Latter-day Saints since we know that only through the ordinance of celestial marriage can we have our mate eternally.

(15-29) Isaiah 35:1–7. "The Desert Shall Rejoice, and Blossom as the Rose"

Several General Authorities have seen the settlement of the mountain valleys of the Rockies by the Latter-day Saints as a fulfillment of these verses in Isaiah (see Milton R. Hunter, in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, p. 81; LeGrand Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, p. 42; Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:346–47; Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:145). When the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847, it could be described as a "wilderness" and a "solitary place" (Isaiah 35:1). The Saints went to work immediately, and soon the desert valleys of Utah began to "blossom as the rose" (v. 1). But this prophecy may also be fulfilled by the

settlement of modern Jews in the Holy Land, where similar things are taking place.

After quoting Isaiah 35:3–4, Elder Orson Pratt reasoned:

"That has never been fulfilled; but preparatory to the time when God will come with vengeance to sweep away wickedness from the face of the earth, the house of Israel will be gathered back to their own lands, and the people of God will be permitted to dwell in the wilderness, and that wilderness will become a fruitful field. It is even said that the desert should rejoice because of those who are gathered, and should blossom as the rose.

"Now that is something that has been fulfilled during the last quarter of a century, here in this wilderness, barren, desert country. The great latter-day work has commenced, the kingdom of God has been reorganized on the earth; in other words, the Christian Church in all its purity and with all its ordinances, has been reorganized upon the face of the earth, and the time has at length come when the Spirit of God has been poured out from on high. Until that period arrived, there was no hope for Israel, no hope for the land of Palestine, no hope for the redemption of the tribes scattered in the four quarters of the earth; but when the wilderness should become as a fruitful field, when the spirit should again be poured out from on high, through the everlasting Gospel of the Son of God, then the people should be gathered together by the commandment of the Lord. . . . Then we may look out for a change upon the face of the land where this gathering takes place; we may look for the deserts to become like the garden of Eden, to blossom as the rose that blossoms in rich and fertile gardens, to blossom abundantly, and the desert to rejoice with joy and singing. . . .

"The Prophet says that, when Jesus comes with vengeance and destroys the wicked, redeems the desert, and causes the wilderness to become a fruitful field, then the lame man shall leap as a hart, the tongue of the dumb shall speak, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 18:145–46.)

(15-30) Isaiah 35:8–10. Who Are the "Ransomed of the Lord" and What Does the Future Hold for Them?

Isaiah 35:8–10 is closely related to Doctrine and Covenants 133:26–34 and is generally acknowledged to refer to the return of the ten tribes. But these references may also include all the tribes. Only the "redeemed" of the Lord, that is the righteous, shall tread the "highway" or "way of holiness"—"the unclean shall not pass over it." Since Ephraim is the source of the ten tribes' blessings (see D&C 133:32), it stands to reason that Ephraim must be gathered first. The ten tribes may then "come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads" (Isaiah 35:10). Judah also shall be gathered as part of this same picture. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote: "Our western tribes of Indians are descendants from that Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and . . . the land of America is a promised land unto them, and unto it all the tribes of Israel will come,

with as many of the Gentiles as shall comply with the requisitions of the new covenant. But the tribe of Judah will return to old Jerusalem. The city of Zion spoken of by David, in the one hundred and second Psalm, will be built upon the land of America, 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.' [Isaiah 35:10]; and then they will be delivered from the overflowing scourge that shall pass through the land. But Judah shall obtain deliverance at Jerusalem. [See Joel 2:32; Isaiah 26:20-21; Jeremiah 31:12; Psalm 1:5; Ezekiel 34:11-13]. These are testimonies that the Good Shepherd will put forth his own sheep, and lead them out from all nations where they have been scattered in a cloudy and dark day, to Zion, and to Jerusalem; besides many more testimonies which might be brought." (*Teachings*, p. 17.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(15-31) Isaiah and the Doctrine and Covenants

You have now studied approximately half of Isaiah's writings. Again and again through numerous cross-references other prophets have cited Isaiah. For the New Testament and Book of Mormon writers this is not too surprising, since the Old Testament was their primary book of scripture. Some find surprising the parallel phraseology between Isaiah's writings and the revelations of Joseph Smith, since by then Christianity emphasized the New Testament writings, often at the expense of the Old Testament.

But while removed from each other by more than twenty-five hundred years, Isaiah and Joseph Smith were both called by the same God, were engaged in the same type of spiritual calling, and were blessed with the same priesthood. Compare the revelatory phrases of these two prophets to see how closely they parallel each other:

Isaiah	D&C
1:2	76:1
1:16-17	88:123-24
1:18	50:10
1:19	64:34
8:16	88:84; 109:46
11:1-10	113:1-6
24:5	1:15
24:20	88:87
25:6	58:8
28:10	128:21
28:15	45:31
28:21	95:4; 101:95
29:14	6:1
34:4	88:87
34:5	1:13, 36
34:8	133:51-52
35:3	81:5
35:10	66:11; 101:18; 133:33

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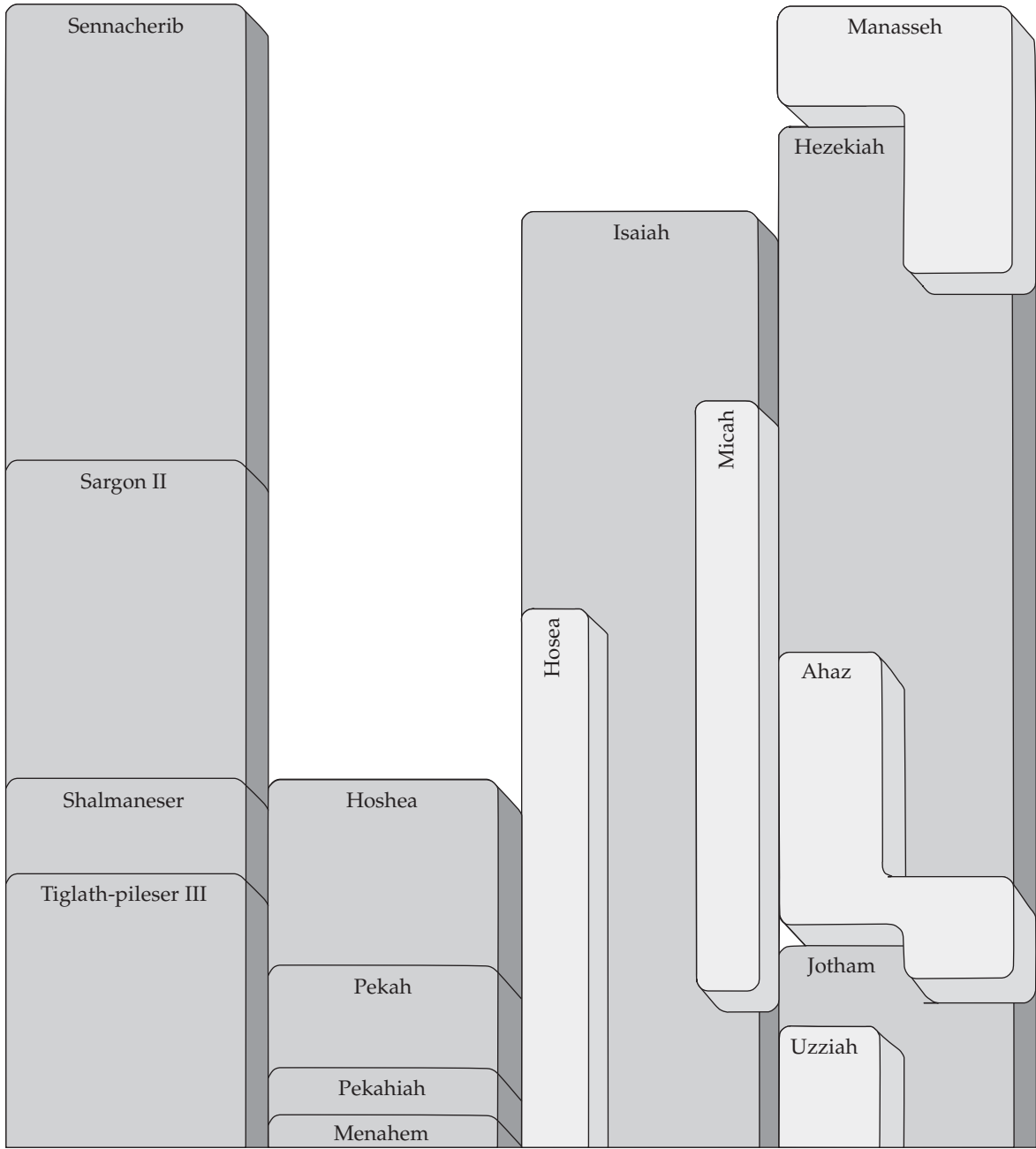
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Kings of Assyria

Kings of Israel

Prophets

Kings of Judah

The World of Isaiah

F

(F-1) Introduction

The importance of the prophet Isaiah is attested to in many scriptural declarations. The Savior Himself commanded that we should search his words diligently (see 3 Nephi 23:1). When did Isaiah live? With whom did he labor? What were the conditions and circumstances in his day? Little is preserved about the life and times of many of the Old Testament prophets, but the period of Isaiah’s ministry has been generally well documented. Elder Bruce R. McConkie identified fifteen chapters in the writings of Isaiah as primarily about the local or historical events of Isaiah’s day (see chart in “Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, pp. 82–83). This enrichment section is to help you better understand the world in which Isaiah lived, the challenges he faced, and the works he accomplished.

(F-2) Chronological Chart of the Scriptural Record of Isaiah’s Ministry

The following chart, with brief summary statements, outlines the chronology of the events of the prophet Isaiah’s ministry. The narrative from both the books of Kings and Chronicles and the pertinent passages from Isaiah present what is known of this period in the history of the kingdom of Judah. (See the Old Testament chronology chart in Maps, and Enrichment A.) Dates in parentheses refer to happenings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Dates with asterisks show flashbacks in the chronology as it is recorded in the scriptures.

Date	Scriptural References	Events
792 B.C.	2 Kings 15:1–4 2 Chronicles 26:1–4	Azariah, or Uzziah (probably his royal or throne name), was made king in Judah. He ruled twenty-four years jointly with his father, fifty-two years total.
768–750 B.C.	2 Chronicles 26:5–7	Uzziah sought counsel from the prophet Zechariah (not the Zechariah who wrote the Old Testament book). Uzziah subjugated the Philistines and the Arabians.
	2 Chronicles 26:8–15	Judah was established as a strong military power. Jerusalem was well fortified and the army well equipped. Agriculture was also improved. Some neighbors paid tribute to this powerful state.
750 B.C.	2 Kings 15:5–6 2 Chronicles 26:16–21	Uzziah, lifted up in pride, assumed the right to officiate in the temple. His unauthorized acts brought the judgment of God against him: leprosy. His son Jotham ruled jointly with him for ten years.
	2 Chronicles 26:22	Isaiah is mentioned as having recorded the history of Uzziah’s reign. We do not have this record today.
740 B.C.*	2 Kings 15:7 2 Chronicles 26:23	Jotham began his sole reign. (See the continuation of the narrative below: 2 Kings 15:32–35; 2 Chronicles 27:1–6.)
(753 B.C.)	2 Kings 15:8–12	Zachariah ruled six months as king in Israel (Northern Kingdom) after his father Jeroboam II.
(752 B.C.)	2 Kings 15:13–15	Shallum ruled one month in Israel before his assassination.
(752 B.C.)	2 Kings 15:16–18	Menahem began a ten-year reign of terror and wickedness in the Northern Kingdom.
743 B.C.	2 Kings 15:19–21	The Northern Kingdom was attacked by the Assyrians. Tiglath-pileser III (also known as Pul) secured tribute from the king of Israel, who had exacted the money from the wealthy of his kingdom. The ancient historical texts of Tiglath-pileser III at Nimrod confirm this scriptural account. These texts report tribute of gold and silver paid by “Menahem of Samaria” (see James B. Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , p. 283).

(742 B.C.)	2 Kings 15:22–26		Pekahiah ruled two years in Israel before being assassinated by his successor.
(740 B.C.)	2 Kings 15:27–31		Pekah, son of Remaliah, reigned over the Northern Kingdom. The king formed an alliance with the Syrians against the Assyrians. The coalition also threatened Judah. (See the continuation of this narrative below: 2 Kings 15:37; 16:5–6.) Finally Tiglath-pileser III captured the northern regions and took many of the inhabitants hostage. This action opened the way for Hoshea to obtain the throne of the Northern Kingdom. Isaiah referred to this conquest in warning of further threats to the nations of God—both Israel and Judah (see Isaiah 9:1).
740 B.C.	2 Kings 15:32–35	2 Chronicles 27:1–6	Jotham enlarged the temple gate and strengthened the fortifications of the nation of Judah. The Ammonites attempted to overthrow the tribute of Judah begun by King Uzziah, but they were not successful.
735 B.C.	2 Kings 15:36–38	2 Chronicles 27:7–9	The coalition of Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, began an attempt to subjugate Judah during this era.
732 B.C.*		2 Chronicles 27:9; 28:1	Ahaz ruled jointly with his father for three years until Jotham’s death.
735 B.C.	2 Kings 16:1–4	2 Chronicles 28:1–4	Ahaz adopted idolatrous practices, including human sacrifice of some of his own children.
735–720 B.C.	2 Kings 16:5–6	2 Chronicles 28:5–15	The coalition of Israel (Ephraim) and Syria attacked Judah and Jerusalem. They were not successful in their conquest, although they gained some territory.
	Isaiah 7:1–6		Isaiah was directed to go to King Ahaz and warn him against making any political alliances with Assyria.
	Isaiah 7:6–9; 8:9–18		Isaiah prophesied that the threatened conquest would not be successful. He further warned that Ephraim (Israel) would be destroyed as a nation.
	Isaiah 7:10–16; 9:6–7		The prophet testified that Judah would be preserved to fulfill its foreordained destiny as the house of the Messiah.
	Isaiah 7:17–25; 8:1–8; 9:8–12		Isaiah prophesied that Judah would be overrun by the Assyrians but would not be destroyed as would the people of Israel and Syria. He also prophesied the fall of Syria and Damascus (see Isaiah 17:1–4) and even the people of Israel (Samaria and Ephraim; see Isaiah 28:1–4).
	Isaiah 10:5–19		Isaiah prophesied not only of Assyria’s destruction of Samaria but also of the eventual fall of Jerusalem and of all wickedness. Assyria’s destruction was also shown.
	2 Kings 16:7	2 Chronicles 28:16	Ahaz rejected the counsel of the prophet Isaiah and sought an alliance with Assyria.
		2 Chronicles 28:17–19	Judah, with her weak leadership, was attacked by Edom and Philistine neighbors, who occupied some cities and territory of the nation.
	2 Kings 16:8–9	2 Chronicles 28:20–21	In an attempt to secure the aid of the Assyrians, Ahaz offered tribute from the treasures of the temple and the throne. Wealthy people were forced to contribute. Ancient Assyrian texts also report this tribute from Ahaz. (See D. Winton Thomas, ed., <i>Documents of Old Testament Times</i> , pp. 55–56.) The Assyrians did not, however, aid Judah against her enemies.
	2 Kings 16:10–16		Ahaz visited Tiglath-pileser III in the conquered city of Damascus. He directed that a pagan, altar-like throne patterned after one he saw in Damascus be erected at the temple complex in Jerusalem.

		2 Chronicles 28:22–23	Ahaz offered sacrifices to the idols of Damascus.
	2 Kings 16:17–20	2 Chronicles 28:24–27	Ahaz destroyed or altered some of the temple vessels and closed the temple. He also established places of idolatry throughout the land.
(732 B.C.)*	2 Kings 15:30; 17:1–2		Hoshea was made king over Israel by the Assyrians. The historical annals of the Assyrian kings found at Calah, or Nimrod, attest to the enthronement of Hoshea as vassal king by the Assyrians (see Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , pp. 283–84).
(725 B.C.)	2 Kings 17:3–4		In time King Hoshea rebelled against the Assyrians. When Shalmaneser V became king of Assyria in 727 B.C., Hoshea used the change of rulers to break the tribute agreement, and he conspired to obtain assistance from Egypt. Messengers were sent to So of Egypt. This king is generally believed to be the Ethiopian conqueror of Egypt who ruled there as founder of the twenty-fifth dynasty. (See Thomas, <i>Documents of Old Testament Times</i> , p. 63; Alan Gardiner, <i>Egypt of the Pharaohs</i> , p. 450.)
(724–721 B.C.)	2 Kings 17:5		The land of Israel and its capital Samaria were besieged for three years. Near the end of this period, Sargon II became ruler in Assyria.
(722 B.C.)*	2 Kings 17:6–17		The destruction of Samaria came at the hands of Sargon II. The people of Israel were taken captive by Sargon and exiled to Assyria. Some question Sargon’s rule, but palace inscriptions about this ruler list him as “conqueror of Samaria” (Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , p. 284). These ancient writings likewise affirm the exile of the inhabitants of the ten northern tribes (see Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , pp. 284–85). This large group later escaped from their captivity and were lost to the scriptural narrative, hence the designation “lost tribes” of Israel. (See Enrichment D.)
721 B.C.	2 Kings 17:18–19		The nation of Judah was the only nation remaining after the Assyrian devastation.
(721 B.C.)	2 Kings 17:24		The Assyrians resettled the conquered and depopulated territory of Israel, particularly the region of Samaria, the capital. The wall inscriptions from Sargon’s palace affirm that people from Mesopotamia were relocated in Israel to be a new tribute state to Assyria.
(720 B.C.)	2 Kings 17:25–41		The new settlers experienced much difficulty there. Their superstitious conclusion was that they did not know the “God of the land” (2 Kings 17:26). Finally, the Assyrians sent Levites and priests from captivity into Israel to teach the new inhabitants of their God. They worshiped both the Lord and the gods they had brought with them. Eventually the new settlers worshiped chiefly Jehovah and intermarried with the priestly families. In time they became known as the Samaritans. (See Ezra 4:1–3.)
	Isaiah 19:1–15; 20:1–6		Assyrian texts report a number of rebellions in the conquered territories and even in the newly-conquered Samaria. Gaza and Damascus were reestablished as Assyrian provinces. (See Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , p. 285.) The rebellious vassals of Assyria sought aid from Egypt. In the face of such action, the prophet Isaiah warned Judah against the unstable Egyptians. The prophet further warned of Assyria’s defeat of weakened Egypt, now dominated by foreign (Ethiopian) rulers. The Babylonians were also rebelling, eventually

			causing Assyria to shift her attention and presence from the land of Israel. (See John Bright, <i>A History of Israel</i> , p. 263.)
715 B.C.	2 Kings 18:1–6	2 Chronicles 31:1–32:12	Hezekiah succeeded his father, Ahaz, as king. He attempted to purge the land of the idolatry of his father. Even the brazen serpent from the days of Moses (see Numbers 21:8–9) had become an object of false worship, so Hezekiah destroyed it.
715–701 B.C.		2 Chronicles 29:1–11	Hezekiah reopened the temple and challenged the Levites to prepare themselves to administer there.
		2 Chronicles 29:12–19	The Levites carried out the work of cleansing and restoring the temple.
		2 Chronicles 29:20–36	True worship and sacrifice were reestablished in the nation of Judah.
		2 Chronicles 30:1–12	Hezekiah sent messengers inviting all the nation to come to Jerusalem for the reinstatement of the feast of the Passover. Many throughout the land scorned and rejected his call.
		2 Chronicles 30:13–27	The faithful who responded to the invitation rejoiced in the celebration in Judah of the sacred festival of the Passover.
		2 Chronicles 31:1	The worshipers continued their efforts to rid the land of the institutions of false worship.
		2 Chronicles 31:2–10	The priesthood was organized and appointed to their continuing functions. Tithes were given for the support of the priests.
		2 Chronicles 31:11–21	The administration of temporal affairs was appointed, the rights of the Levites being established by lineal descent and birthright.
705 B.C.	2 Kings 18:7		Sargon, king of Assyria, was killed in battle, and revolutions followed throughout the Assyrian Empire. Hezekiah refused to pay the heavy tribute that his father had begun, and he sought an Egyptian alliance. Isaiah had warned the people of the folly of expecting help from Egypt. (See Isaiah 30:1–7; 31:1–3.)
(722 B.C.)*	2 Kings 18:9–12		The account of the fall of Israel and Samaria in the north to Shalmaneser V and Sargon II is repeated. This account was a reminder of the power of the Assyrians.
701 B.C.	2 Kings 18:13–16		Sennacherib, the successor to Sargon, swept into Judah and the territory of the Philistines to enforce the tribute agreements. The annals of this invader king record the capture of forty-six cities or forts and many villages. The extended siege of Hezekiah at Jerusalem is described: “Himself I made a prisoner . . . like a bird in a cage” (Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , p. 288). The Assyrians were headquartered in Lachish, twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Hezekiah sent tribute, mostly from the temple, to sue for peace. The receipt of the tribute is confirmed in ancient texts. (See Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , p. 288.)
		2 Chronicles 32:1–8	In spite of the offering, the siege continued. Hezekiah sought to strengthen the fortifications of the city and moved to protect the water supply. A conduit or water course was dug out of limestone rock to bring the water safely into the city where it could be stored (see 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:30). In warning of the future destruction of Jerusalem, Isaiah spoke of these preparations made by Hezekiah (see Isaiah 22:8–11). This tunnel exists today and is known as Hezekiah’s,

		or the Siloam, Tunnel. An ancient inscription in the tunnel tells of the construction and is generally associated with Hezekiah's project. (See Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , p. 321; Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Hezekiah's Tunnel.")
2 Kings 18:17–18 Isaiah 36:2–3	2 Chronicles 32:9–10	As the siege continued, the Assyrians sent representatives of Sennacherib to demand the surrender of the city. Hezekiah sent his officials outside the city walls to negotiate.
2 Kings 18:19–25 Isaiah 36:4–10	2 Chronicles 32:11–12	The Assyrian spokesman challenged the people's ability to withstand his forces. He criticized the alliance Judah had attempted to make with Egypt. Finally he blasphemously claimed that the God of Judah had commanded Judah's destruction.
2 Kings 18:26 Isaiah 36:11		The representatives of Hezekiah requested that the negotiations be carried out in the Syrian language (Aramaic) rather than Hebrew, so the people would not understand the exchange.
2 Kings 18:27–35 Isaiah 36:12–20	2 Chronicles 32:18–19	The Assyrian official ignored the plea and, speaking loudly in the language of the people of Judah, declared the futility of trusting Hezekiah or their God for deliverance. He challenged the power of Judah's God with the results of Assyria's victories.
2 Kings 18:36–37 Isaiah 36:21–22	2 Chronicles 32:16–17	Since Hezekiah's representatives had been ordered to remain silent, they said nothing at all but returned and reported to the king. In addition to the spoken challenges, the Assyrians sent written messages.
2 Kings 19:1–5 Isaiah 37:1–5	2 Chronicles 32:20	Upon receiving these challenges and the report of his representatives, Hezekiah sought counsel and direction from the prophet Isaiah.
2 Kings 19:6–13 Isaiah 37:6–13		Isaiah prophesied the departure of the Assyrians and Sennacherib's death upon his return to his homeland. The chief negotiator for the Assyrians returned to Sennacherib to report, and he found that the main force was engaged against Tibnah, not far from Lachish. The Assyrians were also threatened by attack from the Ethiopian pharaoh of Egypt. As a result, the pressure upon Jerusalem for surrender was increased.
2 Kings 19:14–35 Isaiah 37:14–36	2 Chronicles 32:21	Hezekiah, upon receiving the message from the Assyrians, sought the Lord in prayer for deliverance. The Lord's response was revealed to the king through the prophet Isaiah, who declared the destruction of the Assyrians and the future blessing and prosperity of Judah. Hezekiah stood firm and faithfully obeyed the prophet's direction. The people of Judah were delivered by the Lord. The Assyrians encamped around Jerusalem were smitten and suffered many casualties.
2 Kings 19:36–37 Isaiah 37:37–38	2 Chronicles 32:21–23	The Assyrians who survived broke off the campaign and withdrew to their homeland. There Sennacherib was assassinated, as Isaiah had prophesied. This miraculous deliverance brought Hezekiah and his God recognition and tribute from neighboring nations.
2 Kings 20:1–11 Isaiah 38	2 Chronicles 32:24	Hezekiah became very proud and became deathly ill. The prophet Isaiah declared that he would die. Hezekiah pleaded with the Lord, and before the prophet had left the courts of the king, Isaiah was inspired to return and tell Hezekiah that his life would be extended fifteen years. The treatment for his illness was also revealed. Isaiah also prophesied a sign as a witness of God's hand

			in Hezekiah's recovery. The daylight was extended, as indicated by the sundial of Ahaz, Hezekiah's father (see Helaman 12:13–15).
701–686 B.C.		2 Chronicles 32:25–26	Hezekiah continued to struggle with his pride, which had brought the Lord's wrath upon him and his people. The Lord's wrath was appeased only when Hezekiah became sufficiently humble.
		2 Chronicles 32:27–30	The people and the king were richly blessed with material wealth.
	2 Kings 20:12–13 Isaiah 39:1–2	2 Chronicles 32:31	Merodach-baladan (a Babylonian prince called Marduk-apal-iddina in his own land), who had earlier rebelled against Assyrian domination, sent messengers of good will with gifts for the king of Judah. Hezekiah responded by showing them all the state treasures and armaments.
	2 Kings 20:14–19 Isaiah 39:3–8		The prophet Isaiah upbraided the king for openly revealing the wealth and defense of the kingdom. He also prophesied the future subjugation and destruction of Judah by the Babylonians.
	2 Kings 20:20–21	2 Chronicles 32:20, 32–33	The water tunnel in Jerusalem is mentioned as being one of Hezekiah's significant accomplishments.
697 B.C.*	2 Kings 21:1–2	2 Chronicles 33:1–2	Manasseh joined his father as king. He apparently ruled jointly with his father during the last eleven years of his father's reign.
686 B.C.	2 Kings 21:3–16	2 Chronicles 33:3–10	When Manasseh began to reign alone, upon the death of his father, he led the prosperous nation deep into apostasy and idolatry. They did "more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel" (2 Kings 21:9). Prophets foretold the judgments and destruction that were to come upon this rebellious nation. Manasseh shed much innocent blood.
679 B.C.		2 Chronicles 33:11–17	Essarhaddon, the Assyrian ruler and one of the sons of Sennacherib, again overran the land of Judah, placing twenty-one cities, including Jerusalem, under tribute. After this defeat and punishment at the hands of the Assyrians, Manasseh attempted some reforms among the people, but without result.

(F-3) Summary

Isaiah was a prophet-statesman who ministered during the reigns of four kings of Judah. The historical records of this time come from three major sources: the second book of Kings, the second book of Chronicles, and the writings of Isaiah.

Tradition records that Isaiah died as a martyr by being sawed in two at the hands of Manasseh (see R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2:162; Hebrews 11:37).





The God of Israel and the Nations

(16-1) Introduction

This chapter deals with events in Judah during the reign of King Hezekiah that were the prelude to the Babylonian captivity. It treats the captivity period, including the hope for the promised Messiah. Isaiah dramatized the utter futility of trusting in man-made gods and revealed both Judah's future deliverance from bondage and the destruction of the Babylon that had been Judah's oppressor.

Although some claim that Isaiah 40 and the chapters that follow were written by different authors, Isaiah merely shifted from a mix of prose and poetry to a more completely poetic style. These later chapters use his typical words and expressions. Further, his authorship is attested by modern revelation.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Isaiah 36–47. Refer to Enrichment E throughout your study of the book of Isaiah. Enrichment F will provide an overview of the historical setting of the prophet Isaiah's ministry.

2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 36–47

(16-2) Isaiah 36–39. Isaiah and the Assyrian Invasion

These chapters in the prophet's writings parallel the narrative account recorded in 2 Kings 18:2–20:19. Because they cite the prophet Isaiah's counsel and the prophecy to King Hezekiah, they are included here. A complete overview of the chronological events dealt with is found in Enrichment F. The notes and commentary that apply to these chapters are found in chapter 12, which covers 2 Kings 14–20. Second Kings 18:14–20:11 parallels the account in Isaiah so Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 18:14–20:11 will not be duplicated here. The correlation between the accounts in 2 Kings, Isaiah, and 2 Chronicles is provided in the accompanying table.

(16-3) Isaiah 40–47. Isaiah Changed His Style of Writing to Prophetic Poetry

The preceding chapters in Isaiah include a mix of prophetic poetry and historical prose. The prophet used a beautiful poetic writing style for the entire portion covered in this reading, with the brief exception of 44:9–20. Hebrew poetry differs from poetry written in English, primarily because it emphasizes

parallelism in thought, rather than rhyme and meter. Its beauty and sense are wonderful and pleasing to both the mind and the ear. (See *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 303–6.)

(16-4) Isaiah 40:1–3. Why Did Isaiah Say Jerusalem's Warfare Was Over?

"The message of comfort to Jerusalem, 'that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned,' clearly refers to the latter days. The Anchor Bible translates this line 'that her sentence is served, her penalty is paid.' Judah was to be sent through the 'furnace of affliction' (see 48:10), so the message given here is to be fulfilled after she has been through the furnace. A look at history and at present-day circumstances shows her still to be going through that furnace. The rest of the chapter also supports a Second Coming time period." (Monte S. Nyman, "Great Are the Words of Isaiah," pp. 141–42.)

(16-5) Isaiah 40:3. "The Voice of Him That Crieth in the Wilderness"

As with so many Old Testament prophecies, this passage has more than one meaning. The Savior clearly identified the "voice in the wilderness" as John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:3; John 1:23; 1 Nephi 10:8–9). But if this forerunner was to prepare the way for the person who was to tell Jerusalem that times of trial were over (see Isaiah 40:1), then the prophet clearly could not be referring only to John the Baptist's mortal ministry. Elder George Teasdale said: "Instead of speaking comforting words to Jerusalem, He [Christ] exclaimed: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.' Were these comforting words to Jerusalem? I think not. It is very evident that John the Baptist was not only the forerunner of His first coming, but also of His second advent. The Scriptures are plain on this matter." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 25:16.)

Only with the Second Coming of the Lord will Jerusalem find forgiveness and peace. Therefore, the reference to the voice in the wilderness (John the Baptist) making a straight way in the desert applies to his ministry as a forerunner for both the former and the latter days. Luke quoted Isaiah 40:3–5 (see Luke 3:4–6)—not only verse 3 but also verses 4 and 5, which are clearly millennial in application. When Joseph Smith revised Luke's passage, he added five verses that also apply to the Second Coming and clearly identify the Savior as Him for whom the forerunner would prepare the way.

Since the five verses the Prophet Joseph added were put in the middle of Luke's quotation of Isaiah, it can

Parallels of the Scriptural Record
Isaiah 36–39; 2 Kings 18–21; 2 Chronicles 32–33

Isaiah	2 Kings	2 Chronicles	Isaiah	2 Kings	2 Chronicles
36:2	18:17	32:9	37:28	19:27	
36:3	18:18	32:10	37:29	19:28	
36:4	18:19	32:11	37:30	19:29	
36:5	18:20		37:31	19:30	
36:6	18:21		37:32	19:31	
36:7	18:22	32:11–12	37:33	19:32	
36:8	18:23		37:34	19:33	
36:9	18:24		37:35	19:34	
36:10	18:25		37:36	19:35	32:21
36:11	18:26		37:37	19:36	32:21
36:12	18:27		37:38	19:37	
36:13	18:28	32:18			32:22–23
36:14	18:29		38:1	20:1	32:24
36:15	18:30	32:12	38:2	20:2	32:24
36:16	18:31	32:11–32:19	38:3	20:3	
36:17–18	18:32		38:4	20:4	
36:18	18:33	32:13	38:5	20:5	
36:19	18:34			20:5	
36:20	18:35	32:14	38:5	20:6	
36:21	18:36		38:6	20:6	
36:22	18:37			20:6	
		32:15–17		20:8	32:24
37:1	19:1		38:7	20:9	
37:2	19:2		38:8	20:9	
37:3	19:3	32:20		20:10	
37:4	19:4		38:8	20:11	32:25
37:5	19:5		38:9–20		32:26
37:6	19:6		38:21	20:7	
37:7	19:7		38:22	20:8	
37:8	19:8				32:27–29
37:9	19:9		39:1	20:12	32:31
37:10	19:10		39:2	20:13	
37:11	19:11		39:3	20:14	
37:12	19:12		39:4	20:15	
37:13	19:13		39:5	20:16	
37:14	19:14		39:6	20:17	
37:15–16	19:15		39:7	20:18	
37:17	19:16		39:8	20:19	
37:18	19:17				
37:19	19:18				
37:20	19:19				
37:21	19:20				
37:22	19:21				
37:23	19:22				
37:24	19:23				
37:25	19:24				
37:26	19:25				
37:27	19:26				

be assumed they were part of Isaiah's original text. They are therefore cited here (they were inserted between verses 3 and 4 of Luke).

"For behold, and lo, he shall come, as it is written in the book of the prophets, to take away the sins of the world, and to bring salvation unto the heathen nations, to gather together those who are lost, who are of the sheepfold of Israel;

"Yea, even the dispersed and afflicted; and also to prepare the way, and make possible the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles;

"And to be a light unto all who sit in darkness, unto the uttermost parts of the earth; to bring to pass the resurrection from the dead, and to ascend up on high, to dwell on the right hand of the Father,

"Until the fulness of time, and the law and the testimony shall be sealed, and the keys of the kingdom shall be delivered up again unto the Father;

"To administer justice unto all; to come down in judgment upon all, and to convince all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds, which they have committed; and all this in the day that he shall come." (JST, Luke 3:5-9.)

Clearly John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy twice. But there was to be yet another fulfillment of the prophecy.

Another forerunner who prepared for Christ's coming was the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Joseph Fielding Smith observed that "Malachi [as does Isaiah] speaks of the Lord sending his messenger to prepare the way before him, and while that does have reference to the coming of John the Baptist, it is one of those prophecies in the scriptures that has a double fulfillment. It has reference also to the coming of the Prophet Joseph Smith, because that messenger which was to come and prepare the way before him, was to come in this day. I am going to take just a moment for that because it is important, and I will show you when this messenger was to deliver his message. . . .

"The Lord declared, through one of his prophets, that before his second coming a messenger should be sent to prepare the way and make it straight. You may apply this to John if you will, and it is true. John, the messenger who came to prepare the way before the Lord in the former dispensation, also came in this dispensation as a messenger to Joseph Smith; so it applies, if you wish to apply it so, to John who came as a messenger to prepare the way before the Lord.

"But I go farther and maintain that Joseph Smith was the messenger whom the Lord sent to prepare the way before him. He came, and under direction of holy messengers laid the foundation for the kingdom of God and of this marvelous work and a wonder that the world might be prepared for the coming of the Lord." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:193-95.)

(16-6) Isaiah 40:4. Earthquakes Will Change the Face of the Land

President Joseph Fielding Smith declared that before the Second Coming of the Lord, there will be an earthquake that will be so destructive that mountains will be made low, valleys will be elevated, and rough places made as a plain. It will be so violent that the sun will be darkened and the moon will be turned to blood. The waters will be driven back into the north countries and the lands joined as they were before the days of



All flesh is as grass.

Peleg. (See *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:85; 2:317; D&C 49:23; 88:87; 109:74; 133:17-25, 44; Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 38:20; Revelation 16:15-20.)

(16-7) Isaiah 40:6-8. What Does "All Flesh Is Grass" Mean?

The metaphors the prophets drew from the land of Canaan had poignant spiritual messages. The spring rains, called the "latter rains" (Jeremiah 3:3), fall through April and May. During these rains the grass springs up in Israel as a spontaneous, green carpet over the land in such abundance and splendor that it seems it could never fail. Within a very short time the rains end, however, and the fierce summer heat turns the grass brown almost overnight. It simply seems to disappear across the barren hills. The withered, lifeless grass was the metaphor Isaiah chose to describe the wicked whose ways seem to be so attractive to the world but cannot endure long. Only those sanctified of the Lord will withstand the glory of His coming, for the wicked will be as the dried grass before a blazing fire. (Compare D&C 101:24-25.)

(16-8) Isaiah 40:9. Who Was Called "Zion" in the High Mountain?

Elder Orson Pratt said that this scripture was a prophecy concerning the Lord's Zion that would be built up upon the earth before He comes in His glory. The prophecy indicated that "the people called Zion" would go to the high mountain territory (the mountain valleys of Utah and nearby areas). He further stated that Joseph Smith had also predicted the same thing and concluded: "Thus the prophecy was uttered—thus it has been fulfilled." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 15:48.)

(16-9) Isaiah 40:10–11. Work Preparatory to His Coming

These verses clearly speak of the preparatory activity required before the Lord comes again. Elder Levi Edgar Young said:

“I sincerely believe that these days are bringing us closer and closer to God. . . .

“May we become the pure in heart and see God,” which is the happy lot of those who are “wise and have received the truth, and have taken the holy Spirit for their guide,” for they are the ones who shall not be deceived and shall “abide the day.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1933, p. 121; see also D&C 45:57.)

(16-10) Isaiah 40:12–31. What Is the Significance of “Measured” Waters and “Comprehended” Dust?

Verse 12 is Isaiah’s poetic way of saying that God knows the world so intimately that He knows even the measure of the waters of the ocean and the dust of the earth. (See Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:141.)

The other verses emphasize through the impressive use of contrasts the greatness of God and the nothingness of mortal nations and the gods they worship.

(16-11) Isaiah 40:28. Isaiah Identified One of the Names of God

“In the same sense in which one of the Lord’s names is *Endless* and another *Eternal*, so *Everlasting* is also an appellation of Deity. (Moses 1:3; 7:35; D. & C. 19:10.) He is called the *Everlasting God* (Gen. 21:33; Isa. 9:6; 40:28; Jer. 10:10; Rom. 16:26; D. & C. 133:34), signifying that he endures forever, for ‘his years never fail.’ (D. & C. 76:4.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 243.)

(16-12) Isaiah 40:31. What Did Isaiah See as the Reward of Those Who “Wait upon the Lord”?

Speaking of the ultimate power given to those who wait upon the Lord, whose strength “the Lord shall renew,” the prophet Isaiah said they shall “mount up with wings as eagles” (Isaiah 40:31). Elder Orson Pratt suggested that those who have been confined to the mortal sphere and its laws may be renewed with the light of truth and be enabled to move from place to place at accelerated velocity, even with the speed of light. (See *Journal of Discourses*, 3:104.)

The greater promise reserved for those who have been true and faithful in keeping the commandments by waiting upon the Lord is found in their being able to “run and not be weary” and to “walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31; compare D&C 89:18–21.)

Since everyone who runs far enough experiences some weariness, and anyone who walks long enough feels at least somewhat faint, it is evident that these promises apply also to the things of the Spirit, for the Lord “fainteth not, neither is weary” (Isaiah 40:28).

While there are those who “run” without being sent (see Jeremiah 23:21), the Lord’s servants are commissioned to run His errand. One called by the Lord to serve is engaged in a contest in which “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Ecclesiastes 9:11); but the reward is to those who “endure to the end” (Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13).

To have the strength to run the race of life without becoming weary is a valuable promise; to be able to journey with safety and not faint or fall away from the truth is a great blessing. What consolation and encouragement it is to those who wait upon the Lord to be able to serve mightily and not weary of it, to walk with certainty and not fall away.

(16-13) Isaiah 41–44. A Key to Understanding

Isaiah 40–66 is prophetic. Although reference is made to Isaiah’s immediate future, the burden of his prophecy is for the latter days. Most Bible scholars feel that these chapters are historical and that they were written by others after Judah was exiled to Babylon. Yet Book of Mormon prophets quote parts or all of Isaiah 48–53, indicating these chapters must have been included on the Brass Plates before the Babylonian exile. Christ told the Nephites that Isaiah “spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles” (3 Nephi 23:2). Isaiah’s prophecies concerning Israel’s destiny are more reliable than the limited perspective of historians.

(16-14) Isaiah 41:1, 5. What Are the “Isles” Seen by Isaiah?

From time to time the Lord has led away remnants of Israel to “isles” from which He will eventually gather them before the Second Coming. The Americas are one of these isles. (See 2 Nephi 10:20–21; compare 1 Nephi 19:10, 16; 21:8; 22:3–4; 2 Nephi 10:8.) A study of these references reveals that these “isles” were not known by others (see especially 1 Nephi 22:3–4). Isaiah alluded to scattered Israel when he used the metaphor “isles” and suggested that there, in the isles, they would learn to trust Him and wait upon His word and be renewed together. All of this would come near the time of the harvest. (See Isaiah 24:15; 41:1–5; 49:1; 51:5; 60:9.) Then scattered Israel will learn a new song, the song of the redeemed, as they are gathered into the kingdom (see also Isaiah 42:4, 10; Revelation 14:1–3).



John the Revelator has a part in the return of the ten tribes.

(16-15) Isaiah 41:2. Who Is the Righteous Man from the East?

John saw a vision similar to Isaiah's and spoke of this righteous man as an "angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God" (Revelation 7:2). The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that this angel of the east was "Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things" (D&C 77:9).

Of this "angel," Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: "Who has restored all things? Was it one man? Certainly not. Many angelic ministrants have been sent from the courts of glory to confer keys and powers, to commit their dispensations and glories again to men on earth. At least the following have come: Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James and John, Moses, Elijah, Elias, Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael. (D. & C. 13; 110; 128:19–21.) Since it is apparent that no one messenger has carried the whole burden of the restoration, but rather that each has come with a specific endowment from on high, it becomes clear that *Elias is a composite personage. The expression must be understood to be a name and a title for those whose mission it was to commit keys and powers to men in this final dispensation. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 170–174.)*" (Mormon Doctrine, p. 221.)

Thus the "man from the east" seems to mean angels of the Restoration, who are grouped together under the composite title of Elias.

(16-16) Isaiah 41:21–29. The Wisdom of the Wicked Is Futile

The Lord challenged the wisest of the world to produce the smallest insight into the future (see vv. 21–23) and reminded them that their works are "nothing" (v. 24) and that in the end their values "are all vanity" and will only bring "confusion" (v. 29).

(16-17) Isaiah 42:1–4. Who Is the Servant?

Only one servant was given power of judgment (see v. 1; compare Romans 14:10; 2 Nephi 9:41), and that is He upon whose law the isles shall wait (see Isaiah 42:4; 51:5; 60:9), the Mediator of Israel and the Savior of the Gentiles. He did not cry or lift up His voice in the streets, that is, raise a great tumult and boast in His own ways. Matthew cited this passage in Isaiah after noting that the Savior charged the multitudes not to make His healings known (see Matthew 12:15–21), for His was not an earthly kingdom wherein His voice and His works and wonders were to be heralded abroad; rather, His was a heavenly kingdom (see John 18:33–37). Thus, He withdrew from multitudes and avoided the honors of men, and He ministered with meekness and gentleness. The spirit of judgment was to be withheld until the Day of Judgment, at which time Christ will claim victory as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15).

The imagery of the bruised reed and smoking flax (see v. 3) means that even though He comes in judgment, it is not to destroy souls but to save them. The phrase "smoking flax" was translated by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch as a "glimmering wick." They explained its use as follows: "In the statement that in such a case as this He does not completely break or extinguish, there is more implied than is really expressed. Not only will He not destroy the life that is dying out, but



The Lord opens the eyes of those who are spiritually blind.

He will actually save it; His course is not to destroy, but to save." (Commentary on the Old Testament, 7:2:176.)

The phrase "he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" that immediately follows the reference to the reed and the flax was interpreted by Keil and Delitzsch "as denoting such a knowledge, and acknowledgment of the true facts in the complicated affairs of men, as will promote both equity and kindness" (Commentary, 7:2:176).

(16-18) Isaiah 42:5–16. Who Is the Light That Opens the Eyes of the Blind?

Isaiah's frame of reference shifts from the Father's relationship with His Son to the Savior's relationship with covenant Israel, particularly with those who would respond to the gospel invitation and be qualified to sing the song of the exalted (both living and dead). (Compare Isaiah 49:7–12; 1 Nephi 21:7–12; Revelation 14:1–3; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:269–70; 1 Peter 3:18–21; 4:6; John 5:28.) When mortals who are blind because they lack gospel light embrace the gospel, they are as prisoners set free.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was speaking of the crucified Christ when he said: "Here then we have an account of our Savior preaching to the spirits in prison, to spirits that had been imprisoned from the days of Noah; and what did He preach to them? That they were to stay there? Certainly not! Let His own declaration testify. [Luke 4:18; Isaiah 42:7] It is very evident from this that He not only went to preach to them, but to deliver, or bring them out of the prison house. . . . Thus we find that God will deal with all the human family equally, and that as the antediluvians [those who lived before the Flood] had their day of visitation, so will those characters referred to by Isaiah, have their time of visitation and deliverance, after having been many days in prison." (*History of the Church*, 4:596–97.)

Everything centers in the Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the light of the world and "of the gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). His hand is extended to strengthen, support, and protect covenant Israel; but that is not all. Every covenant person becomes a light to the world by holding up the light of the Savior through faithfully living His commandments (see 3 Nephi 18:24; see also Acts 26:17–18).

(16-19) Isaiah 42:9–16. The Restoration of the Gospel in the Latter Days Foretold

The prophet Isaiah introduced the vision of the restoration of the gospel in the latter days by explaining that the truths and the keys of former days were to be restored. He also observed the restoration of new keys in the dispensation of the fulness of times (see v. 9). Using the metaphor of childbirth he described the restoration of the earthly kingdom following a long period of apostasy, during which the heavens had been sealed (see v. 14; compare Revelation 12:1–2, 13, 17). The Church will be restored in the last days, before the destruction that will make the mountains as plains and dry up the waters, and before the return of the scattered tribes of Israel, when they will come on paths they have not known, and the light of the gospel will dispel the darkness they have so long endured (see Isaiah 42:15–16). Isaiah reiterated the Lord’s promise that the restored gospel would not be taken again from the earth and that the Lord will not forsake His own. (See v. 16; compare Isaiah 2:2–3; 11:11–16; 29:14–15, 18–19; Daniel 2:44–45; Joel 2:25–29.)

(16-20) Isaiah 42:10. What Is the “New Song”?

Isaiah recorded the singing of the “new song” after he recorded the restoration of the gospel. The song is unique in that only those who are sanctified are worthy to sing it (compare Revelation 14:1–3). The same spirit is reflected in Doctrine and Covenants 84:98–102. In another instance, the song is simply called the “song of the Lamb” (D&C 133:56–57).

(16-21) Isaiah 42:17–25. Are the Servants of the Lord Blind?

Isaiah was caught up in the majesty of his latter-day prophecy; however, at this point he digressed to expound upon the status of Israel between the day of his prophecy and the day of its fulfillment. He gave a clear reminder that all those, including wayward Israel, who pay homage at the feet of idols are deaf and blind to the message and light of the gospel (see vv. 17–18). The Prophet Joseph Smith clarified verses 19–22 as follows:

“For I will send my servant unto you who are blind; yea, a messenger to open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf;

“And they shall be made perfect notwithstanding their blindness, if they will hearken unto the messenger, the Lord’s servant.

“Thou art a people, seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears to hear, but thou hearest not.

“The Lord is not well pleased with such a people, but for his righteousness’ sake he will magnify the law and make it honorable.

“Thou art a people robbed and spoiled; thine enemies, all of them, have snared thee in holes, and they have hid thee in prison houses; they have taken thee for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.” (JST, Isaiah 42:19–23.)

Clearly, it is not the servant who is blind, but scattered Israel, who have adopted the idols of their neighbors.

(16-22) Isaiah 43–47. The Lord Will Save Israel and Destroy Babylon

In chapters 43–44 Isaiah assured Israel that the Lord alone is in control and has the power to save her, that He is her Redeemer and will blot out her sins. Then speaking prophetically but in past tense (Isaiah had already seen the redeeming sacrifice of the Lord, although it had not yet occurred), he declared that the Atonement had been made, and that Israel’s redemption was predicted only upon her return to Him. (See Isaiah 44:21–22.)

Chapter 45 reveals how and by whom the Lord will redeem Judah, a remnant of Israel. Chapter 46 deplors idols and states that the idol gods themselves are in captivity. Chapter 47 reveals the dramatic final destruction of temporal and spiritual Babylon.

(16-23) Isaiah 43:1–7. A Shadow and a Type for One Who Is Called, Before He May Be Owned by the Lord

In these verses, as Isaiah promised the eventual restoration and regathering of Israel, he compared it to a person’s walking on a perilous journey where fire and flood threaten. The metaphor is as valid for an individual as it is for the house of Israel. The Lord called her by name, for *Israel* is the name given her by covenant and symbolizes the fact that she would eventually be preserved and belong to Him (see Genesis 32:28–30). He then promised that as she passed through the perils of her journey back He would be with her. Neither waters nor flood nor the fires of trial and persecution could take away His protection of His chosen people. There may also be a spiritual symbolism in these promises. When Israel escaped from Egypt, she passed through the water (the Red Sea) and was overshadowed with fire, the pillar of fire, and smoke (see Exodus 13:21–22; 14:21–22). Paul saw these phenomena as types or symbols of the baptism of water and the Holy Ghost (see 1 Corinthians 10:1–4). Here Isaiah showed Israel being gathered. One is gathered into the fold by becoming baptized; thus, the symbolism is both spiritually and temporally significant.

(16-24) Isaiah 43:4–10. The Gathering of Israel Is a Universal Event

Isaiah used east, west, north, and south (see vv. 5–6) to symbolize “all the nations” (v. 9) throughout the world to which Israel was scattered and from which she will be gathered. The promised gathering is to be brought about in the last days by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (See Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:228; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:181–82.)

In connection with this promise, read Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 42:17–25, concerning the servant who sees and hears and will open the eyes and ears of those who will be gathered.

(16-25) Isaiah 43:13. What Was Meant by the Words “Let It”?

According to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the whole phrase should read: “I will work, and who shall hinder it?” (JST, Isaiah 43:13).

(16-26) Isaiah 43:14–17. For Her Own Good, Israel Was Delivered into Bondage

The Lord sent Israel into Babylonian bondage for a wise cause. It is likely that the purpose in her captivity was at least twofold: to humble proud and wicked Israel, and to have indisputable cause for destroying Babylon and showing the world that this attractive “daughter of the Chaldeans” was a poor one to emulate, for she would be no more (see Isaiah 47:1–6). And all of this would be as sure as the destruction of the Egyptians in the days of Moses, which had become legendary.

(16-27) Isaiah 43:18–21. What Was Meant by “a New Thing” in the Wilderness?

After recalling the destruction of the Egyptians before his day (see v. 3), and predicting the destruction of Babylon in his own future (see vv. 14–17), Isaiah directed the reader’s attention away from all of that, saying “remember ye not the former things” (v. 18), and reminded the reader that he was going to speak of a “new thing” (v. 19). Thus casting his mind to another prophetic vision, Isaiah spoke of a miraculous time when the destruction would be reversed: the desert would “blossom as the rose” (Isaiah 35:1), in contrast to the flower of Babylon becoming a desert. In a conference talk given when he was Presiding Bishop, LeGrand Richards described a literal fulfillment of Isaiah’s words:

“Isaiah said: ‘Behold, I will do a new thing,’ and as far as my understanding of this scripture is concerned, that new thing was the great principle of irrigation. It is true the Saints had to make the canals, they had to make the ditches, they had to put in the dams, but the land might have remained arid had not the Lord put into their minds the inspiration to do this very thing, and that is what Isaiah saw that the Lord would do. He said: [Isaiah 43:19–20].

“If you want to see the rivers in the desert, just go up through Idaho and see the great canals that come out of the Snake River. They are greater than many of the rivers of the land. [Isaiah 43:20–21; 41:18, 20.]

“So as you brethren gather in your crops by day in the harvest time, remember that it was the Lord God of Israel who did this new thing in this great wilderness to make it to prosper as a rose and to be a land that would attract the attention of all the world.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1948, pp. 44–45.)

After his prophetic interlude, Isaiah dropped back to historical Israel (see Isaiah 43:22–28), with the single reminder in verse 25 of a future forgiveness—a ray of hope for better things.

(16-28) Isaiah 44:1–2. What Was Meant by the Term *Jesurun*?

Isaiah began chapter 44 in the same spirit as he began chapter 43, by reminding Israel that they were the covenant people of the Lord. Jacob was the father of Israel. The Lord renewed the covenant He had made with Abraham with Jacob and changed his name to Israel because of his righteousness (Gen. 35:9–11). It is fitting, therefore, that the Lord also called this faithful servant “Jesurun,” (or Jeshurun), which is the Hebrew for *upright* or *righteous*. (See James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, no. 3484 in “Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary”; McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 323.)



The right hand is the covenant hand.

(16-29) Isaiah 44:5–20. “Is There Not a Lie in My Right Hand?”

With great irony, Isaiah brought out the inconsistency of those who work wood and metal, use it for firewood and other mundane things, but fashion idols from the same material and then expect those idols to show forth great power and answer their prayers. Such idolatry precipitates in man “a deceived heart” that has “turned him aside” (v. 20), or in other words, that has such a negative effect as to cause him to lose his soul. Though this principle is true, and obvious to the spiritually alert, the idolater cannot recognize nor admit that there is “a lie in [his] right hand” (v. 20). This tragic phrase reflects the dire consequences for one who lives a lie. Since the right hand is the covenant hand (see Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:107–8), this phrase implies that those who continue to seek treasures, or to worship false gods, become blinded to the truth and cannot recognize that their covenants are broken and become to them as lies that will condemn them at the last day.

(16-30) Isaiah 44:21–28; 45:1–14. The Lord Prophesied of Cyrus, King of Persia

At the time Isaiah prophesied, Babylon had not yet come to power, and more than a hundred years would pass before Babylon would carry Judah into captivity. But of course, the calendar in no way affects a prophet’s vision. After recording numerous prophecies of Judah’s coming destruction and their fall to Babylon, Isaiah revealed the Lord’s plan for Judah’s restoration to their homeland under a king called Cyrus. At the time Isaiah spoke his name, Cyrus was still in the premortal existence.

"Numerous commentators deny that Isaiah could foresee Cyrus so clearly as to be able to call him by name. They commonly claim, therefore, that this part of Isaiah was written by someone during the Exile and after Cyrus had given Israel help. . . .—in other words, after the event. Nevertheless, it is of great interest to find that the Jewish historian Josephus accepted Isaiah's words and even quotes letters from Cyrus confirming the prophet's predictions. Part of the account of Josephus is quoted herewith:

"... he (God) stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia:—

"Thus saith Cyrus the king.—Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea."

"This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision:—

"My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple."

"This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and, besides that, beasts for their sacrifices." (*Antiq.* XI, 1, 2)" (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 107–8.)

(16-31) Isaiah 45:1–4. How Could Cyrus, a Persian King, Be Called the Lord's "Anointed"?

Alfred Martin, in his work on Isaiah, gave an excellent answer to this question: "Cyrus is the only Gentile king who is called God's 'anointed.' Since this is the translation of the Hebrew word which we spell in English as *Messiah*, Cyrus is in a sense a type of the Anointed One, the Lord Jesus Christ. Typology is often misunderstood and abused. A type is a divinely appointed prophetic symbol, usually of Christ. When a person or a thing is called a type, that does not alter its literal meaning or deny its historical reality. Cyrus was a Persian king, and we have no evidence that he ever really knew the true God, although the Persian religion was relatively free from the gross idolatries of the Babylonians. Consequently when it is asserted that Cyrus is a type of Christ, it is not said that he was like the Lord Jesus Christ in every respect. The only intended resemblance is in the fact that Cyrus was the anointed one who delivered the people of Israel from their captivity. As such he points us to the greater Anointed One who saves His people from their sins." (*Isaiah, the Salvation of Jehovah*, pp. 77–78.)

(16-32) Isaiah 45:3. Did Cyrus Gain Riches from Conquering Babylon?

When Cyrus conquered in Asia, he carried off "gold and silver estimated by weight in this account, being converted into pounds sterling, amount to *one hundred and twenty-six millions two hundred and twenty-four thousand pounds*" (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:178).

(16-33) Isaiah 45:7. Does the Lord Create Evil?

In the first part of this verse Isaiah laid out contrasts:

"I form the light, and create darkness"

"I make peace, and create evil"

Since the opposite of peace is sorrow or trouble, the translation from the New American Catholic Bible makes better sense: "I form the light, and create the darkness, I make well-being and create woe." The idea is that the Lord is the author of peace, but that He also sends judgments upon the wicked who are ripe in iniquity. Therefore, even when the wicked are punished by the wicked (see Mormon 4:5), it is under the direction of the Lord.

(16-34) Isaiah 45:8. How Do the Heavens "Drop Down" and the Skies "Pour Down Righteousness"?

There is little doubt that Isaiah was referring to the same thing that is recorded in Psalm 85:11: "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Isaiah saw the earth open and a message of salvation brought forth—a reference to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon from the buried Nephite record. (Compare Ezekiel 37:15–20; see also James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, pp. 275–76; McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 99; Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:287–88.)

This latter-day event illustrates that the day truly cannot say to its maker, "What makest thou?" (v. 9). The many men who conspired against Joseph Smith were not reviling merely a man but were reviling their own maker, whose servant that man was.

(16-35) Isaiah 45:12. What Is the Lord's and What Is Man's Own?

People and organizations often deal with the things of the earth in terms of ownership. "I own a large home," one might say, or "I built this business up through my own labors; therefore it is mine." If these statements were really true, then one could understand their reluctance to share it with others or to pay the Lord His required tenth. But people cannot speak of ownership. Through Isaiah, the Lord reminded Israel that He is the creator of the earth and therefore only He can properly refer to it in terms of ownership. In language similar to Isaiah's, the Lord reminded the Latter-day Saints that He created the earth and that we are only stewards over His property (see D&C 104:13–14, 54–57). Then He gave this reminder: "And let not any among you say that it is his own; for it shall not be called his, nor any part of it" (D&C 104:70).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball asked some pointed questions concerning this subject:

“Do you feel generous when you pay your tithes? Boastful when the amount is large? Has the child been generous to his parents when he washes the car, makes his bed? Are you liberal when you pay your rent, or pay off notes at banks? You are not generous, liberal, but merely honest when you pay your tithes.” [Isaiah 45:12.]

“Perhaps your attitudes are the product of your misconceptions.

“Would you steal a dollar from your friend? A tire from your neighbor’s car? Would you borrow a widow’s insurance money with no intent to pay? Do you rob banks? You are shocked at such suggestions. Then, would you rob your God, your Lord, who has made such generous arrangements with you?

“Do you have a right to appropriate the funds of your employer with which to pay your debts, to buy a car, to clothe your family, to feed your children, to build your home?

“Would you take from your neighbor’s funds to send your children to college, or on a mission? Would you help relatives or friends with funds not your own? Some people get their standards mixed, their ideals out of line. . . . Would you supply gifts to the poor with someone else’s money? The Lord’s money?” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1968, p. 77.)

Honestly answering these questions may reveal to modern Saints how dangerously close they are to walking the same foolish path chosen by ancient Israel.

(16-36) Isaiah 45:15–25. The God of Israel Is the Lord, the Savior Jesus Christ

This is one of the primary testimonies of Isaiah. Many lose sight of the fact that the God of the Old Testament was the premortal Jesus. Often they speak of the theology of the Old Testament as being significantly different from that of the New Testament. Or they talk about how the concept of God mellowed as people became more civilized and sophisticated. The blind refuse to see, for it is not just modern revelation that teaches Jehovah is Christ. Both Old and New Testament writers testified of it again and again, and none did it more frequently or more powerfully than did Isaiah.



Sacrifices were symbolic reminders of Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament.

In this chapter the identity of the God of the Old Testament is clearly revealed. Consider the witnesses here given:

1. He is the Messiah, the Savior of the world (see v. 15).
2. He shall save Israel with an everlasting salvation (see v. 17).
3. He is the Creator (see v. 18).
4. He is just and is mighty to save (see v. 21).
5. There is no other name given by which we may be saved (see vv. 21–22).
6. His words are truth and righteousness (see v. 23).
7. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ (see v. 23; compare Romans 14:11; see also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:20).
8. He is the Mediator for all the seed of Israel (see v. 24).

(16-37) Isaiah 45:23. What Does It Mean to Say “Every Knee Shall Bow, Every Tongue Swear”?

President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“I want to call attention to something that is stated frequently in the scriptures, and I think very often misunderstood, and that is the statement that, ‘every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess.’ [Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:10–11; Philippians 2:9–11; D&C 76:110; 88:104] I wonder how many of us have an idea that if a knee bows and a tongue confesses, that is a sign of forgiveness of sin and freedom from sin, and that the candidate is prepared for exaltation? If you do, you make a mistake. It does not mean that at all.

“The time will come when ‘every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess,’ and yet the vast majority of mankind will go into the celestial kingdom eternally. Let me read these verses: ‘The time shall come when all shall see the salvation of the Lord; when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye and shall confess before God that his judgments are just.’ [Mosiah 16:1–4.]

“It is a wonderful thing when men reach the stage when they will be willing to confess that the judgments against them are just, and they will bow the knee and will understand ‘eye to eye.’” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:30.)

Isaiah’s intent was to assure all the world, both the wicked and the righteous, that Jesus Christ is the God of Israel and that one day all will be constrained to recognize that fact, whether or not they are or have been His disciples.

(16-38) Isaiah 46. Idols Are Idols, but Christ Is God

The poetic refrain of this chapter is at once familiar and new. It is a good example of how the Eastern mind is taught. The same theme is repeated again and again with only slight variations. In this manner the listener is driven to the inescapable conclusion of the teacher. Isaiah was a master of the technique. Isaiah enumerated the ways the Lord had been solicitous of Israel and has left her with only one conclusion: “I am God, and there is none like me” (v. 9).

(16-39) Isaiah 46:11. What Was the “Ravenous Bird from the East”?

This metaphor describes Cyrus, who was prophetically destined to humble Babylon swiftly and decisively (see Isaiah 46:11a). This is a fitting insertion

Babylon of the Chaldees

Isaiah 47:5

Called “the lady of kingdoms.”

Babylon, or Spiritual Wickedness

As society is attracted to a beautiful woman, so the children of men are attracted to the glitter and power of spiritual Babylon.

Isaiah 47:6

Showed no mercy to covenant Israel, but laid great burdens upon her.

Though the wickedness of Babylon may appear attractive because it is easy or pleasurable, it only enslaves its subjects.

Isaiah 47:7

Boasted of being indestructible, but failed to see the judgment that would finally destroy her.

In blindness, spiritual Babylon wreaks havoc upon the world, failing to see the self-destructive nature of her acts.

Isaiah 47:8

Declared her pleasures to be the end and fulfillment of life’s dream, not merely the means to it.

The Babylon of the world is enthroned triumphantly when men worship the lusts of the flesh. She becomes a counterfeit god. “They deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and . . . say unto the people . . . there is no God” (2 Nephi 28:5), and “there is no hell”; thus the devil “grasps them with his awful chains from whence there is no deliverance” (2 Nephi 28:22).

Isaiah 47:10

Through Babylon’s own wicked power subjected men to her will.

The Babylon of the world, through wicked covenants and deeds, binds a man’s loyalty to the prince of darkness by the promise of secret gain (see Helaman 6:16–25).

Isaiah 47:10

So great had this “lady of the kingdoms” become that her rulers gloried in the thought that they were the center of knowledge and wisdom and forced their subjects to kneel to the king, and not to God (see Daniel 3:1–6; 6:1–7).

The Babylon of the world assumes expertise in all knowledge and decrees that men should worship at her door. As men embrace this hellish doctrine, they begin to believe that they *know* where others do not, and they become self-appointed gods, even to the giving and taking of life (compare the attitude of 2 Nephi 9:20). “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; emphasis added.)

and serves as a prelude to chapter 47, where Babylon’s destruction is again shown forth.

(16-40) Isaiah 47. Spiritual Babylon Is the Perverted Counterfeit of Jehovah

This chapter demonstrates as well as any scripture in the Old Testament the extent to which Satan has gone to achieve his eternal lie. From the beginning Lucifer said in his heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13–14). As Zion is the spiritual offspring of the Lord Jesus Christ, so Babylon is the evil offspring of Lucifer, who fell and became Satan, “the father of all lies” (Moses 4:4). The accompanying chart demonstrates how the Babylon of this world has sought to assume dominion over the children of men.

POINTS TO PONDER**(16-41) “Go Ye out from Babylon”**

Though the claim to power and greatness may be made boldly by the world and made so convincingly that multitudes may follow, it does *not* give the boaster the rights he claims. For every offense there is a punishment, and whether we speak of the physical Babylons of the world, which have continually oppressed men under dictatorial force, or of the spiritual Babylon of the world, which just as literally enslaves her disciples, it is the same. Babylon will be destroyed. Therefore, the Lord through His prophets warns His people: “Go ye out . . . from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon” (D&C 133:14). Note Isaiah’s warnings: Babylon will be brought down to the dust (see Isaiah 47:1). She will become damned as a slave of her own evil nature (see Isaiah 47:2–3). She will fall from her favored place in

the world (see Isaiah 47:5). She will be denied the very thing she boasted of possessing: children (subjects) and marriage (that which saved a woman from disgrace in a society) (see Isaiah 47:9). She will be destroyed by sources she knows not of (see Isaiah 47:11). And she will be cleansed from the earth even as by fire (see Isaiah 47:14).

Truly, Isaiah could say as did Alma, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Your experience in studying these chapters of Isaiah should have been significant, for the words of Isaiah

were written to teach the great principle that safety comes in following Messiah, the living God of heaven and earth. From the perspective of history, it is easy for people in our day to say, "O, those foolish Israelites! Why couldn't they see?" But all the while they say that, they may themselves be feasting at the tables of Babylon, blind to the destruction that awaits her and those who serve her.

That is the message of Isaiah. It is just as pertinent for us today as it was for ancient Israel.



The Gathering of Israel and the Coming of the Messiah

(17-1) Introduction

Nephi loved to quote Isaiah. Of the fifty-five chapters in his books, nineteen are from Isaiah, and he quoted parts of other chapters of Isaiah as well. Small wonder, then, that Nephi, rather than always mentioning Isaiah by name, referred to him simply as “the prophet” (see 1 Nephi 19:24; 22:1–2; 2 Nephi 6:12, 14). He explained that he read Isaiah to his people so that he “might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer” (1 Nephi 19:23).

Isaiah 48–54 includes some of Isaiah’s greatest work. Six of the seven chapters, slightly changed in some instances, are found in the Book of Mormon; the other chapter, chapter 52, is scattered throughout the sacred record. The Book of Mormon is, therefore, our greatest help in understanding this part of Isaiah’s written work.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Isaiah 48–54. Refer to Enrichment E throughout your study of the book of Isaiah. Enrichment F will provide an overview of the historical setting of the prophet Isaiah’s ministry.

2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 48–54

(17-2) Isaiah 48:1–11. “Hear Ye This, O House of Jacob”

Isaiah 48 is the first chapter of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon and is found there as 1 Nephi 20. Every verse in the Book of Mormon reads differently from the way it reads in the King James text, and many of the differences are significant. It can be assumed that the Book of Mormon text is more correct than the King James Version because Nephi lived just a little more than one hundred years after Isaiah’s time and most likely possessed a purer text than the one the King James translators worked from. Carefully compare verses 1–2, 6–7, 11, 14, 16–17, and 22 in both versions to see the significant changes.

(17-3) Isaiah 48:1–8. Judah’s Apostasy

Isaiah 48:1–2 describes Israel’s apostasy from God’s revealed ways. While these chosen people of the Lord

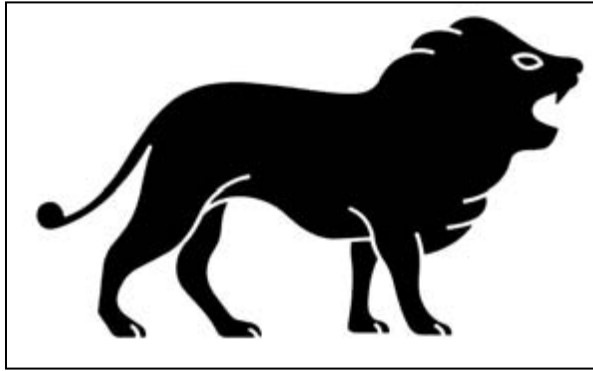
have “come forth out of the waters of . . . baptism” (1 Nephi 20:1; compare Isaiah 48:1–2 with 1 Nephi 20:1–2), “they do not stay themselves upon the . . . Lord” (1 Nephi 20:2). In other words, they have apostatized. For this reason, the Lord elected to demonstrate His powers of omniscience. He had, He told them, “declared . . . things from the beginning,” that is, He spoke of them before their occurrence, and then “shewed them . . . suddenly” by bringing them to pass (Isaiah 48:3). This He had done, He said, lest the apostates should say, “Mine idol hath done them” (v. 5), or “Behold, I knew them” (v. 7), that is to say, “I already knew that.” The Lord then promised to defer His anger but utterly refused to give His glory to false gods or to suffer His name to be polluted (compare v. 11 with 1 Nephi 20:11). Thus the Lord’s purpose for revealing the future unto man is partly made clear: it is the solid proof that He is truly God, for no mute idol could possibly duplicate such a feat.

(17-4) Isaiah 49. Israel Scattered on the Isles of the Sea

Monte S. Nyman observed that “chapter 49 is one of the most important chapters in the whole book of Isaiah, because it also clearly foretells the mission of the Latter-day Saints and the destiny of the land of America in connection with the house of Israel. Nephi interpreted the chapter as foretelling that the land of America would receive some of scattered Israel, while his brother Jacob applied it both to the Jews in Jerusalem and to the Gentiles. Chapter 49 is of such importance that it ought to be studied diligently by every member of the Church.” (*Great Are the Words of Isaiah*, pp. 173–74.)

(17-5) Isaiah 49:1–3. “Thou Art My Servant, O Israel, in Whom I Will Be Glorified”

The entire chapter of Isaiah 49 is quoted in 1 Nephi 21. Half of verse one is missing from the King James text. What was lost from the Bible is the statement that the scattering of Israel was a direct result of the wickedness of the religious leaders. Those on the isles who are invited to hearken are the broken-off or scattered branches of the house of Israel. Nephi wrote that by his time “the more part of all the tribes” of Israel had been “scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea” (1 Nephi 22:4). Moreover it is made clear that the person speaking in these verses, the “me” of Isaiah 49:1–2, was Israel herself. Her mouth was “like a sharp sword” (v. 2) because she possessed the word of God to give to the nations. In many places God’s message is likened to a sword with a keen edge (see Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 1:16; 2:12; D&C 6:2; 33:1). It is double-edged because it cuts regardless of the direction it is moved.



Lion, emblem of the tribe of Judah

But ancient Israel did not spread the word of God as they might have done. Commissioned by the Lord and placed under covenant to bless all nations with the gospel and its priesthood power (see Abraham 2:11), most of Israel refused even to live the teachings of the Lord. Isaiah 49:2–3 may refer, therefore, to latter-day Israel. Nyman’s explanation of why this may be so is important:

“The Lord’s hiding Israel in ‘the shadow of his hand’ is clarified in the Doctrine and Covenants, where the Lord declares that the priesthood holders of this last dispensation are ‘lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God’ (D&C 86:8–9). This description of priesthood bearers as ‘lawful heirs according to the flesh’ is a reference to the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed through the literal seed of his body, who would bear the ministry and the priesthood (see Abraham 2:9–11). The Doctrine and Covenants also identifies latter-day Israel as the ‘seed of Abraham’ (D&C 103:17). The world did not know where scattered Israel was, but the Lord knew and had concealed them in his protective hand.

“The ‘polished shaft’ hidden in the Lord’s quiver may be a direct reference to Joseph Smith. As the ‘choice seer’ of the latter day, he was to be the Lord’s servant in a special sense (see 2 Nephi 3:6; 3 Nephi 21:10). The Prophet Joseph’s description of himself is interesting in this light:

“I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force against religious bigotry, priestcraft, lawyer-craft, doctor-craft, lying editors, suborned judges and jurors, and the authority of perjured executives, backed by mobs, blasphemers, licentious and corrupt men and women—all hell knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty, who will give me dominion over all and every one of them, when their refuge of lies shall fail, and their hiding place shall be destroyed, while these smooth-polished stones with which I come in contact become marred.” (TPJS, p. 304.)

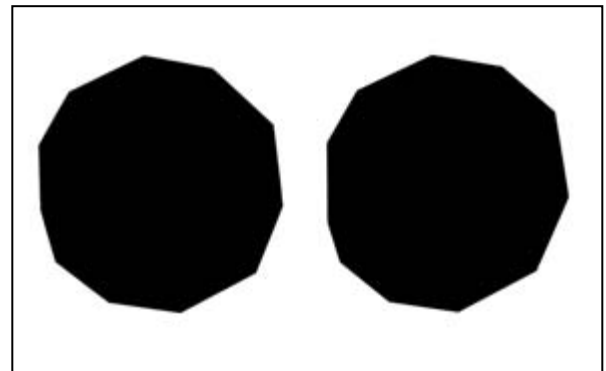
“The arrow shaft is polished that it might fly truer and faster, and the shaft that is polished is generally reserved for one’s most important shot. The last dispensation, when all things are gathered in one, is the Lord’s most important ‘shot,’ so he saved his

‘polished shaft’ for this latter-day work. Joseph was called to give this generation the word of God (see D&C 5:10), which recalls also the sharp sword analogy mentioned in verse 2.” (“Great Are the Words of Isaiah,” pp. 176–77.)

(17-6) Isaiah 49:4–12. Did the Lord Forget Israel, His Chosen People?

The Restoration was a long time in coming. During the years of waiting, dispossessed Israel undoubtedly felt lonely and forsaken by the Lord. Isaiah 49:4–12 shows that loneliness. Verse 4 describes the attitude of one somewhat discouraged, yet not completely so: “I have spent my strength . . . in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord” (Isaiah 49:4).

Nephi spoke of the Jews in their cast-off condition as being “a hiss and a byword and . . . hated among all nations” (1 Nephi 19:14). Isaiah 49:7 describes that condition: men despise and abhor the Lord’s covenant people. But Israel still has hope: “Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I (Israel) be glorious in the eyes of the Lord” (v. 5). Jacob will yet be raised and restored and stand as “a light to the Gentiles” and as a beacon of “salvation unto the end of the earth” (v. 6). “In an acceptable time” God will hear their cry and “give thee [“my servant,” in 1 Nephi 21:8] for a covenant of the people” (Isaiah 49:8). That began with the call of Joseph Smith. Since then, the call has gone forth to others, “to the [spiritual] prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in [spiritual] darkness, Shew yourselves” (v. 9). They shall be fed with the fruits of the gospel—not “hunger nor thirst”—and shall be gathered into the gospel net “from far . . . from the north and from the west” (vv. 10, 12).



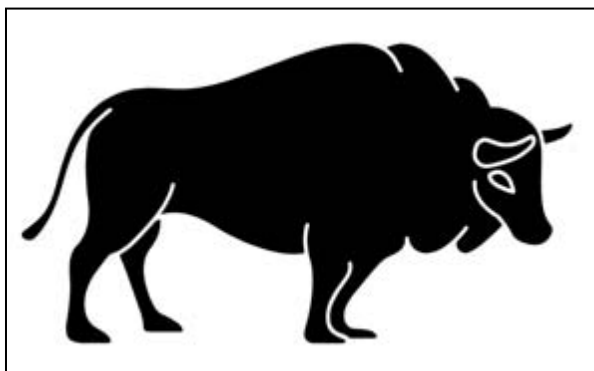
Urim and Thummim, emblem of the tribe of Levi

Nephi interpreted the foregoing verses in 1 Nephi 22. His brothers had asked if Isaiah’s words were to be interpreted spiritually or temporally, and Nephi replied that they were to be interpreted both ways (see 1 Nephi 22:1–3). He then described Israel’s scattering and gathering by the Gentiles. First Nephi 22:8–12 gives a very clear interpretation of Isaiah 49.

(17-7) Isaiah 49:13–17. God Remembers All His Covenants and Promises

Through the restoration in the latter days, God would show that He remembered the covenant He made with father Abraham.

Nephi quotes verse 1 differently than in the King James Version (see 1 Nephi 21:1). The promise says clearly that Zion will be restored and smitten no more. But even so, Zion in her forlorn condition will come to view herself as one “forsaken” of the Lord (Isaiah 49:14), but He will show that He has not forsaken her. Can mothers forget their nursing children when they cry for food? The Lord answered that question emphatically, “Yea, *they* may forget, yet will *I* not forget thee, O house of Israel” (1 Nephi 21:15; emphasis added). All that the Lord has promised will be fulfilled, for His covenant people are so much a part of Him that it is as if their



Wild ox, emblem of the tribe of Ephraim

name has been carved on His hands or on the walls that are continually before His eyes (see Isaiah 49:16). For this reason Israel’s children (or descendants) shall “make haste against [their] destroyers; and they that made thee waste shall go forth” (1 Nephi 21:17; note the addition of the word *against* in the Book of Mormon). The account in Nephi suggests that while God’s ancient people were “wasted” by their enemies, the tables will be turned in the latter days. In speaking of this truth, President Wilford Woodruff said:

“This Zion of the Lord, in all its beauty, power and glory is engraven upon the hands of Almighty God, and it is before his face continually; his decrees are set and no man can turn them aside.

“There never was a dispensation on the earth when prophets and apostles, the inspiration, revelation and power of God, the holy priesthood and the keys of the kingdom were needed more than they are in this generation. There never has been a dispensation when the friends of God and righteousness among the children of men needed more faith in the promises and prophecies than they do to-day; and there certainly never has been a generation of people on the earth that has had a greater work to perform than the inhabitants of the earth in the latter days. That is one reason why this church and kingdom has progressed from its commencement until today, in the midst of all the opposition, oppression and warfare which have been waged against it by men inspired by the evil one. If this had not been the dispensation of the fulness of times—the dispensation in which God has declared that he will establish his kingdom on the earth never more to be thrown down, the inhabitants of the earth would have been enabled to overcome the kingdom and Zion of God in this as well as in any former dispensation. But the set time has come to favor Zion,

and the Lord Almighty has decreed in the heavens that every weapon formed against her shall be broken.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 15:8–9.)

(17-8) Isaiah 49:18–21. Israel’s Latter-day Gathering Shall Be Rapid and Sustained

In Isaiah 49:18–21, the latter-day gathering of Israel is spoken of. In the same way that a new bride adorns herself for her wedding day, so will the Zion of the latter days spiritually adorn those who come to her for blessings. This imagery of Christ as the Bridegroom and His covenant people as His bride is seen elsewhere in the scriptures (see Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14; Matthew 25:1–13; Revelation 19:7; D&C 33:17; 133:10, 19). And just as a bride puts on her finest clothing in preparation for the marriage, so will Israel clothe herself in righteousness in preparation for her coming “marriage” (see Revelation 19:8, where the “clothing” of the bride is described).

So many people will come, both to Zion and the Old Jerusalem, that they will complain that the land is “too strait [narrow] for me: give place to me that I may dwell” (Isaiah 49:20). This overcrowding has occurred wherever the modern gathering has taken place. The Church has a difficult time keeping up with needs for chapels and leadership because of its many converts. Modern Israel has received so many ingatherers that the land is literally “too narrow by reason of the inhabitants” (v. 19). Thus the reaction voiced in verse 21 is quite real: “Who hath begotten me these . . . ; where had they been?” In other words, where in the world did all these people (Israelites) come from?

(17-9) Isaiah 49:22–26. How Will the Gentiles Be Nursing Fathers and Mothers to Israel?

Isaiah 49:22–26 speaks of the day when God’s promises will be fulfilled and of how it will be done. The “how” is made clear in verses 22 and 23. God will set up His “standard,” the gospel, or the new and everlasting covenant (see D&C 66:2), “and they [the Gentiles] shall bring thy [the house of Israel’s] sons in their arms and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers.” (Isaiah 49:22–23.) This prophecy has, as Nephi said, both a temporal and spiritual fulfillment (see 1 Nephi 22:3).

The “when” of the prophecy is now. Converts from throughout the world have joined the Church and then



Olive tree, emblem of the tribe of Asher

have gone throughout the world seeking to reclaim the house of Israel and bring them back to the Lord. President Spencer W. Kimball saw a partial fulfillment of these verses in the Church's modern missionary efforts, specifically with the descendants of Lehi:

"This day of the Lamanite brings opportunity. Millions farm the steep hillsides of Andean ranges and market their produce with llamas and horses and burros. They must have the emancipating gospel. Millions serve in menial labor, eke out bare subsistence from soil and toil. They must hear the compelling truths of the gospel. Millions are tied to reservations, deprived, untrained, and less than they could be. They must have the enlightening gospel. It will break their fetters, stir their ambition, increase their vision, and open new worlds of opportunity to them. Their captivity will be at an end—captivity from misconceptions, illiteracy, superstition, fear. . . .

"The brighter day has dawned. The scattering has been accomplished; the gathering is in process. May the Lord bless us all as we become nursing fathers and mothers (see Isa. 49:23 and 1 Nephi 21:23) unto our Lamanite brethren and hasten the fulfillment of the great promises made to them." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1965, p. 72.)

But there is another side as well. Following the end of World War I, Great Britain was given the mandate over Palestine and began to facilitate the ingathering of the Jews scattered throughout the earth. Other gentile nations, such as the United States, also rallied to assist.

President Joseph Fielding Smith spoke of the role Great Britain played in the establishment of the nation of Israel:

"From the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus until the year 1917, Jerusalem was trodden down of the Gentiles. After General Allenby, at the head of the British forces, captured Palestine, that country became free from the tyranny and oppression of the Turkish empire, and after peace was declared, England sent to Palestine Dr. Herbert Samuel, a Jew, to be governor of the land, and that is the first time in all those years that a Jew has ruled in Palestine. . . .

"We see today a miracle being performed before our eyes. Following the war, which we are pleased to call the first world war, the British Premier issued a proclamation to the Jews telling them they could gather and they could have in Palestine a Jewish Home,



"The gathering is in process."

or state. They began to gather in great numbers. At the beginning of [the 20th] century things in Palestine were in a deplorable condition. They were using wooden plows, water wheel irrigation; they had infested wells and streams. They carried water in skins as of old. Sanitation was deplorable.

"The British government changed all of this, when they obtained the mandate. You see, the mandate of Palestine was given to Great Britain. That nation and other nations spent millions of pounds in rehabilitating that land. The Sea of Galilee is now a great reservoir, and the flood waters from the various streams are being diverted into it.

"Canals have been built for irrigation, and the Jordan has been changed from its natural channel into channels or into canals on each side of the original stream. These irrigate some seven million acres, which could not be under cultivation otherwise. Hydro-electric stations have been built on these streams." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:259–60.)

In 1947 the United Nations voted to partition Palestine and create a Jewish state in the land for the first time in nearly two thousand years. Thus, the Gentiles participated in the fulfillment of this prophecy, although there may yet be future fulfillment.

The "prey" mentioned in Isaiah 49:24 is the house of Israel in her scattered condition. She is "prey" or "captive" because she has been unable throughout the centuries to return to her promised home or to claim her gospel blessings. Until recently many gentile countries would not permit Jewish residents to emigrate, and many still do not permit the gospel to be preached freely in their borders. All of that will change, for "even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered" (v. 25). When Jacob quoted this verse in the Book of Mormon, he added these significant words: "For the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people" (2 Nephi 6:17), and thus, "all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (v. 18). First the Lord predicts it, then He brings it to pass; only a "mighty one" could perform such a task. Nephi made it very clear that all who seek to thwart the Lord in bringing this great thing to pass shall be destroyed, for "they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord" (1 Nephi 22:14).

(17-10) Isaiah 49:26. An Addition to Isaiah from the Book of Mormon

In his work on Isaiah, Nyman noted a significant addition to Isaiah: "As Nephi commented on Isaiah 49 in 1 Nephi 22, he quoted or paraphrased three verses from 'the prophet,' obviously Isaiah. We do not have these verses in the present Bible text, but they fit very well into the context of Isaiah 49 and 50. We can illustrate this by placing [1 Nephi 22:15–17] between the last verse of chapter 49 and the first verse of chapter 50." (*Great Are the Words of Isaiah*, p. 191.)

(17-11) Isaiah 50. "Where Is the Bill of Your Mother's Divorcement?"

The Lord employed the figure of a divorce and the sale of a slave to teach that though Israel's past apostasy scattered them among the nations, the Lord

had not set aside the original covenant He made with His people. Chapter 50 continues the theme begun in chapters 48 and 49 that in the last days Israel would be gathered and established again.

Under Mosaic law a man who divorced his wife was required to give her a written bill of divorce. She was then free to marry again (see Deuteronomy 24:1–4). Likewise, under the ancient laws, a man could sell himself or his children into slavery to satisfy his creditors. But the Lord had no creditors; neither had He divorced His “wife,” Israel. Instead, Israel had separated herself from the Lord by her sins and was in debt to her evil creditors. “For your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away” (Isaiah 50:1).

But the Lord has power both to redeem Israel from their creditors and to forgive their transgressions against Him. This He assured them He will do. Speaking of the future as if it were already past, He reminded them that He tried to do so once before when He, Jehovah, came to earth as Jesus Christ. This statement is a messianic passage, since Jesus is both Redeemer from sin and Deliverer from evil ways. Yet when He appeared on earth, there was no man ready to receive Him; when He called upon men to repent, there was none to answer (see v. 2). He gave His “back to the smiters” (He was scourged) and hid not His face “from shame and spitting” (v. 6; compare Matthew 26:67; 27:26). But in spite of such rejection and treatment, He still did not divorce Israel or sell her as a slave. The covenant was still in effect, and Israel would be restored to the status of a free and faithful wife of Jehovah.

The foregoing imagery may also refer to scattered Israel, for Israel, too, has been smitten and spat upon and scourged through the centuries. Still, Israel is represented as saying that “the Lord will help me; . . . I know I shall not be ashamed” (Isaiah 50:7). Israel’s confidence and trust in God appears unbounded. “He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?” (v. 8). The “he” in this verse is clearly “the Lord” in a parallel verse in 2 Nephi 7:8. “Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?” (Isaiah 50:9). Israel then asks a question, as if they have learned something by their past experiences. “Who is among you . . . that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?” (v. 10). People trust in themselves; they do not trust in God. Instead, they “walk in the light of [their own] fire, and in the sparks that [they themselves] have kindled” (v. 11). They who refuse God’s revelations and put their trust in their own reason “shall lie down in sorrow” (v. 11).

(17-12) Isaiah 51:1–3. What Is Meant By the “Hole . . . Whence Ye Are Digged”?

God’s promises to Israel were stated in a direct way in the Abrahamic covenant. Most Latter-day Saints have patriarchal blessings that declare their descent from Abraham through one of the twelve tribes. Abraham, then, is the “rock” from whence Israel was hewn and the “pit” from whence they were digged. Israel, both ancient and modern, is urged to “look unto Abraham [our] father, and unto Sarah” (Isaiah 51:1–2). They are the ones through whom the Saints claim their promised blessings. By means of the covenant established with

Abraham and Sarah, “the Lord shall comfort Zion” and make “her desert like the garden of the Lord” (v. 3). This passage is a plain assurance that God will fulfill for Abraham and his descendants all that He has promised in the covenant.

(17-13) Isaiah 51:4. What Law Will Proceed from God?

Isaiah 51:4 contains a prophecy of the restoration of the gospel law and covenant in the last days. That law and covenant includes modern scripture and living prophets to reveal God’s will anew.

(17-14) Isaiah 51:4–16. Who Is Speaking in These Verses?

In Isaiah 51:4–16, great emphasis is placed on the pronouns *me* and *my*: “my people,” “my nation,” “my judgment,” “my righteousness,” “my salvation,” “mine arm,” “my law” (vv. 4–8). The Lord emphasized these things to stress His relationship with us. He is our Creator, He is our Judge, He is our Savior, and He is our perfect Exemplar. And though the earth itself “shall vanish away like smoke, and . . . wax old like a garment” (v. 6), the qualities He claims for Himself will endure forever. God is permanent, stable, upright, and dependable. Those who trust in Him need not fear “the reproach of men” (v. 7) but should “awake” and “put on strength . . . as in the ancient days” (v. 9). This call is from God to His latter-day children to return to Him and “come with singing unto Zion” where “sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (v. 11).

As do many other passages in the Old Testament, these verses bear strong witness that Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, is the same person as Jesus Christ of the New.

(17-15) Isaiah 51:17–23. Who Were the “Two Sons” Who Fainted?

For centuries the covenant people of the Lord have “drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury,” or in other words, they reaped the results of their refusal to heed His word and this “wrung them out” (Isaiah 51:17). And the days of judgments for Israel are not finished yet. In the battle of Armageddon, the Jewish nation will once again undergo great oppression and judgment (see Enrichment I).

The text of 2 Nephi 8:19–20 taken from the brass plates suggests that the two sons may be the two witnesses of Revelation 11:1–6 who will keep the armies from defeating the Jews (see also D&C 77:15). The two witnesses are discussed in detail in Reading I-6.

By means of these two servants of God and the miracles they work, God will remove from Israel’s hand “the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury.” The promise is “thou shalt no more drink it again” (Isaiah 51:22.) Instead, the cup of fury shall be given to those who have trampled on and walked over the covenant people of the Lord. It will then be their turn to know suffering. (See v. 23.)

(17-16) Isaiah 52:1–6. “Put on Thy Strength, O Zion”

As shown in Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 2:3, there will be two headquarters for the Lord and His



Two prophets will be in Jerusalem.

people during the Millennium: Zion, the New Jerusalem, on the American continent; and Zion, the Old Jerusalem, in the Holy Land.

Isaiah 52:1–2 is quoted in three places in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 8:24–25; 3 Nephi 20:36–37; Moroni 10:31) and once in the Doctrine and Covenants. In Doctrine and Covenants 113:7–8, Joseph Smith answered questions about the meaning of Isaiah 52:1–2. He showed that the beautiful garments symbolized the priesthood power restored to the house of Israel in the last days and that the loosing of the bands from her neck signified the removal of the curses of God. If Israel would return to God, new revelations would be given.

When the Savior cited passages from Isaiah 52, He omitted verses 4 and 5, perhaps these verses did not apply to the Nephites at that time (see 3 Nephi 20:36–40).

(17-17) Isaiah 52:7. “How Beautiful upon the Mountain Are the Feet of Him That Bringeth Good Tidings”

Isaiah 52:7 is a scripture significant to missionary work. Its interpretation was given in the Book of Mormon where Abinadi was asked its meaning by the priests of King Noah (see Mosiah 12:20–24). The bringer of “good tidings” is Jesus Christ, the “founder of peace.” Those who publish that peace are the servants of the Lord who spread His word.

(17-18) Isaiah 52:8–10. A Passage Often Quoted

Nyman noted that “these verses are quoted four times in the Book of Mormon, and always as a unit,

although the Savior once interpolated a comment between verses 8 and 9 when he quoted them (see 3 Nephi 20:33). Although verse 8 speaks about Zion while verse 9 speaks about Jerusalem, the Savior quoted all three verses twice to the Nephites and said they would be fulfilled through both the Nephites and the Jews. This again shows the dual nature of Isaiah’s prophecies. The Savior first quoted this passage following His declaration that the land of America was to be given to Lehi’s descendants after the Gentiles reject the fulness of the gospel and are ‘trodden under foot’ by the house of Israel; he said this would fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah (see 3 Nephi 16:10–20). He later quoted the passage while instructing the Nephites concerning the restoration of the Jews. He changed the wording from ‘thy watchmen’ to ‘their watchmen,’ as he was referring to Jerusalem’s watchmen in this case rather than those of Zion (see 3 Nephi 20:29–35). Abinadi also recognized the universal application of this passage in teaching that ‘the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people’ and quoting these three verses as evidence (see Mosiah 15:28–31). Joseph Smith designated Jackson County, Missouri, as the Zion spoken of in verse 8 (see *TPJS*, pp. 79–80). The ‘watchmen’ are those who preach the gospel, as indicated in verse 7. The song to be sung in Zion will be a new song, sung when all will know Christ (i.e., during the Millennium). The words of the song, which will include parts of verse 8, are recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 84:99–102.” (*“Great Are the Words of Isaiah,”* p. 199.)

(17-19) Isaiah 52:11–12. Why Does the Lord Counsel That the Departure from Babylon Be Not “with Haste”?

In language closely parallel to Isaiah’s, the Doctrine and Covenants explains that the Lord’s servants, those who “bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 133:5), are to flee from Babylon, which is defined as “wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon” (D&C 133:14). Then follows what is almost a direct quotation of Isaiah 52:12 with the additional admonition to “let all things be prepared before you” and to “not look back lest sudden destruction come upon [you]” (D&C 133:15). This addition clarifies Isaiah’s command. He admonished Israel to gather (depart from wickedness) but in an orderly manner under the Lord’s direction. Had the early Saints of this dispensation observed this direction to the letter, their flight to Zion in Missouri and the events that followed might have turned out differently (see D&C 58:56; 63:24; 101:67–68, 70, 74). The presiding elders in Missouri issued the following counsel in July of 1833:

“For the disciples to suppose that they can come to this land without ought to eat, or to drink, or to wear, or anything to purchase these necessities with, is a vain thought. For them to suppose that the Lord will open the windows of heaven, and rain down angel’s food for them by the way, when their whole journey lies through a fertile country, stored with the blessings of life from His own hand for them to subsist upon, is also vain. For them to suppose that their clothes and shoes will not wear out upon the journey, when the whole of it lies through a country where there are thousands of sheep from which wool in abundance

can be procured to make them garments, and cattle upon a thousand hills, to afford leather for shoes, is just as vain. . . .

“. . . Do not conclude from these remarks, brethren, that we doubt in the least, that the Lord will provide for His Saints in these last days; or think that we would extend our hands to steady the ark; for this is not the case. We know that the Saints have the unchangeable word of God that they shall be provided for; yet we know, if any are imprudent, or lavish, or negligent, or indolent, in taking that proper care, and making that proper use of what the Lord has made them stewards over, they are not counted wise; for a strict account of every one's stewardship is required, not only in time, but will be in eternity. Neither do we apprehend that we shall be considered putting out our hands to steady the ark of God by giving advice to our brethren upon important points relative to their coming to Zion, when the experience of almost two years' gathering, has taught us to revere that sacred word from heaven, 'Let not your flight be in haste, but let all things be prepared before you.'" (*History of the Church*, 1:382–83.)

(17-20) Isaiah 52:13–15. Who Is the Servant?

Isaiah 52:13–15 is a dualistic prophecy. On the one hand, it refers to Jesus Christ. These verses belong with Isaiah 53 as introductory material for the greatest of the Old Testament messianic chapters. The Savior's "visage was so marred more than any man" (Isaiah 52:14) when He suffered for the sins of mankind and was crucified on Calvary. Nails—metal spikes—were driven into His hands and feet, and a spear pierced His side to ensure His death (see John 19:17–18, 32–34).

On the other hand, the Savior Himself made it clear that Isaiah 52:13 also had reference to a servant involved in the "great and marvelous work" of the Father in the latter days (3 Nephi 21:9). The Book of Mormon verse undoubtedly refers to Joseph Smith and the Restoration. Men "marred" him, persecuting him throughout his life until they succeeded in killing him. Yet power was given him by the Father "to bring forth unto the Gentiles" the Book of Mormon as well as other latter-day revelations (see 3 Nephi 21:10–11; see also D&C 3:10). As a result, kings and rulers of the earth behold and consider things "which had not been told them" (Isaiah 52:15).

(17-21) Isaiah 53:1–2. How Did Isaiah Foresee People Receiving Christ?

When Isaiah spoke of the Savior as being a "tender plant" without form and comeliness, he meant that Jesus was born as a small, helpless infant just as all people are. Jesus grew as other people do.

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "Did not Christ grow up as a tender plant? There was nothing about him to cause people to single him out. In appearance he was like men; and so it is expressed here by the prophet that he had no form or comeliness, that is, he was not so distinctive, so different from others that people would recognize him as the Son of God. He appeared as a mortal man." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:23.)



Christ in Gethsemane

(17-22) Isaiah 53:3. In What Ways Was Jesus a "Man of Sorrows and Acquainted with Grief"?

Jesus experienced tragedy and sorrow throughout His life. Members of His own family did not accept Him as the Messiah at first (see John 7:5). People in His hometown sought to kill Him (see Luke 4:16–30). His countrymen, the Jews, rejected His messianic calling (see John 1:11). One friend betrayed Him; another denied knowing Him (see Luke 22:48, 54–62). In the end, "all the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matthew 25:56). His enemies demanded His crucifixion (see Matthew 27:22–23).

President Joseph Fielding Smith asked: "Was not Christ a man of sorrows? Was he not rejected of men? Was he not acquainted with grief? Did not the people (figuratively) hide their faces from him? Did not the people esteem him not? Surely he knew our griefs and carried our sorrows, but he was thought to be stricken of God and forsaken by him. Did not the people say that? How true all these things are!" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:24.)

(17-23) Isaiah 53:4–9. "He Was Wounded for Our Transgressions"

Jesus suffered and was crucified for men's transgressions. "But few details of the actual crucifixion are given us. We know however that our Lord was nailed to the cross by spikes driven through the hands and feet, as was the Roman method, and not bound only by cords as was the custom in inflicting this form of punishment among some other nations. Death by crucifixion was at once the most lingering and most

painful of all forms of execution. The victim lived in ever increasing torture, generally for many hours, sometimes for days. The spikes so cruelly driven through hands and feet penetrated and crushed sensitive nerves and quivering tendons, yet inflicted no mortal wound. The welcome relief of death came through the exhaustion caused by intense and unremitting pain, through localized inflammation and congestion of organs incident to the strained and unnatural posture of the body." (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 655.)

But it was not just on the cross Christ suffered. In the Garden of Gethsemane He began the suffering that allowed Him to take the sins of the world upon Himself, or as Isaiah says, to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows (see Isaiah 53:4). Speaking of this suffering and pain, Elder Talmage wrote:

"Christ's agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. The thought that He suffered through fear of death is untenable. Death to Him was preliminary to resurrection and triumphal return to the Father from whom He had come, and to a state of glory even beyond what He had before possessed; and, moreover, it was within His power to lay down His life voluntarily. He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed, and syncope would have produced unconsciousness and welcome oblivion. In that hour of anguish Christ met and overcame all the horrors that Satan, 'the prince of this world' could inflict. The frightful struggle incident to the temptations immediately following the Lord's baptism was surpassed and overshadowed by this supreme contest with the powers of evil.

"In some manner, actual and terribly real though to man incomprehensible, the Savior took upon Himself the burden of the sins of mankind from Adam to the end of the world. Modern revelation assists us to a partial understanding of the awful experience. In March 1830, the glorified Lord, Jesus Christ, thus spake: '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.'" (*Jesus the Christ*, pp. 613–14.)

The Savior's suffering was a vicarious act of one totally innocent assuming responsibility for myriads of guilty ones. Thus, Isaiah said, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" and "was wounded for our transgressions, [and] bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:4–5).

When Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor of Judea, "he was accused by the chief priests and elders"

of many evil things, but "he answered nothing" in return (Matthew 27:12). "Then said Pilate unto him, Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee?" But Jesus held His peace and "answered him . . . never a word; inasmuch that the governor marvelled greatly." (Matthew 27:13–14.) In fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb," so Jesus "openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

While it was yet early in the morning, the soldiers in charge of Jesus brought Him "from Caiaphas [the high priest] unto the hall of judgment" of Pilate's residence (John 18:28). Later, at the time of crucifixion, Jesus' cross was placed between two evil men who were thieves (see John 19:18; Luke 23:32–33). After Jesus' death on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, went to Pilate and begged for permission to bury Jesus. Joseph laid the body "in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock" (Matthew 27:60). An examination of Matthew's account shows that the remarkable detail with which Isaiah foretold the Savior's arrest, trial, death, and burial was accurate.

(17-24) Isaiah 53:10. Did It "Please" Father in Heaven to "Bruise" His Son?

Obviously God was not pleased with the way Jesus was treated, but He was pleased with His Son's "offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10). The Atonement met the strictest demands of God's innate justice and made forgiveness and mercy possible on certain terms.

Elder Melvin J. Ballard explained why it pleased God not to interfere: "In that hour I think I can see our dear Father behind the veil looking upon these dying struggles until even he could not endure it any longer; and, like the mother who bids farewell to her dying child, has to be taken out of the room, so as not to look upon the last struggles, so he bowed his head, and hid in some part of his universe, his great heart almost breaking for the love that he had for his Son. Oh, in that moment when he might have saved his Son, I thank him and praise him that he did not fail us, for he had not only the love of his Son in mind, but he also had love for us. I rejoice that he did not interfere, and that his love for us made it possible for him to endure to look upon the sufferings of his Son and give him finally to us, our Savior and our Redeemer. Without him, without his sacrifice, we would have remained, and we would never have come glorified into his presence. And so this is what it cost, in part, for our Father in Heaven to give the gift of his Son unto men." (Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard*, pp. 154–55.)

(17-25) Isaiah 53:10. In What Way Does Christ, through His Righteous Offering, "See His Seed"? Who Are the Seed of Christ?

Abinadi explained who the seed of Christ will be (see Mosiah 15:10–13).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie summarized what Abinadi taught as follows: "The seed of Christ are those who are adopted into his family, who by faith have become his sons and his daughters. (Mosiah 5:7.) They are the children of Christ in that they are his followers and disciples and keep his commandments. (4 Ne. 17; Morm. 9:26; Moro. 7:19.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 700.)



All who come to Christ are His seed.

(17-26) Isaiah 53:11. How Did Christ’s Sacrifice “Satisfy” the Father and Thus “Justify Many”?

The law of justice requires punishment for every sin. In making an Atonement for the sins of all, Jesus satisfied the full demands of justice and made forgiveness of sins possible. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

“Then Jesus Christ came upon the scene as the Mediator between man and God, and the Advocate for man with the Father. He pleads our cause. As our Mediator, through his ministry, he labors to reconcile us, to bring us into agreement with God his Father.

“An advocate is one who defends or pleads for or in behalf of another. A mediator is one who reconciles or brings about agreement between parties.

“That is part of his great mission. He stands between the Father and man. When he was upon earth, he prayed frequently for his disciples, pleading with his Father in their behalf, and he has been pleading ever since, and he stands between us and God our Father.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:26–27.)

(17-27) Isaiah 53:12. How Will Jesus Receive a “Portion with the Great” and “Divide the Spoil with the Strong”?

As the literal and faithful Son of God, Jesus inherits all that the Father has to give (see John 16:15). If we accept the Atonement of Christ and live worthy lives, we may become “joint-heirs” with Christ (Romans 8:17). Elder McConkie defined the term *joint heir* as follows:

“A joint-heir is one who inherits equally with all other heirs including the Chief Heir who is the Son.

Each joint-heir has an equal and an undivided portion of the whole of everything. If one knows all things, so do all others. If one has all power, so do all those who inherit jointly with him. If the universe belongs to one, so it does equally to the total of all upon whom the joint inheritances are bestowed.

“Joint-heirs are possessors of all things. (D. & C. 50:26–28.) All things are theirs for they have exaltation. (D. & C. 76:50–60.) They are made ‘equal’ with their Lord. (D. & C. 88:107.) They gain all power both in heaven and on earth and receive the fulness of the Father, and all knowledge and truth are theirs. (D. & C. 93:15–30.) They are gods. (D. & C. 132:20.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 395.)

(17-28) Isaiah 54:1–8. The Bride of the Lord Is Prepared

Once again the figure of a marriage is employed. Israel is called a barren wife because of her inability or unwillingness to produce spiritual offspring for the Lord. But in the end, when she is gathered once again, there will be more children from the “desolate,” or temporarily forsaken, wife than when she enjoyed her wedded status in ancient times (Isaiah 54:1). This being true, space must be found so that the latter-day “tent” of Zion can be expanded to accommodate them all. When one wishes to make a small tent larger, one must pull up the stakes and move to a further distance from the center pole. This is what is meant by lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes (v. 2; see also Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 33:20–24). Israel’s latter-day growth through conversion and gathering is represented as breaking “forth on the right hand and on the left” (Isaiah 54:3).

In ancient times, the inability to bear children was considered a great curse by women of the Middle East. As a gathered “wife,” Israel will forget the shame or cast-off status of her earlier years and rejoice in her new and prosperous condition. She is once again “married” to the Lord (see vv. 4–5). The barren or forsaken years, though they seemed long, were but a small moment compared to the vast eternity that lies ahead (see vv. 6–8).

(17-29) Isaiah 54:9–17. What Is Meant by the “Waters of Noah”?

When God makes promises, He keeps them. He vowed to send a flood to cleanse the earth in Noah’s day and then covenanted with Noah that He would never again destroy the earth in that manner (see Genesis 9:13–17). His promise to restore Israel in the latter days is “as the waters of Noah unto me” (Isaiah 54:9), that is, His promise to restore Israel is just as sure as His promise to Noah. Mountains may depart and “hills be removed” (v. 10), but God’s promise will still see fulfillment.

In her gathered condition Zion shall be beautiful. The precious gems mentioned in verses 11 and 12 represent the material and spiritual blessings that redeemed Israel will enjoy (see also Revelation 21:19–21), including children being “taught of the Lord” (Isaiah 54:13) and knowing great peace. Those who gather together to oppress latter-day Israel “shall fall for thy sake” (v. 15), for “no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper” (v. 17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 71:9–10, where a similar promise is made to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon).

POINTS TO PONDER

(17-30) Isaiah’s Witness of Christ Is of Value to Latter-day Saints

As you read these chapters of Isaiah, did you notice how Latter-day Saints are the only ones who can fully understand what Isaiah foresaw? The scholars of the world made a significant contribution to your understanding of the history and language of Isaiah. But only modern prophets can provide the key to understanding what the prophet saw when he wrote of future realms. More than any other people, the Latter-day Saints can understand why the Savior said, “Great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1).

(17-31) You Can Gain Greater Appreciation for the Mission of Christ

When Jesus came the first time, He came to His own people, but they knew Him not (see John 1:11). Isaiah had been called to his ministry to testify of Christ so that Christ’s own people would not be justified in rejecting Him.

Read Isaiah 53, and then read the accounts in the four Gospels of the last week of the Savior’s life (see Matthew 26–28; Mark 14–16; Luke 22–24; John 18–21). Reread Isaiah 53, slowly and thoughtfully. Ponder each phrase carefully. Identify aspects of the Lord’s mortal life that Isaiah prophesied of. How do the prophecies in Isaiah 53 help you to understand and appreciate the Savior?



The Last Days and the Millennium

(18-1) Introduction

Jesus said, “Great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1). That statement is true not only of Isaiah’s powers of expression but also of his ability to see into the future, to reveal things of future generations. Of particular interest are his revelations pertaining to our own time—the last days—and the great Millennium that will follow. Truly, as Jesus said, “great are the words of Isaiah, for surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel” (3 Nephi 23:1–2).

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Isaiah 55–66.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 55–66

(18-2) Isaiah 55:1–2. “Come Ye to the Waters . . . Buy, and Eat”

This passage about coming to the waters and eating is repeated by Jacob in his sermon on the Atonement and forms the basis for his plea that all will come and partake of the blessings of redemption. The Book of Mormon passage has some additions that are significant. Carefully compare Isaiah 55:1 with 2 Nephi 9:50–51.

The meaning of the scriptures is clear. Jesus is the “living water” and “the bread of life” (see John 4:13; 6:47–51), and His gracious gifts to men are free. The invitation to come unto Christ and obtain those gifts without money and without price suggests not that they can be obtained without effort but that one does not need the goods of this world to obtain them.

Elder Marion G. Romney explained what price is required:

“When earth life is over and things appear in their true perspective, we shall more clearly see and realize what the Lord and his prophets have repeatedly told us, that the fruits of the gospel are the only objectives worthy of life’s full efforts. Their possessor obtains true wealth—wealth in the Lord’s view of values. . . .

“I conceive the blessings of the gospel to be of such inestimable worth that the price for them must be very exacting, and if I correctly understand what the Lord has said on the subject, it is. The price, however, is within the reach of us all, because it is not to be paid in money nor in any of this world’s goods but in righteous living. What is required is wholehearted devotion to the gospel

and unreserved allegiance to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . .

“A half-hearted performance is not enough. We cannot obtain these blessings and be like the rich young man who protested that he had kept the commandments from his youth up but who went away sorrowful when, in answer to the question, ‘What lack I yet?’ Jesus said unto him,

“‘If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come and follow me.’ (Matt. 19:21.) Evidently he could live everything but the welfare program.

“There can be no such reservation. We must be willing to sacrifice everything. Through self-discipline and devotion we must demonstrate to the Lord that we are willing to serve him under all circumstances. When we have done this, we shall receive an assurance that we shall have eternal life in the world to come. Then we shall have peace in this world.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1949, pp. 39, 43–44.)

(18-3) Isaiah 55:3. “The Sure Mercies of David”

For an explanation of who “David” is, see Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1.

(18-4) Isaiah 55:8–13. How May God’s Children Partake of His Goodness?

God’s ways, words, and thoughts are not like ours: they are higher and greater. As the rain comes down from heaven to help crops grow and provide food for us, so will the words of God feed and prosper our souls if we incline our ears to hear His word. But often we are tempted to forget God and trust in our own wisdom or reject God’s way of doing things because they are not done as we think they should be done.

Elder John Taylor commented on the passage in Isaiah: “We know in part, and see in part, and comprehend in part; and many of the things of God are hid from our view, both things that are past, things that are present, and things that are to come. Hence the world in general sit in judgment upon the actions of God that are passing among them, they make use of the weak judgment that God has given them to scan the designs of God, to unravel the mysteries that are past, and things that are still hid, forgetting that no man knows the things of God but by the Spirit of God; forgetting that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; forgetting that no man in and of himself is competent to unravel the designs and know the purposes of Jehovah, whether in relation to the past, present, or future; and hence, forgetting this, they fall into all kinds of blunders; they blunder over things that are contained in the Scriptures, some of which are a representation of the follies and weaknesses of men, and some of them perhaps may be the wisdom and intelligence of God, that are as far above their wisdom and intelligence as the heavens are above the earth.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 1:368.)

(18-5) Isaiah 56:1–8. Who Are the “Son of the Stranger” and the “Eunuch”? What Is Their Significance?

To understand Isaiah’s meaning in 56:1–8, one must understand the significance of three words and their meaning to ancient Israel. The words are *Sabbath*, *strangers*, and *eunuchs*.

Sabbath. Modern readers think only of Sunday, or the Lord’s day, as the Sabbath, but for ancient Israel *Sabbath* had a wider meaning. The weekly sabbath was only one of several days called the Sabbath. All of the feast days, including Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and the day of Atonement, were also called sabbaths (see Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. “Sabbath”; James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Sabbaths.”) Thus, to “keep my sabbaths [plural]” (v. 4) implied a keeping of the whole law of Moses, since the various feasts covered many aspects of the Israelites’ commitment to God. Also, by revelation, the Lord told Moses that keeping the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between Israel and God (see Exodus 31:13, 16–17). When Isaiah talked about polluting the Sabbath, he meant far more than simply working or playing on Sunday (Saturday for the Jews).

Strangers. “A stranger in the Mosaic law, and in the Old Testament generally, means one not of Israelitish descent dwelling with the Hebrews, as distinguished from a foreigner temporarily visiting the land [Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 16:29; 17:8; 2 Samuel 1:13; Ezekiel 14:7]. The stranger was not a full citizen, yet he had recognized rights and duties. He was under the protection of God, and the Israelites were charged to treat him kindly [Leviticus 19:33–34; Deuteronomy 10:18–19].” (Fallows, ed., *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “strangers.”)

Eunuchs. Under the Mosaic law, anyone who had been sexually mutilated was not allowed into full fellowship in the house of Israel (see Deuteronomy 23:1–2). The law was likely written because wholeness of body typified or symbolized spiritual wholeness. (See *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 229–30.) A priest or Levite who was a eunuch could not function in the priesthood offices (see Leviticus 21:17–23).

With an understanding of these three words, one can see the beauty of Isaiah’s promise given in Isaiah 56. Strangers (Gentiles) and eunuchs (those previously excluded from full fellowship with the covenant people, and who felt they could produce no fruit in the covenant, being “a dry tree” [v. 3]) would now find the full blessings of God extended to them if they kept the sabbaths (epitomizing the law of God). Not only will the “outcasts of Israel” (those who were scattered) be gathered in the last days, but so will “others” (v. 8). Whether one is a literal descendant of Israel will not matter as much as whether one will make and keep the covenant with God. In the age of restoration, the house of God will be “an house of prayer for *all* people” (v. 7; emphasis added).

(18-6) Isaiah 56:9–12. To Whom Might the Special Figures in These Verses Refer?

There is no general agreement among scholars about the meaning of “beasts,” “watchmen,” “dogs,” and “shepherds” mentioned in Isaiah 56:9–12. The beasts

devour, the watchmen are blind, the dogs are mute and greedy, and the shepherds are without understanding. In a latter-day context, which this seems to be, these figures may point to the Gentiles who reject the gospel when it is presented to them and seek to have others do the same. This passage may also refer to those who have the gospel (watch over the flock) but do not make it available to others.

“Kimchi observes, ‘The flock is intrusted to the care of these watchmen. The wild beasts come; these dogs bark not; and the wild beasts devour the flock. Thus they do not *profit* the flock. Yea, they *injure* it; for the owner trusts in them, that they will watch and be faithful; but they are not. These are the false teachers and careless shepherds.’” (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:212.)

These words are an apt description of the Christian world of the last days. Read Nephi’s comments about the churches of today (see 2 Nephi 28:3–9) and compare them with Moroni’s comments (see Mormon 8:31–33, 37–39).

(18-7) Isaiah 57. “There Is No Peace, Saith My God, to the Wicked”

When the righteous die, they go to paradise, a state of peace and rest. The wicked, on the other hand, know no peace. Isaiah 57:3–12 refers to general wickedness and uses Israel’s faithlessness to God, described here and in other places as adultery, for an example (see vv. 7–8). “I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works,” the Lord said, “for they shall not profit thee” (v. 12). The book of Proverbs perhaps states it best: “Treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death” (Proverbs 10:2).

(18-8) Isaiah 58:1–7. Is There a Proper Way to Fast?

Men who truly love the Lord seek to overcome their sins and to draw nearer to the Lord in fasting and prayer. Whether Isaiah 58:1–7 refers to ancient or to modern Israel, or to both, is not clear. It is certain that there is a proper way to fast and to commune with God. The guilty Israelites described in these verses seem to have been disturbed because they fasted and God seemed



There will be no peace until He comes.

not to notice; they afflicted their souls and God failed to regard their sufferings (see v. 3). But the Lord pointed out that they were fasting for improper reasons. Instead of abstaining from food and the activities of the world, they continued in their labors and pleasures (see v. 3). "Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and [seek for strength] to smite with the fist of wickedness" (v. 4). That is not the kind of fast the Lord enjoined. The Lord challenged them to answer if their kind of fasting is the fast "that I have chosen" (v. 5). In other words, is it a proper fast, pleasing to Him? Does it show true humility and reliance on God? Fasting has genuine spiritual purpose: it breaks the bands of wickedness, sets free the spiritually oppressed, and provides bread for the hungry and covering for the naked (see vv. 6–7). Bishop John H. Vandenberg explained:

"I suppose when he speaks of 'loosing the bands of wickedness' of 'undoing the heavy burdens,' and the 'breaking of every yoke' that he is referring to the wickedness of people who think only of themselves in selfishness, vanity, pride, and having hearts so set upon the things of this world that the two great commandments of loving God and loving neighbor are entirely forgotten. The principles of loving thy neighbor and of loving God are encompassed in the true purpose of the fast.

"Certainly, it takes no imagination to understand what is meant when he says, '... that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?'

"He meant that in addition to taking care of the poor, that we should watch over our own kin and be responsible for our father, mother, brother, and sister when they are in need.

"It is here that I would like to state that the Lord has caused a day of fasting and prayer to be set up in this day so that collectively the Church might join together to fulfil the purposes of fasting." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1963, p. 28.)

(18-9) Isaiah 58:8–12. Promises for Those Who Fast Properly

Bishop Vandenberg explained the significance of the blessings promised in Isaiah 58:8–12:

"Listen again to Isaiah and this promise, 'Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: . . .' (Isa. 58:8.) What would this be worth to you? Think of what it means. '... and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. . . .'

"Further, 'Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .' [Isaiah 58:9.] What more assurance would we need than this as a promise that we may call upon the Lord and he will answer?

"Then Isaiah reiterates: '... If thou take away from . . . thee the yoke, (or wickedness) the putting forth of the finger, (or accusing others) and speaking vanity;

"And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day:

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, (or the Holy Ghost will direct your daily life) and satisfy thy soul in drought, (This is your personal security in

times of need and difficulty.) and make fat thy bones: (I believe this has to do with health. In the bone there is marrow and marrow manufactures the blood that is vital to the strength and well-being of the body.) and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not (or inspiration and wisdom will flow from you continually).

"And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.' (*Ibid.*, 58:9–12.) To me this is a promise to those working with the members of the Church who are in need physically and spiritually, 'they that shall be of thee,' or that you may be able to help them—to do what? 'Build the old waste places,' and as you help them to build 'thou shalt raise up the foundations of (their) many generations (to follow); and then thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach.' In other words, you have helped them overcome their weaknesses, to restore their souls, to bridge the gap through reactivating, rehabilitation, and 'restoring' the path for them to walk in." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1963, p. 29.)

(18-10) Isaiah 58:8. What Is the Meaning of the Word *Rereward*?

Rereward is an older word meaning "rear guard." The Hebrew word *asaph* has the root meaning of "to gather" and, as used in Isaiah 58:8, "it is applied to the gathering up of the scattered rear of an army, or the keeping it from straggling, and defending it from the attacks of an enemy" (William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "rereward.") A better translation would be "the glory of Jehovah will gather thee, or keep thee together, i.e. be thy rear-guard" (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 7:2:390).

"When Israel is diligent in the performance of works of compassionate love, it is like an army on the march or travelling caravan, for which righteousness clears and shows the way as being the most appropriate gift of God, and whose rear is closed by the glory of God, which so conducts it to its goal that not one is left behind" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 7:2:390).

(18-11) Isaiah 58:13–14. The Law of the Sabbath

In the same beautifully poetic language with which he portrayed the law of the fast, Isaiah explained the covenant of the Sabbath by using an "if-then" construction: If we do our part (see Isaiah 58:13), then God will bless us in specific ways (see v. 14).

Our part is to turn away our foot (the symbol of following or obeying) from doing our own pleasure on the Sabbath, to call the Sabbath a delight (that is, to take delight in it), to call it the "holy of the Lord" (*holy* means set apart or sanctified for the work of God), to call it honorable (that is, capable of being honored), and to honor God by not doing our own ways, finding our own pleasures, or even speaking our own words (see v. 13). If we do this, then we will be able to delight ourselves in the Lord (a promise similar to "then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God" [D&C 121:45]). We will be able to ride upon the "high places of the earth" (Isaiah 58:14; mountains, or the

high places of the earth, have long been the site of revelation and communion with God; see Moses 1:1; 7:2; 1 Nephi 11:1; Ether 3:1; Isaiah 2:2). And we will feed on the heritage of Jacob (eat or consume it so that it becomes part of us). The word *heritage* comes from the same root as *heir* and *inherit*. Latter-day revelation teaches that Jacob's inheritance is exaltation and godhood (see D&C 132:37).

(18-12) Isaiah 59:1–8. Iniquity Separates Us from the Lord

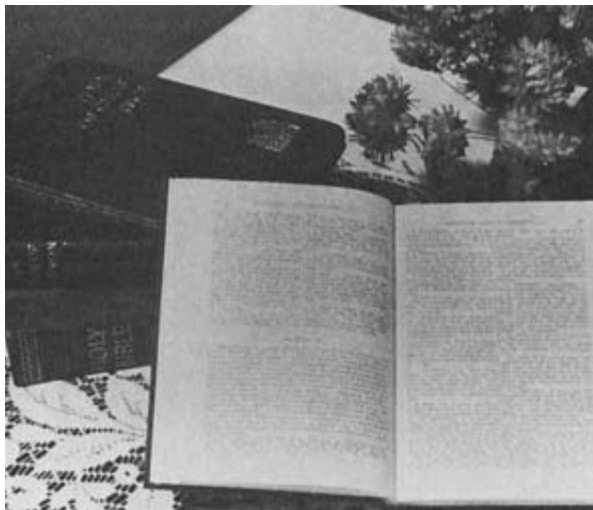
Those in any age who transgress God's commands are separated from His Spirit. In their separated condition, they neither hear nor understand the word of the Lord, as Elder Mark E. Petersen explained:

"The true Church must always produce new scripture. . . . If it does not, we must admit that it has drifted from the path of truth and right. It was Isaiah who explained such a situation which existed anciently when he said:

" . . . the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

"For your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and you sins have hid his face from you, . . ." (Isa. 59:1–2.)

"To say that there can be no new scripture is itself unscriptural and contrary to the teachings of the Bible. If we truly believe the Bible, we must expect additional scripture from time to time, and to do so we must look for living prophets to receive the revelations which are to become that new scripture. We cannot escape this conclusion. It is a well-established pattern of God's hand-dealings with men all down through the ages." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1964, p. 122.)



Darkness is dispelled by the light of the Lord.

(18-13) Isaiah 59:9–15. What Occurs When We Refuse to Harken to God?

Failure to heed the word of the Lord causes people to "wait for light" but none comes (Isaiah 59:9), and thus they "walk in darkness" and "grope for the wall like the blind" (v. 10). Judgment (righteousness) disappears, transgression increases, and "truth faileth" (v. 15). Apostasy occurs whenever people turn away from the Lord.

(18-14) Isaiah 59:16–21. What Time Periods Do These Verses Refer To?

Isaiah 59:16–21 refers to Jesus Christ, our intercessor with the Father. He came to earth because "there was no man" and "there was no intercessor" (v. 16) for the people. If the Savior had not been sent, our state, because of iniquity, would have been grim indeed (see vv. 1–15; compare 2 Nephi 9:8–9). Therefore, Jesus was sent to earth. "His arm brought [man's] salvation unto him," which was possible because "his righteousness, it sustained him," much as a breastplate protects a soldier in battle (v. 16). On His head was a "helmet of salvation," and He was clothed in "garments of vengeance," for He deals with men "according to their deeds" (vv. 17–18).

When the Savior comes again, He will "come to Zion," and if Jacob, or the house of Israel, will "turn from transgression" (v. 20) to the Lord, He will place His Spirit upon them. Elder Orson Pratt said of that promise: "Certainly Jesus, when he came eighteen centuries ago, did not turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for they then were filling up their cup with iniquity. They have remained in unbelief from that day to this; hence, there did not come a Deliverer out of Zion eighteen centuries ago. But the Zion of the last days, that Zion that is so frequently and so fully spoken of by the ancient prophets, especially by Isaiah, is the Church and kingdom of God; and out of that Church or kingdom or Zion is to come a Deliverer, who will turn away ungodliness from Jacob after the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 14:64.)

(18-15) Isaiah 60:1–2. "Darkness Shall Cover the Earth"

The Light of Zion is the Lord Himself, and these verses refer to conditions of the latter days when Zion shines forth but darkness covers the earth. Elder Orson Pratt wrote: "The Zion that is here spoken of is called to 'arise and shine, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' There is no one thing more fully revealed in the Scriptures of eternal truth, than the rise of the Zion of our God in the latter days, clothed upon with the glory of God from the heavens—a Zion that will attract the attention of all the nations and kindreds of the whole earth. It will not be something that takes place in a corner on some distant island of the sea, or away among some obscure people; but it will be something that will call forth the attention of all people and nations upon the face of the whole earth." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 16:78.)

(18-16) Isaiah 60:3–18. "Who Are These That Fly As a Cloud"?

Although Isaiah 60:3 is sometimes seen by scholars as a prophetic utterance relating to the wise men who came from the east to visit the child born in Bethlehem (see Matthew 2:1–15), in context it is a prophecy of a Zion of the latter days, perhaps the New Jerusalem. Zion's "sons shall come from far" (Isaiah 60:4), and "the forces of the Gentiles" (v. 5) will do the same. Gold, silver, camels, and dromedaries (symbols of earthly wealth) will be brought to "glorify the house of [God's] glory" (v. 7). As these precious things are gathered in, "the sons of strangers" (Gentiles) will build her walls or help in rebuilding Jerusalem (v. 10; compare Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 49:22).

About the phrase “thy gates shall be open continually” (Isaiah 60:11), Elder Orson Pratt said: “They shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought, for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.’ What! no people or nation left that will not serve Zion? Not one. What will become of this great republic [the United States] . . . ? If they will comply with the ordinances of Zion, repent of their sins and be prepared for this great and glorious day, God will save them; but if they will not they will be utterly wasted away. Thus have the prophets declared.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 14:355.)

(18-17) Isaiah 60:19–22. “The Sun Shall Be No More Thy Light by Day”

When the New Jerusalem is eventually built, and Jesus Christ returns to earth in glory, the need will disappear for the sun and the moon to give light to God’s covenant people. The Lord Himself will be an everlasting light.

“Zion will not need the sun when the Lord is there, and all the city is lighted up by the glory of his presence. When the whole heavens above are illuminated by the presence of his glory we shall not need those bright luminaries of heaven to give light, so far as the city of Zion is concerned. But there will be a great people round about, dwelling in other cities that will still have need of the light of the sun and the moon; but the great capital city where the Lord will establish one of his thrones—for his throne is not to be in Jerusalem alone, it will also be in Zion, as you will find in numerous places in this Bible. When therefore, he shall establish his throne in Zion and shall light up the habitations thereof with the glory of his presence, they will not need this light which comes from the bright luminaries that shine forth in yonder heavens, but they will be clothed upon with the glory of their God. When the people meet together in assemblies like this, in their Tabernacles, the Lord will meet with them, his glory will be upon them; a cloud will overshadow them by day and if they happen to have an evening meeting they will not need . . . lights of an artificial nature, for the Lord will be there and his glory will be upon all their assemblies. So says Isaiah the Prophet, and I believe it.” (Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:355–56; see also D&C 133:57–58.)

(18-18) Isaiah 61:1–2. “The Lord Hath Anointed Me to Preach Good Tidings”

Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1–2 to the people of Nazareth in their synagogue. When He had finished, “the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him” (Luke 4:20). He then said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (v. 21; see vv. 16–19). These verses in Isaiah relate to Jesus as does the rest of Isaiah 61—to Him and to the building of His Zion in the latter days. He it is who is appointed of the Father to preach the gospel unto men, to heal or provide forgiveness to the wounded soul, to preach deliverance to those captives in the spirit prison (see 1 Peter 3:18–19). Jesus Himself cited this passage as evidence of His divinity (see Matthew 11:2–5; Luke 7:19–22).

(18-19) Isaiah 61:3–11. What Are the Robes of Righteousness and the Garments of Salvation?

The Lord does not work alone. Isaiah 61:3–11 refers to the physical restoration of Zion and to the priesthood, which Zion’s sons will use to restore again this glory of the Lord. Once again the marriage figure is employed to depict the covenant between the Lord and His people in the latter days. Covered “with the robe of righteousness” and dressed “as a bride adorneth herself with pearls” (v. 10), Zion awaits the coming of her “husband,” Jesus Christ. John the Revelator used a similar figure when he spoke of “the marriage of the Lamb [Jesus] and his wife [Zion]” (Revelation 19:7). Here the bride is “arrayed in fine linen,” symbolic of “the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:8). Thus will be fulfilled that part of the tenth article of faith that states: “Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.” Verse 11 of Isaiah 61 clearly describes that day when the Zion of the Lord, the New Jerusalem, will bring forth righteousness and praise “as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth.”

(18-20) Isaiah 62. How Is the Latter-day Union of God and His People Symbolized?

Once again Isaiah referred to the Old and New Jerusalem. Both are to possess “righteousness” that will “go forth as brightness” and offer salvation “as a lamp that burneth” (Isaiah 62:1). Zion is to be called by a “new name” (v. 2), the New Jerusalem, and the Old Jerusalem shall “no more be termed Forsaken” nor “Desolate” (v. 4). Once again Zion shall be married to the Lord. This symbol represents her return to spiritual righteousness, for “as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall [our] God rejoice over [Jerusalem’s restoration]” (v. 5).

(18-21) Isaiah 62:4–5. Why Will the Lord Call Israel “Hephzi-bah” and “Beulah”?

The words that Isaiah used to describe this latter-day condition of Zion are important. *Hephzi-bah* means “delightful” in Hebrew and may refer to Jerusalem and Zion’s latter-day righteousness. *Beulah* means “union” (see Isaiah 62:4). A marriage is once again the symbol of unity, but this time the marriage is not of the people and God but of the land and God.

According to the Doctrine and Covenants, there will come a time when “the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided” (D&C 133:24). In the days of Peleg the earth was divided into continents (see Genesis 10:25), but before that time it was all united in one land mass. The joining of the continents once again can be likened to a union or a marriage that is both *hephzi-bah* and *beulah*, that is, delightful and united. The lands, like a man and woman in holy wedlock, will be sealed by the authority of the one officiating (see JST, Isaiah 62:4–5).

(18-22) Isaiah 63:1–9. “Wherefore Art Thou Red in Thine Apparel?”

See Doctrine and Covenants 133:46–48.



Treading the winepress

(18-23) Isaiah 63:10–19. “O Lord, Why Hast Thou Suffered Us to Err?”

Isaiah 63:10–19 depicts a people gone astray, a people who have broken their covenants with the Lord. These verses explain the great judgment of the earth described in verses 1–9. Verse 17 in the Joseph Smith Translation contains a significant alteration. Instead of “O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways and hardened our heart,” it reads, “O Lord, why hast thou suffered us to err from thy ways, and to harden our heart?” God does not compel people to sin or to harden their hearts. It is possible that the last part of verse 17 is a plea for the Lord to restore the lost tribes of Israel to the lands of their inheritance (see D&C 133:23–33).

(18-24) Isaiah 64:1–3. What Do the Great Physical Disturbances Describe?

The first five verses in Isaiah 64 are quoted almost verbatim in Doctrine and Covenants 133:40–45. There, the obligation of God’s servants to go forth preaching the gospel and admonishing people to worship God so they can escape these great devastations is explained (see D&C 133:37–39). The description of the mountains flowing down at God’s presence (see Isaiah 64:1, 3) is probably a reference to the tremendous physical changes that will attend the Savior’s Second Coming in glory (see D&C 88:87–91). At that time, valleys shall be “exalted” and mountains “made low” (D&C 49:23). God’s voice “shall break down the mountains,” so that “the valleys shall not be found” (D&C 133:22).

Jesus Christ is a celestial being. Since the sun is typical of the glory of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 76:70), the imagery of burning and fire that describes the Second Coming could actually be caused by the glory of Christ’s person. Elder Charles W. Penrose, writing of this day, said: “He comes! The earth shakes, and the

tall mountains tremble; the mighty deep rolls back to the north as in fear, and the rent skies glow like molten brass. He comes! The dead Saints burst forth from their tombs, and ‘those who are alive and remain’ are ‘caught up’ with them to meet him [see 1 Thessalonians 4:17]. The ungodly rush to hide themselves from his presence, and call upon the quivering rocks to cover them. He comes! with all the hosts of the righteous glorified. The breath of his lips strikes death to the wicked. His glory is a consuming fire. The proud and rebellious are as stubble; they are burned and ‘left neither root nor branch’ [see Malachi 4:1]. He sweeps the earth ‘as with the besom of destruction.’ [Isaiah 14:23]. He deluges the earth with the fiery floods of his wrath, and the filthiness and abominations of the world are consumed. Satan and his dark hosts are taken and bound—the prince of power of the air has lost his dominion, for He whose right it is to reign has come, and ‘the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.’” (“The Second Advent,” in *Millennial Star*, 10 Sept. 1859, p. 583.)

(18-25) Isaiah 64:4–11. Is Our Righteousness like “Filthy Rags” unto the Lord?

When people do evil in the Lord’s sight, their ways can be compared to “filthy rags.” “We are all as an unclean thing” (Isaiah 64:6). God then hides His face from such individuals (see v. 7), and they must repent and plead to be forgiven (see vv. 8–9). Isaiah said that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” or as Keil and Delitzsch translated the passage: “All our virtues [are] like a garment soiled with blood” (*Commentary*, 7:2:470). That is not to say that God despises virtue and views it as filthiness, but rather to say that Israel’s former righteousness has now become evil. Joseph Smith changed Isaiah 64:5–6 to reflect this teaching more clearly: “Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness, and rejoiceth him that remembereth thee in thy ways; in righteousness there is continuance, and such shall be saved. But we have sinned; we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (JST, Isaiah 64:5–6.)

(18-26) Isaiah 65:1–7. Can Men Find the Lord If They Do Not Seek Him?

Isaiah 65:1–7 speaks of God as being found by those who did not seek Him. The Apostle Paul interpreted these verses to mean the Gentiles (see Romans 10:20–21). The Prophet Joseph, in his inspired translation of the Bible, expanded the text and changed it: “I am found of them who seek after me, I give unto all them that ask of me; I am not found of them that sought me not, or that inquireth not after me. I said unto my servant, Behold me, look upon me; I will send you unto a nation that is not called after my name, for I have spread out my hands all the day to a people who walketh not in my ways, and their works are evil and not good, and they walk after their own thoughts.” (JST, Isaiah 65:1–2.)

There is a difference between those who know that they should call upon the Lord but do not and those who do not call upon Him because they do not know they should. The Gentiles are in the latter category. Paul wrote that God manifested Himself to the Gentiles

but not to the Jews because He had “stretched forth [His] hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” all day long (for many generations), and they would not respond (Romans 10:21). It is the Gentiles’ turn now. Isaiah 65:3–7 describes the Lord’s attitude toward those who, having been given much, return but little to the Giver.

(18-27) Isaiah 65:17–25. To What Period of Time Do These Verses Refer?

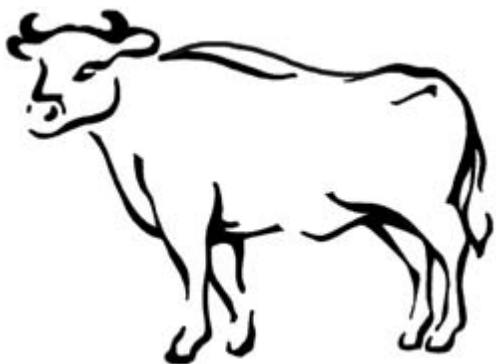
Isaiah 65:17–25 refers to the Millennium. People living then will have no desire for things to be as they once were. The old earth, in fact, “shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (v. 17). Everything will be gloriously new, sorrow will cease (see v. 19), children will not die in infancy (see v. 20), homes will be built, and fruit trees and gardens planted and enjoyed. No one will drive others from their lands, as the Saints were driven in the early days of this dispensation (see vv. 21–22).

In summarizing conditions in this glorious day, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Great and marvelous though the changes will be incident to life during the millennial era, yet mortality as such will continue. Children will be born, grow up, marry, advance to old age, and pass through the equivalent of death. Crops will be planted, harvested, and eaten; industries will be expanded, cities built, and education fostered; men will continue to care for their own needs, handle their own affairs, and enjoy the full endowment of free agency. Speaking a pure language (Zeph. 3:9), dwelling in peace, living without disease, and progressing as the Holy Spirit will guide, the advancement and perfection of society during the millennium will exceed anything men have supposed or expected.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 496–97.)

A great deal of information about the Millennium has been revealed in Doctrine and Covenants 101:23–31.

(18-28) Isaiah 66:1–4. How Is “He That Killeth an Ox . . . As If He Slew a Man”?

Anciently God required animal sacrifice as a token of the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for the sins of men. But the people took the form of worship that was to teach them faith in the coming of Christ and turned it into a mockery. They maintained the outer form of the ordinances but lost the spiritual meaning, for they showed no corresponding inward righteousness. Thus, the very forms of worship that were intended to save them became an abomination and worked to their condemnation.



An ox was used as a sacrifice.

In strong language Isaiah revealed the Lord’s feelings for their hypocritical religious observances. Those who killed the ox for sacrifice were viewed as though they offered a man, an act of great wickedness. Other sacrificial offerings would mean nothing more than sacrificing a dog or pig, both of which were considered abominable (see v. 3). People had “chosen their own ways” (v. 3) instead of the Lord’s. When called by God through His prophets, they refused to hearken. The result was “delusions” and “fears” (v. 4), fit rewards for evildoers.

(18-29) Isaiah 66:5–14. How Can a “Nation Be Born at Once” and the “Earth Be Made to Bring Forth in One Day”?

Even though the Jews have long rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah, at a critical time in the future He will appear to them. Elder Charles W. Penrose described that great event, which will occur during the battle of Armageddon:

“His next appearance will be among the distressed and nearly vanquished sons of Judah. At the crisis of their fate, when the hostile troops of several nations are ravaging the city and all the horrors of war are overwhelming the people of Jerusalem, he will set his feet upon the Mount of Olives, which will cleave and part asunder at his touch.

“Attended by a host from heaven, he will overthrow and destroy the combined armies of the Gentiles, and appear to the worshiping Jews as the mighty Deliverer and Conqueror so long expected by their race; and while love, gratitude, awe, and admiration swell their bosoms, the Deliverer will show them the tokens of his crucifixion and disclose himself as Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had reviled and whom their fathers put to death. Then will unbelief depart from their souls, and ‘the blindness in part which has happened unto Israel’ [see Romans 11:25] be removed. ‘A fountain for sin and uncleanness shall be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem’ [see Zechariah 13:1], and ‘a nation will be born’ unto God ‘in a day’ [see Isaiah 66:8]. They will be baptised for the remission of their sins, and will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the government of God as established in Zion will be set up among them, no more to be thrown down for ever.” (In “The Second Advent,” p. 583.)

The allusion to a woman giving birth who is “delivered of a man child” recalls a similar reference in Revelation 12:1–7 in which a woman is depicted as struggling to give birth and bringing forth “a man child.” This child is identified in the Joseph Smith Translation as the millennial kingdom of God (see JST, Revelation 12:7). The man child referred to in Isaiah (Zion), and the child referred to by John in Revelation are probably the same. This is good news for Jerusalem, who will rejoice at the word.

(18-30) Isaiah 66:15–24. The Final Scenes

These verses relate to the Second Coming of the Lord and the events that will immediately precede it. Verses 15–16 refer to the destruction of the great army that will gather against Jerusalem just before the Millennium begins (compare Isaiah 34:1–10; Jeremiah 25:31–33; Ezekiel 38:17–23; 39:1–16; Joel 3:1–2, 11–14; Enrichment I).

Zechariah taught that once the battle was over, those of the heathen nations who survived would eventually turn to Jehovah, and great holiness would prevail in Jerusalem or among God's people (see Zechariah 14:16–21). This teaching closely parallels what Isaiah revealed here. The wicked will be gathered for destruction (see Isaiah 66:15–18), those who are scattered throughout the heathen nations (Tarshish, Pul, Lud, and so forth) will bring an offering to Jerusalem, and the holy people of God (see vv. 19–23) will marvel at what God has done to the wicked (see v. 24).

Evidently many will then join the Church, for the Lord said He will take of the Gentiles "for priests and for Levites" (v. 21); in other words, they shall receive the priesthood.

POINTS TO PONDER

(18-31) Calamities and Troubles Are Increasing in the Earth, but There Is a Place of Deliverance

Prophets in every age have warned their people against sin. These are the last days, the period just before the return of Jesus Christ to earth. Satan is making one final effort to lead people away from God. In June 1894 President Wilford Woodruff said: "When I have the vision of night opened continually before my eyes, and can see the mighty judgments that are about to be poured out upon this world, when I know these things are true, . . . while I am holding this position before God and this world, can I withhold my voice from lifting up a warning to this people, and to the nations of the earth? . . . And from this very day they shall be poured out. Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. . . . Read the scriptures and the revelations. They will tell you about these things." ("A Remarkable Statement," *Improvement Era*, 22 June 1894, pp. 1164–65.)

It should therefore not surprise us that the world is in turmoil, that wars spring up constantly, that wickedness increases. These things have been prophesied. President Joseph Fielding Smith, commenting on Doctrine and Covenants 1, taught: "There is in the world today distress, turmoil, trouble, commotion, and contention among the nations. There is no peace. There will be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes to bring it. And his warning is to the world to repent. This I might have read, for it is the first verse of this revelation I have been quoting. The righteous have

been called on to come out of Babylon, or the world, to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ as it has been restored, and find a place in the kingdom of God." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1953, p. 20.)

President Marion G. Romney, also citing the promise that peace would be taken from the earth (see D&C 1:35), said:

"Today, more than 140 years since the foregoing words were spoken, peace has been taken from the earth. The devil now has power over his dominion, and the Lord has power over his saints. The day approaches when he will 'come down in judgment upon . . . the world' and reign in the midst of his people.

"Between now and then, however, if men and nations continue on their present course, great tribulation will come upon us. There shall be more 'wars and rumors of wars, . . . there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many [other] desolations. . . . the whole earth shall be in commotion. . . .' (D&C 45:26, 33.) Those are the words of the Lord himself.

"The Lord foresaw the coming of these calamities and gave warning of them. He restored his gospel and re-established his church as a means of escape therefrom." ("Why the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 32.)

President Hugh B. Brown spoke words of comfort and assurance: "I want to say to you, brethren, that in the midst of all the troubles, the uncertainties, the tumult and chaos through which the world is passing, almost unnoticed by the majority of the people of the world, there has been set up a kingdom, a kingdom over which God the Father presides, and Jesus the Christ is the King. That kingdom is rolling forward, as I say, partly unnoticed, but it is rolling forward with a power and a force that will stop the enemy in its tracks while some of you live." ("The Kingdom Is Rolling Forth," *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, p. 93.)

President Woodruff asked: "Can you tell me where the people are who will be shielded and protected from these great calamities and judgments which are even now at our doors? I'll tell you. The priesthood of God who honor their priesthood, and who are worthy of their blessings are the only ones who shall have this safety and protection. They are the only mortal beings. No other people have a right to be shielded from these judgments. They are at our very doors; not even this people will escape them entirely. They will come down like the judgments of Sodom and Gomorrah. And none but the priesthood will be safe from their fury." (In *Young Women's Journal*, Aug. 1894, p. 512.)



Judah's Return to Wickedness

(19-1) Introduction

By now it is a familiar theme. It has been heard again and again from the prophets: "Repent or perish! Turn to God or face your enemies alone." Israel heard it and ignored it. They went to destruction. But even more tragic is the story of Judah. Judah heeded the cry of the Lord's servants and was delivered from Assyria in a most dramatic way. But they were like someone who, snatched from the path of a speeding train, jumps in front of a moving truck. The lesson of deliverance was quickly forgotten. Idol worship was begun again, and Babylon became the Lord's instrument of punishment. As Mormon noted, affliction seems the only way the Lord's children learn (see Helaman 12:1–5), so Judah was enrolled in the bitter school of experience.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 2 Kings 21–25.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 2 KINGS 21–25

(19-2) 2 Kings 21. What Was Life Like during the Reign of Manasseh?

"King Manasseh had ascended the throne in Jerusalem at the age of twelve. He reigned for about fifty years and became the most loathed and cursed king in the history of Judah.

"Assyria was then at the height of her power. All the world of Mesopotamia and the west lay subdued before her. In 671 B.C.E. [before the common era, the Jewish equivalent of B.C., before Christ] she would conquer the Egyptian Delta as well, and Esarhaddon would die in 669 B.C.E. during another military campaign against the land of the Nile.

"In Judah, Assyria ruled not only politically but also culturally. Her cults, gods, and fashions were introduced into the land by Manasseh. This was the golden age of astrology and divination in Assyria, and during the reign of Esarhaddon priests and astrologers filled the court with their omens and predictions. . . . The Aramean-Assyrian gods were clearly superior to the gods of all other lands, for all kingdoms were vassals of the God Ashur. The astral gods of Assyria—Ishtar, Shamash, Adad—were worshiped on rooftops everywhere.

"Assyrian cultic texts carefully describe the rituals. 'You clean the roof before Ishtar, sprinkle pure water, you set up an altar of incense, you pour out flour, you

place honey and butter, and libate wine.' 'You clean the roof, you sprinkle pure water, you place four bricks . . . you pile up cuttings of poplar trees, you put fire on them, you pour out juniper, you libate beer, prostrate, and do not look backward.' 'I have set for you, Ishtar, a pure . . . cake baked in ashes. . . .'

"Prophets, condemning the vile contagion that infested the land during the days of Ahaz and Manasseh, told of 'them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops' and described how 'the children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven.' The southern writer of the Second Book of Kings tells of those who 'offered incense to Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.' . . .

". . . Whole elements from the core and periphery of the Assyrian world washed across the hills of Judah, leaving behind gods and goddesses beneath leafy trees, on tall hills, in groves, on rooftops. The southern historian tells us, 'He built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal . . . and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord. . . . And he made his son pass through the fire, and practiced soothsaying, and used enchantments. . . .'

"Less than a mile from where I write these words is the valley of Hinnom outside the walls of the old city of Jerusalem. There, to the din of drums, with smoke and flames rising through the air, children were offered to the god Molech, another name for the king of heaven. The Greeklike word Gehenna, hell, comes from that place: *ge* (pronounced *gay*)—valley, in Hebrew—of Hinnom. . . .

"Within the temple of Solomon the fertility cult . . . flourished as integral elements of the state cult practiced by the people of YHWH. [YHWH is the sacred word that many Jews still do not pronounce. It is translated *Jehovah* by most Christian writers.] In the countryside the populace too worshiped YHWH along with pagan deities. It is probable that this would in time have made YHWH the head of a pantheon, like El in the tablets of Ugarit. The sins of Manasseh were never forgotten." (Chaim Potok, *Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews*, pp. 134–36.)

(19-3) 2 Kings 21:2–9. How Did Manasseh Exceed the Idolatry of His Predecessors?

Manasseh was only twelve years old when he began to reign. Inexperienced as he was, he was easily influenced by the worshipers of Baal and Asherah, or Ashteroth. To the worship of these idolatrous gods Manasseh added a third form of worship: devotion to the heavenly bodies and the constellations. Remnants of this worship are seen today in astrology.

"This worship differed from the Syrophenician star-worship, in which sun and moon were worshipped under the names of Baal and Astarte as the bearers

of the male and female powers of nature, and was pure star-worship, based upon the idea of the unchangeableness of the stars in contradistinction to the perishableness of everything earthly, according to which the stars were worshipped not merely as the originators of all rise and decay in nature, but also as the leaders and regulators of sublunary things." (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:1:469.)

In Judah the stars were worshiped, not by devotions to images, but by simple contemplation in the open air or on the rooftops. Small altars were constructed and incense burned as part of the devotional exercise.

(19-4) 2 Kings 21:13–15. The Plummet

"The line [tape measure] of Samaria" (v. 13) and "the plummet [plumb bob] of the house of Ahab" (v. 13) refer to the destruction of the royal house of Israel. The Lord was saying again that what had happened to the ten tribes of Israel could just as easily happen to Judah—and would, unless they changed their ways.



The ruins of Ahab's palace symbolize the destruction of the kingdom of Israel.

(19-5) 2 Kings 21:16. Manasseh Shed Innocent Blood, or Murdered the Prophets

Josephus explained who these innocent people were: "But when [Hezekiah's] son, Manasseh, whose mother's name was Hephzibah, of Jerusalem, had taken the kingdom, he departed from the conduct of his father, and fell into a course of life quite contrary thereto, and showed himself in his manners most wicked in all respects, and omitted no sort of impiety, but imitated those transgressions of the Israelites, by the commission of which against God, they had been destroyed; for he was so hardy as to defile the temple of God, and the city, and the whole country; for, by setting out from a contempt of God, he barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflowed with blood." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 10, chap. 3, par. 3.)

(19-6) 2 Kings 22:1–2. King Josiah

Josiah was one of the best of all the kings of Judah since the time of David. Although only eight years of age when his reign began, Josiah continued all his days in righteousness. Verse 2, therefore, is very complimentary.

(19-7) 2 Kings 22:8–11. What Was the Book of the Law?

Some have suggested this book was the book of Deuteronomy; others believe that it was the whole Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy), written by the prophet Moses (see D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 365). The account of the great joy at finding the law suggests that the scriptures had been lost for some time. That would partly explain why evil and corruption had become so widespread in Israel.

(19-8) 2 Kings 22:11. Why Did King Josiah Rend His Clothes When He Heard the Law of Moses Read?

To rip or tear one's clothes was to signify profound sorrow and tragedy. When King Josiah heard the law read, it instantly became obvious how far Israel had strayed from what God required of them. Therefore, Josiah rent his clothes to dramatize his profound sorrow and shock at the spiritual state of the nation.

(19-9) 2 Kings 22:14–20. What Is the Significance of Huldah and Her Prophecy?

"Nothing further is known of the prophetess Huldah than what is mentioned here. All that we can infer from the fact that the king sent to her is, that she was highly distinguished on account of her prophetic gifts, and that none of the prophets of renown, such as Jeremiah and Zephaniah, were at that time in Jerusalem. Her [husband] Shallum was keeper of the clothes, i.e. superintendent over either the priests' dresses that were kept in the temple . . . or the king's wardrobe." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:480.)

(19-10) 2 Kings 23:6–7. Josiah Destroyed the Idols

Inspired by the words of the book of the law, Josiah ordered the idols and the groves among the Israelites to be destroyed. The grove mentioned in verse 6 was a shrine dedicated to the idol Asherah, the nature goddess or the goddess of the moon. The "hangings" mentioned in verse 7 were coverings or curtains that enclosed the booths where the impure rituals were performed.



The valley of Hinnom

(19-11) 2 Kings 23:10. What Was Topheth?

Adam Clarke wrote that Topheth was in “the valley of the son of Hinnom, or *Gehenna*. . . here it appears the sacred rites of Molech were performed, and to this all the filth of the city was carried, and perpetual fires were kept up in order to consume it. Hence it has been considered a *type of hell*; and in this sense it is used in the New Testament. [See, for example, Matthew 5:22, where “hell fire” is used to translate the Hebrew *Gehenna*.]” (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:563.)

(19-12) 2 Kings 23:12–16. The Burning of Idols

Josiah scattered the ashes and powder of the idols and the bones of men on the sacred places of the idolaters to defile them and make them abominable to the idolaters so that they would not want to use them anymore.

(19-13) 2 Kings 23:26. Josiah Could Not Undo What Manasseh Had Done

“Manasseh is mentioned here and at [2 Kings 24:3 and Jeremiah 15:4] as the person who, by his idolatry and his unrighteousness, with which he provoked God to anger, had brought upon Judah and Jerusalem the unavoidable judgment of rejection. It is true that Josiah had exterminated outward and gross idolatry throughout the land by his sincere conversion to the Lord, and by his zeal for the restoration of the lawful worship of Jehovah, and had persuaded the people to enter into covenant with its God once more; but a thorough conversion of the people to the Lord he had not been able to effect. For, as Clericus has correctly observed, ‘although the king was most religious, and the people obeyed him through fear, yet for all that the mind of the people was not changed, as is evident enough from the reproaches of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and other prophets, who prophesied about that time and a little after.’ With regard to this point compare especially the first ten chapters of Jeremiah, which contain a *resumé* of his labours in the reign of Josiah, and bear witness to the deep inward apostasy of the people from the Lord, not only before and during Josiah’s reform of worship, but also afterwards.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:492.)

(19-14) 2 Kings 23:29. Josiah’s Death at Megiddo

In the scramble for power that came with Babylonia’s conquest of Assyria, Egypt sought to move north and help Assyria, since they preferred a weak Assyria to a powerful Babylonia. For reasons not named, Josiah sought to stop Pharaoh Necho’s passage through the promised land. It has been suggested that “Josiah’s motives can only be conjectured, but it is probable that in the downfall of Assyria’s power he hoped to extend his authority over what had once been the northern kingdom, and feared that his designs would be foiled by the Egyptian advance. . . . Josiah took up his position here [at Megiddo] to dispute the passage across Carmel. . . . For the sorrow occasioned by Josiah’s death see [2 Chronicles 35:25; Ecclesiasticus 49:2–3].” (J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 246.)

(19-15) 2 Kings 24:1–4. Who Were the Principal Persons Involved in the Capture and Fall of Judah?

Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon. Jehoiakim was the king of Judah. At the time that Nebuchadnezzar first laid siege to Jerusalem, Jehoiakim was paying tribute to Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, in return for protection against the Babylonians. The ploy did not work. At about 608 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar “was sent by his father against the rulers of several provinces that had revolted; and he took Carchemish and all that belonged to the Egyptians, from the Euphrates to the Nile” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:566). Three years later, about 605 B.C., Jehoiakim revolted, and “a mixed army of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites was sent against him, who ravaged the country, and took *three thousand and twenty-three prisoners*, whom they brought to Babylon” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:566; see also Jeremiah 52:28). Among the prisoners were probably Daniel and Ezekiel, who wrote the Old Testament books bearing their names. That same year Nebuchadnezzar assumed the throne of Babylon upon his father’s death. (For a more complete discussion of Babylonia and its conquest of Judah see Enrichment G.)

(19-16) 2 Kings 24:5–7. How Did Jehoiakim Die?

The phrase “slept with his fathers” (v. 6) is a way of stating that Jehoiakim died. It may be taken, in some instances, to mean a peaceful kind of death, but 2 Chronicles 36:6 records that Jehoiakim was bound in fetters to be taken to Babylon, and Jeremiah 22:19 states that the king was given “the burial of an ass [no burial at all], drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.” It seems possible that while being taken to Babylon as a captive, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar’s forces a second time, causing those in charge to kill him and cast his body aside before continuing their journey.

(19-17) 2 Kings 24:8–11. What Is Known about Jehoiakim’s Successor, Jehoiakin?

Jehoiakin (also spelled Jehoiachin) was the son and heir of Jehoiakim. Like his father in many respects, “he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done” (v. 9). Keil and Delitzsch commented on the extent of his evil deeds: “Ezekiel (xix. 5–7) describes him not only as a young lion, who learned to prey and [who] devoured men, like Jehoahaz, but also affirms of him that he knew their (the deceased men’s) widows, *i.e.* ravished them, and destroyed their cities,—that is to say, he did not confine his deeds of violence to individuals, but extended them to all that was left behind by those whom he had murdered, viz. to their families and possessions.” (*Commentary*, 3:1:506.)

(19-18) 2 Kings 24:12–16. How Many Times Was the Temple in Jerusalem Desecrated under Nebuchadnezzar’s Reign?

Verse 13 records that Nebuchadnezzar “carried out thence [from the temple] all the treasures.” Evidence indicates, however, that the temple of Solomon was spoiled three times under Nebuchadnezzar. The first time was when Jerusalem was attacked and Jehoiakim

was taken to Babylon. The vessels removed at this time were those that Belshazzar profaned, as recorded in Daniel 5:2, and that Cyrus, the Median-Persian king, permitted the Jews to carry back to Jerusalem when they were released (see Ezra 1:7–11). When Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem a second time, as recorded in Isaiah, he also took spoil. The third time was when Nebuchadnezzar pillaged the temple under Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (see 2 Kings 25:13–17).



Jerusalem, in the hills of Judah (model)

(19-19) 2 Kings 24:17–20. Who Was Mattaniah and What Transpired in the First Year of His Reign?

Mattaniah, better known as Zedekiah, was a brother of Jehoiakim and was, therefore, an uncle of Jehoiakin, the deposed king.

During the last years of Judah's existence, many prophets were sent to warn the people. Lehi, the first prophet recorded in the Book of Mormon, was one of these prophets sent by the Lord to warn the Jews that they must repent or face the destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:4). Since neither Zedekiah nor his people heeded the warning voices of God's messengers (see 1 Nephi 1:20; 2 Chronicles 36:16; Jeremiah 26:8–11), the destruction of Jerusalem was assured (see 2 Nephi 1:4; 6:8).

(19-20) 2 Kings 25:1–7. Zedekiah Learned That the Prophets Speak the Truth

Josephus recorded an interesting story about Zedekiah and hearkening to the prophets: "Now as to Zedekiah himself, while he heard the prophet [Jeremiah] speak, he believed him, and agreed to every thing as true, and supposed it was for his advantage; but then his friends perverted him, and dissuaded him from what the prophet advised, and obliged him to do what they pleased. Ezekiel also foretold in Babylon what calamities were coming upon the people, which when he heard, he sent accounts of them unto Jerusalem. But Zedekiah did not believe their prophecies, for the reason following: It happened that the two prophets agreed with one another in what they said as in all other things, that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive; but Ezekiel disagreed with him [Jeremiah], and said that Zedekiah should not see Babylon [see Ezekiel 12:13], while Jeremiah said to

him, that the king of Babylon should carry him away thither in bonds [see Jeremiah 34:3]; and because they did not both say the same thing as to this circumstance, he disbelieved what they both appeared to agree in, and condemned them as not speaking truth therein, although all the things foretold him did come to pass according to their prophecies, as we shall show upon a fitter opportunity." (*Antiquities*, bk. 10, chap. 7, par. 2.)

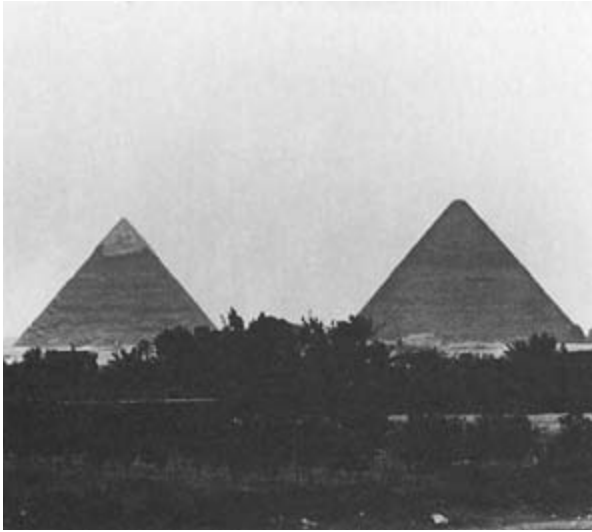
As recorded in 2 Kings 25:7, both prophets were vindicated by subsequent events. After chastising Zedekiah for his unfaithfulness and treachery, Nebuchadnezzar "commanded his sons and his friends to be slain, while Zedekiah and the rest of the captains looked on; after which he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him, and carried him to Babylon. And these things happened to him, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold to him, that he should be caught, and brought before the king of Babylon, and should speak to him face to face, and should see his eyes with his own eyes; and thus far did Jeremiah prophesy. But he was also made blind, and brought to Babylon, but did not see it, according to the prediction of Ezekiel." (*Antiquities*, bk. 10, chap. 8, par. 2.)

(19-21) 2 Kings 25:7. "And They Slew the Sons of Zedekiah"

Contrary to the biblical report, at least one of Zedekiah's sons survived. Mormon recorded that Zedekiah's son Mulek lived and went to the land now known as America, where he and his people settled in the land north of where Lehi and his posterity settled (see Helaman 6:10; 8:21). This group was discovered by Mosiah and his small group of Nephites (see Omni 1:12–19). Latter-day Saints generally refer to them as Mulekites, although they are not called that in the Book of Mormon itself. Some have seen Ezekiel 12:14 as a prophetic hint of Mulek's escape.

(19-22) 2 Kings 25:18–26. Were All the Jews Killed or Carried Away into Captivity?

These verses record that Nebuchadnezzar put to death the leaders of Judah's revolt against him. All the healthy people were then carried out of the land to Babylon (see v. 21), but "the poor of the land" (v. 12; compare 2 Kings 24:14) were permitted to remain and were given work as vinedressers and husbandmen (planters and herdsman). Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah, a Jew, to be governor over Judea, whereupon Ishmael, a zealous Jew of the royal family, undertook to slay Gedaliah for his complicity with the foreigners. Josephus recorded that Ishmael compelled the Jews remaining in the Holy Land to accompany him to the land of the Ammonites. Before their arrival there, however, another Jewish patriot, Johanan, angry with Ishmael for slaying Gedaliah, rescued his countrymen from Ishmael's grasp and took them to Egypt to settle. This move was contrary to the counsel of Jeremiah, who still resided in Judea and who urged Johanan and the other Jews to do the same. They refused, and they compelled Jeremiah and his scribe, Baruch, to flee to Egypt with them. (See Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. 10, chap. 9.)



Jeremiah and his scribe were taken to Egypt.

(19-23) 2 Kings 25:27-30

After a long imprisonment in Babylon, Jehoiachin, former king of Judah, was released from prison by Evil-merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar. From that time until his death, the former king was kindly treated by his Babylonian overlords.

POINTS TO PONDER

(19-24) The Face of Judah: A Spiritual as Well as National Tragedy

The period between the death of Josiah and the final deportation of the Jews to Babylon could be described as the dying time of the kingdom of Judah. The cancer of idolatry was too deep in the hearts of the people for the surgery undertaken by Josiah to have any great effect. After Josiah, Judah began to deteriorate at an even greater rate than before. Nonetheless, spiritual surgeons were sent to proclaim the cure. "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending [his warnings]; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place" (2 Chronicles 36:15). Indeed, the nearer the end

came, the more voices were lifted up. The Book of Mormon states that by the time of Zedekiah, eleven years after the death of Josiah, "there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent" (1 Nephi 1:4). Jeremiah appears to have been the chief of these prophets. His ministry spanned the whole period, but he was assisted by others. Zephaniah was his immediate predecessor and his contemporary. Then came Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Lehi—all joining their voices with Jeremiah's.

The Book of Mormon vividly portrays the feelings of the leaders of the people against these prophets. Their treatment of Lehi appears to have been typical. "The Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them. . . . they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away." (1 Nephi 1:19-20.) Such was the spiritual condition of Judah just before their fall.

How does that condition compare with ours today? Though the prophets were treated violently and martyred in the earlier part of this dispensation, in modern times the Lord's prophets are for the most part ignored by the world. Apathy brings less direct condemnation upon an individual than violence and murder, and yet the results of ignoring the modern prophets will be the same as they were for Judah. The world is rushing toward a spiritual disaster as great as any it has ever known (see Joel 2:2). Once again the prophets raise their voices, warning of impending disasters and pointing the way for national and personal salvation. And like Judah, the people of the world are unheeding.

Fortunately, in this dispensation spiritual Israel will begin to respond and will receive the promised blessings. Work through the following scripture chain and compare our times with those of Judah.

D&C 1:35. Does our generation face a threat today?

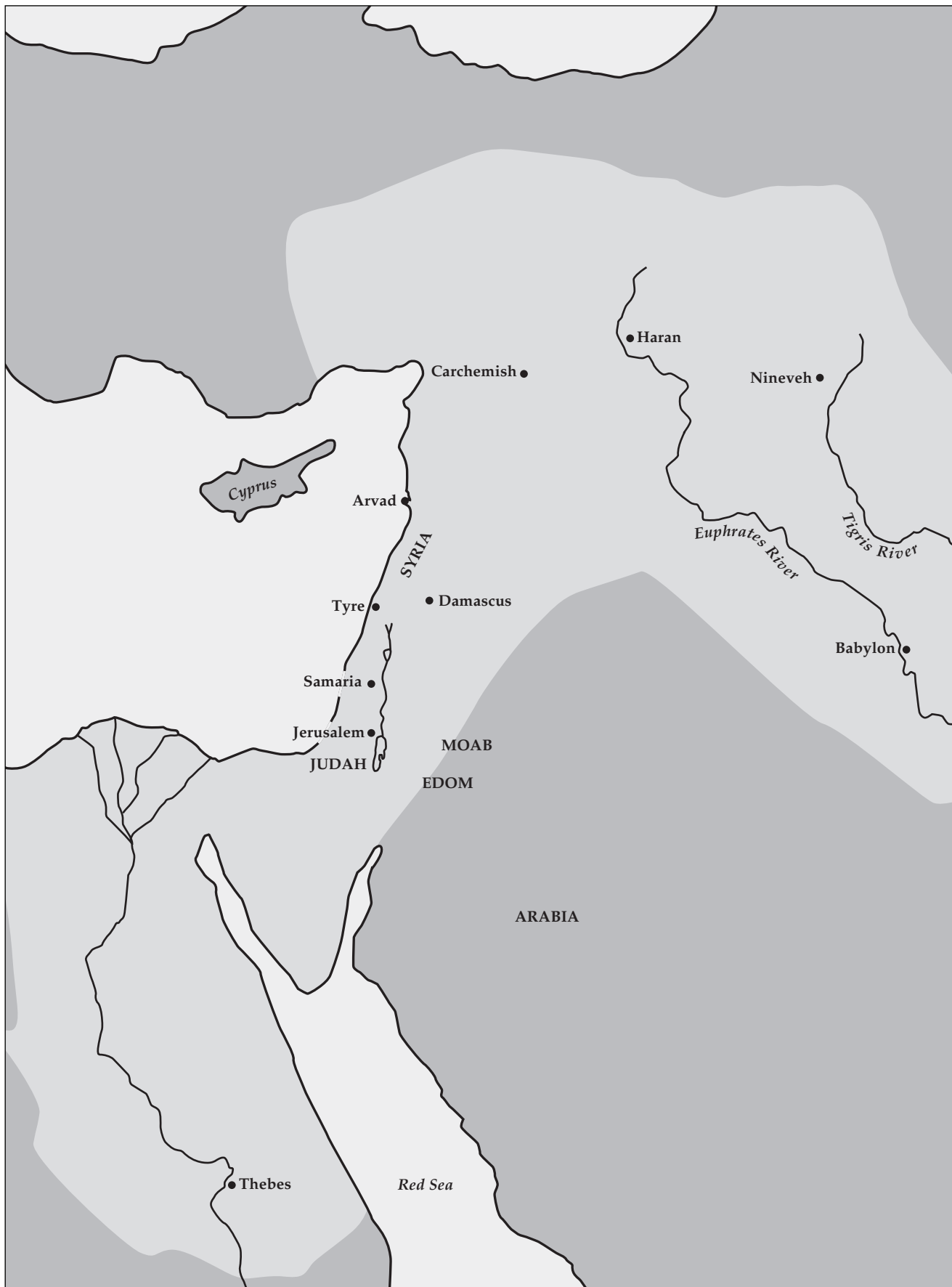
1 Nephi 22:16; D&C 133:48-51. Will the anger of the Lord again be kindled in the last days? Why?

1 Nephi 22:17-19, 22; 2 Nephi 30:10; D&C 1:36; 133:52; Moses 7:61-62. Is there any hope for the world? What?

D&C 1:14, 38; 56:14; 84:36; 90:5; 108:1; 121:16-21.

What will determine whether we will be able to pass through these times in safety?

Assyrian Empire



“The Burden of Nineveh”

(20-1) Introduction

The word *burden*, which is used to render the Hebrew *massa*, may be taken to mean both “a lifting up (of the voice), utterance, oracle” and “a heavy lot or fate” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “burden”). The prophets used *massa* to describe the prophetic message, or oracles, revealed against a people. In this case the prophecy was against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

Jonah fled from the Lord because he did not want to call Nineveh to repentance. But when he finally accepted the Lord’s call, Nineveh repented and was saved (see chapter 9). By Nahum’s time, however, Nineveh had again become extremely wicked. Therefore, Nahum pronounced the Lord’s burden upon the city. Like Judah, Nineveh had repented once and was saved but then forgot the lesson and slid back into wickedness. Now she would have to take the consequences.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Nahum.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON NAHUM

(20-2) Nahum 1:1. When Did Nahum Prophesy?

“The date of Nahum’s activities has to be deduced from certain statements made in the prophecy. In Chapter 3:8–10 reference is made to the destruction of the city of No-Amon, the Egyptian Thebes, as an already



The Way of the Sphinx at ancient Thebes

accomplished fact. We know Thebes was captured by Assurbanipal, the Assyrian, in 663 B.C. Therefore, Nahum’s prophecy must have been written after that date. And since Nahum’s prophecy deals with the coming destruction of Nineveh, we know it must have been written before 612 B.C., the date of her downfall. We may date Nahum’s ministry with some degree of probability, therefore, between the years 663 B.C. and 612 B.C.” (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 353.)

(20-3) Nahum 1:1–14. The Prophecies of Nahum Were Written in Superb Hebrew Poetry

“Nahum was a poet. When he saw in vision the end of Assyria, he poured forth in unrestrained and picturesque Hebrew the relief felt by his people. In many ways his poetry vents the wrath, sighs the relief, and bespeaks the hope of all who have been oppressed when the oppressions at last have ceased and the oppressor is no more. But Nahum was also a prophet; and he saw in Assyria’s downfall an example of the hand of God in justice reaping with a vengeance all the enemies of good, while He preserves in mercy and with patience those who try to do good. . . .

“Envisioning the overthrow of this cruel and mighty empire, whose kings in their own records boast of the captives they have maimed, the realms they have subjected and the treasures they have confiscated, Nahum tells how the doom of the mighty and the wicked is decreed, deserved, and done. [For a detailed description of Assyria’s brutality and cruelty, see Enrichment D.]

“His book begins with an acrostic, with one strophe (stanza) for each of the first fifteen letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with two alterations of the sequence. The first seven strophes (verses 2–5 in English) emphasize God’s power over nature and over His enemies; but the third (verse 3a) interrupts to tell of His goodness and justice. The second seven strophes emphasize His power over all enemies and evils, but again tells by contrast in the third of the series (verse 7) of His goodness and His mercy to those who take refuge in Him. The fifteenth and final strophe (verse 10) provides a summary and a transition to the next subject to be treated: the castigation of Nineveh.

“Assyria and Judah are alternately addressed in the next poem (verses 11–14); the one is to be punished and the other to be redeemed. It concludes with a hopeful verse, speaking of a peaceful age in terms that seem to herald the Messianic age when all oppressors shall have ceased.” (Ellis T. Rasmussen, “Nahum, a Poet-Prophet,” *Instructor*, Aug. 1962, insert between pp. 270–71.)

(20-4) Nahum 1:2–10. The Second Coming

Nahum employed imagery usually associated with the Savior’s Second Coming to depict Assyria’s future

devastation. Assyria would be as easily burned as dry stubble in a field. Here is yet another example of the prophetic dualism so common in the Old Testament (see Enrichment E).

(20-5) Nahum 1:11–13. “A Wicked Counselor”

Still prophesying of Judah’s future, Nahum spoke of one very “wicked counsellor” whose yoke upon Judah, probably a large yearly tribute (see 2 Kings 17:14), was to be broken. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had invaded Judah with a force of nearly two hundred thousand men. The prophecy foretold that Sennacherib would die shortly, and the house of his gods would become his grave (see Nahum 1:14). While he was worshiping in the temple dedicated to the god Nisrock, Sennacherib’s two sons, Adrammelech and Sharazer, murdered their father as Nahum had prophesied (see 2 Kings 19:37).

(20-6) Nahum 2:11–13. “I Am against Thee”

In these verses Nahum wrote a taunting hymn of grief at the fall of Nineveh. “Where,” he asked, “is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions?” (v. 11). This is like saying, Where are those ferocious ones who once discomfited and attacked my people? “I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard” (v. 13).

(20-7) Nahum 3:1–7. “Woe to the Bloody City”

These verses pronounce the worst of woes on Nineveh, “the bloody city” (v. 1). She was a harlot, wicked in the extreme, and her punishments were merited because she was a “mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms” (v. 4). In other words, she not only turned to wickedness herself but exported that wickedness to many others through her power and influence.

(20-8) Nahum 3:8–11. “Art Thou Better?”

As other wicked cities had met destruction, so would Nineveh. She was no better than the Egyptian city,

No-Amon (Thebes), which was earlier destroyed by Assurbanipal, king of Assyria. Neither of the allies of Thebes, Ethiopia or Libya, had been able to protect her. Nineveh, too, would “seek strength” in allies and find none.

POINTS TO PONDER

(20-9) An Epitaph for Nineveh

Rasmussen summarized the lesson of Nahum in these words:

“The final poem (chapter 3) opens with a prelude on the evils of the oppressive city, Nineveh. Her lies, rape, and sorcery; her prey in thousands slain; her harlotry and witchcraft and the seduction of the nations all are told. Because of all this, the prophet says she shall become detestable (verses 5–7). Like all others strong but wicked, Nineveh shall fall (verses 8–11); all her defenses shall be useless when her leaders flee like locusts (verses 12–17). Her end has come; there remains for the prophet but to write the epitaph (verses 18–19):

*Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria,
Thy worthies are at rest;
Thy people are scattered upon the mountains,
And there is none to gather them.
There is no assuaging of thy hurt,
Thy wound is grievous;
All that hear the report of thee
Clap the hands over thee;
For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed
continually? [Holy Scriptures, 1946 ed., The
Jewish Publication Society of America.]*

“Nahum’s message is still true: decadence ends in destruction. Although the Lord is ‘slow to anger,’ He is also ‘great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.’ His mercy shall not rob justice, but neither will justice rob His mercy. ‘The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.’” (“Nahum, a Poet-Prophet,” insert between pp. 270–71.)



The Day of the Lord's Wrath

(21-1) Introduction

Zephaniah was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah, Lehi, Nahum, and possibly Habakkuk. "The immediate occasion of his preaching appears to have been the advance of an enemy which threatened Judah and its neighbours with sudden and complete destruction. Evidently the dreaded foe is not their old masters, the Assyrians, nor their allies, the Egyptians, but the barbarous Scythians, who had already disturbed the politics of southwestern Asia. . . . A detachment of these ruthless foes, who worshipped their swords and gloried only in murder and plunder, was evidently already sweeping down the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. The prophet had his text, and his audience good reason to listen. Their old complacency was shaken. The awakened national conscience found expression on the lips of the royal prophet. Rising above the terror of the moment, he announced that these pitiless destroyers were Jehovah's instrument of punishment, and the catastrophe that threatened His day of judgment." (J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, pp. 592–93.)

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch pointed out that Zephaniah used the imminent danger to stress the universal nature of God's judgment: "Zephaniah's prophecy has a more general character, embracing both judgment and salvation in their totality, so as to form one complete picture. It not only commences with the announcement of a universal judgment upon the whole world, out of which the judgment rises that will fall upon Judah on account of its sins, and upon the world of nations on account of its hostility to the people of Jehovah; but it treats throughout of the great and terrible day of Jehovah, on which the fire of the wrath of God consumes the whole earth [Zephaniah 1:14–18; 2:2; 3:8]." (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10:2:122.) Such a message has meaning for people today as the world prepares for its spiritual and temporal judgment.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Zephaniah.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ZEPHANIAH

(21-2) Zephaniah 1:1. Who Was Zephaniah?

Zephaniah was commissioned by God to warn Judah and encourage her to repent. He was a contemporary of King Josiah, and his ministry probably played an important part in the reform movement of that time.

Israel was at a pivotal point between peril and safety. Zephaniah's sweeping prose account of God's judgments upon the wicked and the eventual triumph of His kingdom was the message vacillating Judea needed to hear.

The brief genealogy in verse one traces Zephaniah back to Hizkiah. It is not known whether this individual was the same as Hezekiah the king, and the other names are not of known individuals. Nothing is known of the life of Zephaniah beyond what can be inferred from his book.

(21-3) Zephaniah 1:1–9. Is This Prophecy of the Near or the Distant Future?

Beyond his message for Judah, Zephaniah asserted God's right and power to judge the whole earth. His design in cataloging all the various forms of life was to stress the complete scope of judgment. The reference to the wicked focuses attention on the main issue: sin and its inevitable consequences. (See D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 776.)

This prophecy is in keeping with the dualism so common in the writings of Hebrew prophets. Zephaniah both anticipated Judah's impending disaster and foresaw the final destruction of all the wicked (see Ellis T. Rasmussen, *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings*, 2:273). The phrase "day of the Lord" in Zephaniah 1:7 usually refers in the scriptures to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

(21-4) Zephaniah 1:10–18. The Great Day Comes: The People Reap the Judgments

The imagery of these verses may be difficult to understand because Zephaniah used terms familiar to listeners in his day but unfamiliar to modern readers. The following information will be helpful:

1. The "fish gate" (v. 10) was on the north end of the city. People there would be the first to see an enemy invading from the north.
2. The fish gate opened into the part of the city known as the "second quarter" (v. 10), probably because it was an expansion of the original city of David. This quarter would be the first reached from the north.
3. "Maktesh" (v. 11) was the name of the merchant quarter, which lay in the second quarter; thus, the reference to merchants, "they that bear silver."
4. To "search with candles" (v. 12) suggests an exhaustive search, since in the poorly lighted houses of those times one would have to use a candle to look for a lost object at night.
5. "Settled upon their lees" (v. 12) is a figure drawn from wine making. The lees are the thick residue of the pulp of the grapes. "Good wine, when it remains for a long time upon its lees, becomes stronger; but bad wine becomes harsher and thicker" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:134). The interpretation of the symbol

is that wicked men, like bad wine, remain apathetic about the true religion and become increasingly harsh and bitter.

(21-5) Zephaniah 2. Is There Hope of Any Escaping the Wrath When the Day of the Lord Comes?

Judah was not the only nation ripe for destruction. The foreign peoples who taunted and reviled Judah were even more worthy of annihilation. Each of them would share in the impending doom. Still, there was some hope.

“Those who see the worst in human nature are often the first to see a gleam of hope. Following the gloom, unmitigated and unrelieved in any way, Zephaniah sends one shaft of light into the darkness. A remnant may yet be saved [see vv. 2–3]. He does not see any way of escape for any but for the *humble*, whom he mentions in contrast to the proud who have provoked the jealous wrath of God.” (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 777.)

(21-6) Zephaniah 3:1–7. A Warning and Promise

Zephaniah turned again to Jerusalem with both warning and promise. He condemned many groups in Judah’s society, including the political leaders, the judges, the prophets, and the priests. Corruption was at every level. He stressed the constant righteousness and justice of the Lord, who continually brings down wicked people and nations. All hope was not to be lost, however, because there would still be a remnant with whom God could work and bring to pass His righteous purposes. In addition, there is always God’s unbounded mercy. The righteous in any age can take comfort in their righteousness.

(21-7) Zephaniah 3:8–20. Zephaniah’s Final Message

The prophet concluded on a note of optimism. The day will come when God’s people “shall not see evil any more” (Zephaniah 3:15). Those who have borne the burden of reproach shall be gathered from afar and become “a name and a praise” (v. 20) among men.

“Zephaniah saw our day and beyond. In it he both suffered and rejoiced. He suffered in spirit because of the desolation and destruction which he saw, but he was able to use this as a warning and threat to his own



Zephaniah warned unrepentant Jerusalem.

people. In the redemption and final blessings of Israel he saw a ray of hope to extend to Judah. No prophet has written more clearly or vigorously of the Day of the Lord. Zephaniah must be added to the list of prophets who give us a grave warning of disaster.” (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 388.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(21-8) The Prophets and the Last Days

Do you find the language and imagery of the Old Testament prophets difficult? Many do, but that should not become discouraging. The language and means of expression are far removed from the way we speak today. But gaining an understanding of them is worth the price of extra study, for the message has great application. Even though the prophets spoke to their own people and of their own times, through the inspiration they received they also spoke again and again of the last dispensation. There is great value in studying the writings of these men, for they saw our day and told us how to prepare for it.



A Question Is Asked of the Lord

(22-1) Introduction

Habakkuk “differs markedly from the other prophetic books. Whereas most of the others contain the words of the Lord addressed to the people, in the Book of Habakkuk the prophet, as the representative of the people, addresses and challenges the Lord. He begins by complaining about the apparent indifference of the Lord to violence, strife, and widespread corruption in Judah. The prophet is puzzled over this indifference, knowing as he does the righteous and holy character of God. The Lord, in answer to this complaining, states that He is about to raise up the Chaldeans to execute judgment. The prophet is only the more perplexed at this answer for he fails to understand why the Lord should use the cruel and fierce Chaldeans to execute judgment upon people who are more righteous than they are. The Lord, however, points out that the Chaldeans are to be but temporarily triumphant; they shall eventually meet with destruction, whereas the righteous shall live by faith. The oppressed nations may begin at once to rejoice over the fall of the Chaldeans; hence the prophet’s ‘taunt-song’ against them, which takes the form of five woes upon the corrupt traits in the enemy’s character and his many cruelties. The book ends in a beautiful anthem of praise, called in the title of Chapter Three ‘A prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet.’” (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 365–66.)

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Habakkuk.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON HABAKKUK

(22-2) Habakkuk 1:1. Who Was Habakkuk and When Did He Minister?

Habakkuk most probably served his ministry after the appearance of the Chaldeans in world history. Many scholars believe that he wrote after the battle of Carchemish in which Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians in 605 B.C. and before the first deportation of the Jews in 597 B.C. From his writing it is also believed he lived in Jerusalem. (See James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Habakkuk.”) If this is the case, then he was a contemporary of Lehi and Jeremiah, prophesying to the same people.

Nothing is known about the man himself other than what may be inferred from his writings. The traditional

material that has filtered down concerning him is evidently legendary and cannot be comfortably relied upon. It is known that he was a great prophet who left “one of the noblest and most penetrating words in the history of religion” (J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 587).

(22-3) Habakkuk 1:2–4. “O Lord, How Long Shall I Cry and Thou Wilt Not Hear?”

Habakkuk, like other prophets through the ages, wondered why the Lord would not answer his prayers. Doubtless everyone who believes in God has felt forsaken at times. Joseph Smith and even Jesus experienced this loneliness at least once in their lives (see D&C 121:1–6; Matthew 27:46). Ellis T. Rasmussen described Habakkuk’s dilemma in this way.

“Habakkuk’s miseries likely arose in the days of Judah’s degeneration, after the time of Assyria’s conquest of northern Israel, and before the time when Babylonia came to carry the remaining tribe, Judah, away into captivity. The religious reforms of Hezekiah in his century, and those of Josiah a hundred years later (about 620 B.C.) had put the just and the right at the helm in Judah for a time. But as always, resurgent corruption in politics, in morals, and in religion swiftly reappeared when the champions of right were gone.

“Religious compromises, induced by the desires of the liberal and the libertine, ever seeking to soften the restrictions and responsibilities of Israel’s covenant faith brought derision and persecution upon the ‘pious’ and the ‘faithful.’ Under these conditions Jeremiah suffered, and it is likely that this was also the setting of Habakkuk’s ministry.

“Thus it is that he cries out against the iniquity, grievance, spoiling, violence, strife, and contention on every side, for the processes of justice and execution of the law seem endlessly delayed when the righteous are encompassed about by the wicked.” (“Habakkuk, a Prophet with a Problem,” *Instructor*, Sept. 1962, insert between pp. 306–7.)

(22-4) Habakkuk 1:5–17. “I Raise Up the Chaldeans”

Habakkuk’s lament is one that has been raised by many: Why does the Lord allow wicked people and nations to operate, and why are they allowed, in some cases, to punish God’s people? Habakkuk did not mention the Babylonians (Chaldeans) in his question (see vv. 1–4), but it is obvious from the Lord’s answer that they were the ones of whom Habakkuk was thinking.

The Lord replied that He intended to use the Chaldeans for His righteous purposes in such a way that it would be difficult for Habakkuk to believe it (see vv. 5–6). The Lord’s response merely increased Habakkuk’s confusion: how could God condone the cruelties of a nation more wicked than Judah? Were the Chaldeans never to get what was due them for their evil ways? Habakkuk’s faith was being tested.

(22-5) Habakkuk 2. What Was Meant by “the Just Shall Live by His Faith” (v. 4)?

Sperry wrote that this verse “is one of the great passages of the Old Testament. It means essentially this: There is a moral and spiritual distinction between the Chaldeans and the people of Judah. The Chaldeans, puffed up and arrogant, priding themselves in their wealth and power and deceptive in their dealings with other nations, do not possess the moral and spiritual elements which alone can insure permanence and stability. The people of the Lord, on the other hand, [should] possess moral integrity, fidelity, and spiritual insight which insure for them a future. ‘The future belongs to the righteous.’ When the prophet says that ‘the righteous shall live by his faith (more accurately faithfulness)’ he implies permanency.” (*Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 371–72.)

(22-6) Habakkuk 3:1–2. What are a “Shigionoth” and a “Selah”?

A *shigionoth* may have been a stringed instrument, or perhaps a musical expression used to accompany singers. Possibly this prayer of Habakkuk was set to music and intended for use in the temple. A *selah* was a cue for the person singing or chanting the words. The use of this word in Psalms is further evidence that Habakkuk’s prayer may have been set to music.

(22-7) Habakkuk 3:4–20. Trust in God

The entire chapter is excellent Hebrew poetry. Habakkuk makes a number of references to events of Moses and Joshua’s time. Anyone familiar with those biblical events will recognize the ones alluded to. The burden of Habakkuk’s prayer is for Jehovah to return and sustain Israel as in days of old. This He will surely do in the latter days. Habakkuk’s trust was fully in God. Rasmussen said of Habakkuk’s song of praise:

“After [his] experience, Habakkuk felt inspired to utter a psalm of praise to God and trust in Him. In

awe at the powers and glory of God, he poetically describes the power of Deity over all facets and functions of nature, and speaks of His might to overcome all of His enemies. Then in the spirit expressed also by Job who said, ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him: . . .’; Habakkuk lists in six poetic lines the disasters that could come to him, but strongly he avers in his last five lines:

*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength,
and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet,
and he will make me to walk upon mine
high places . . .*

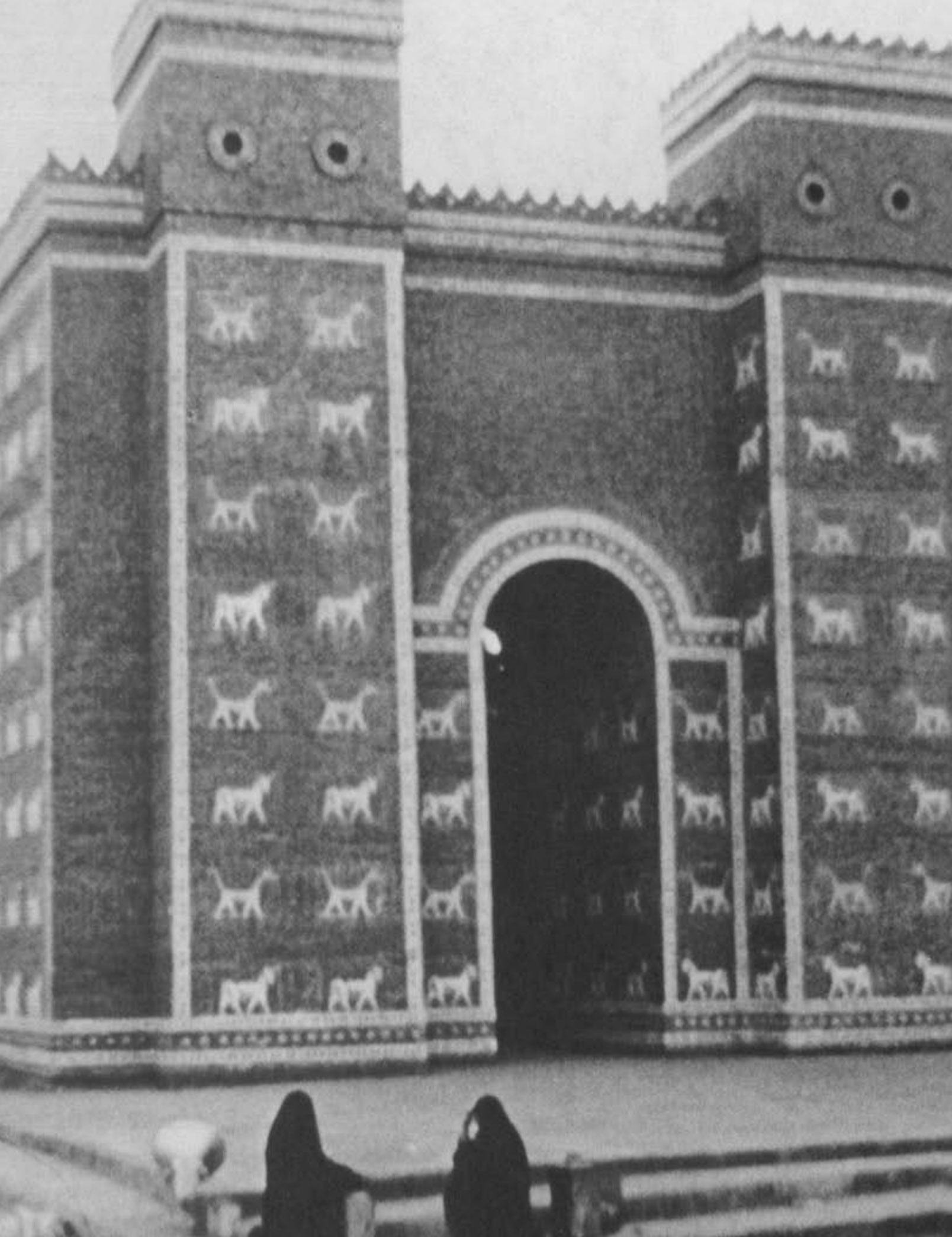
“It is for this trust in God in spite of the vicissitudes of life that Habakkuk’s message is for us also today a wholesome stimulant.” (“Habakkuk, a Prophet with a Problem,” insert between pp. 306–7.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(22-8) Why Does God Suffer the Wicked to Punish His People?

Using the book of Habakkuk as your primary source, write an answer for the questions: “Why does God allow the wicked to punish His people? It is true that the people of Israel did some evil things, but were they any worse than things done by Assyria or Babylon? The Nephites in Captain Moroni’s time were not perfect either, but weren’t they living at a higher level than the Lamanites who attacked them? Were the Jews of Jesus’ day less obedient than the Romans who destroyed them?”

As you formulate your answer, you may also wish to consider Doctrine and Covenants 82:3–4 and Doctrine and Covenants 103:5–10.



Babylonia and the Conquest of Judah

(G-1) Babylon: Symbol of Worldly Splendor

Not many years after Assyria had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and taken the ten tribes captive, the empire began to crumble (see Enrichment D). In the southern part of the empire, the Chaldeans and Babylonians were in the ascendancy, and they quickly seized power from the toppling Assyrians. In 609 B.C., King Nabopolassar, in league with Egypt and Media, attacked and conquered Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Babylonia became the ruling empire and set about to consolidate its position. Like Assyria before it, Babylonia used a combination of conquest and deportation of whole populations to do so.

Nebuchadnezzar inherited the empire when his father, Nabopolassar, died. Under Nebuchadnezzar's leadership Babylon reached the summit of its greatness and glory. Using slaves from various areas of the empire, Nebuchadnezzar inaugurated a massive building program and quickly made Babylon the greatest city in the world. Through conquest and commerce, the wealth of the world flowed into Babylon's treasury, and Nebuchadnezzar used that wealth to glorify the city. The descriptive phrases found in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament describe Babylon's glory. Daniel called it "this great Babylon" (Daniel 4:30); Jeremiah described it as "the praise of the whole earth" (Jeremiah 51:41); Isaiah said it was "the lady of kingdoms" (Isaiah 47:5), "the glory of kingdoms," and "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" (Isaiah 13:19).

Ancient historians spoke in detail of Babylon and showed that such descriptive phrases were not exaggerations. A modern scholar wrote that present-day archaeology supports the incredible claims of these writers:

"Herodotus claimed that this wall was eighty-four feet wide and three hundred and thirty-six feet high. He also claimed that small one-story houses were built on the top of the wall on either side, and there was even then space enough between the houses to permit four chariots to drive abreast.

"Herodotus has fared badly at the hands of modern critics, but in this instance the explorers found that this work of antiquity was even larger than he claimed. The outer retaining wall was twenty-three and a half feet thick and was made of baked bricks laid with asphalt. Inside of this there was a filling of sand and gravel which extended sixty-nine feet, and then the inner retaining wall, which was forty-four feet thick. The whole structure, therefore, was one hundred and thirty-six and a half feet wide. They also verified the statement of Diodorus to the effect that many of the bricks of the wall and its citadels were beautifully colored." (Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. "Babylon," pp. 208-9.)

These massive walls encircled the entire city, running an estimated fifty-six miles, about fourteen miles on each side (see Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Babylon," p. 116).

The walls were not the only amazing structure in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar married a Persian princess named Amytis. Raised in the mountain highlands around Ecbatana, she found the arid plains of Babylon depressing. Nebuchadnezzar set about to create a mountain paradise within the walls of Babylon to help his wife feel more at home. Thus were built the famous hanging gardens of Babylon, ranked as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The sheer size of the undertaking staggers the imagination. Fallows wrote:

"Babylon was all flat; and to accomplish so extravagant a desire an artificial mountain was reared, 400 feet on each side, while terraces one above another rose to a height that overtopped the walls of the city, that is, above 300 feet in elevation. The ascent from terrace to terrace was made by corresponding flights of steps, while the terraces themselves were reared to their various stages on ranges of regular piers, which, forming a kind of vaulting, rose in succession one over the other to the required height of each terrace, the whole being bound together by a wall of 22 feet in thickness. The level of each terrace or garden was then formed in the following manner: the top of the piers was first laid over with flat stones, 16 feet in length and 4 feet in width; on these stones were spread beds of matting, then a thick layer of bitumen; after which came two courses of bricks, which were covered with sheets of solid lead. The earth was heaped on this platform; and in order to admit the roots of large trees, prodigious hollow piers were built and filled with mold. From the Euphrates, which flowed close to the foundation, water was drawn up by machinery. The whole, says Q. Curtius (v:5), had, to those who saw it from a distance, the appearance of woods overhanging mountains. Such was the completion of Nebuchadnezzar's work when he found himself at rest in his house, and flourished in his palace. The king spoke and said, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and the honor of my majesty?' [Daniel 4:30], a picture which is amply justified by the descriptions of heathen writers. Nowhere could the king have taken so comprehensive a view of the city he had so magnificently constructed and adorned as when walking on the highest terrace of the gardens of his palace." (*Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Babylon," pp. 204-5.)

(G-2) Babylon: Symbol of Worldly Wickedness

As so often happens, Babylon's wealth and glory were accompanied by moral decay, wickedness, and iniquity. So terrible were the morals of Babylon that the very name became the symbol for worldliness, spiritual wickedness, and Satan's kingdom. It is "the great whore" (Revelation 17:1); "the mother of harlots and abominations" (Revelation 17:5; see also D&C 133:14; 1:16; 1 Nephi 13:5-9). The secular historians give information that helps to explain why the prophets used the name *Babylon* to symbolize the antithesis of godliness. Will Durant wrote that "even Alexander,

who was not above dying of drinking, was shocked by the morals of Babylon" (*Our Oriental Heritage, The Story of Civilization*, vol. 1, p. 244).

Fallows also described the great city: "Babylon, as the center of a great kingdom, was the seat of boundless luxury, and its inhabitants were notorious for their addiction to self-indulgence and effeminacy. Q. Curtius (v:I) asserts that, 'nothing could be more corrupt than its morals, nothing more fitted to excite and allure to immoderate pleasures. The rites of hospitality were polluted by the grossest and most shameless lusts. Money dissolved every tie, whether of kindred, respect, or esteem. The Babylonians were very greatly given to wine, and the enjoyments which accompany inebriety. Women were present at their convivialities, first with some degree of propriety, but, growing worse and worse by degrees, they ended by throwing off at once their modesty and their clothing.' On the ground of their awful wickedness the Babylonians were threatened with [appropriate] punishment, through the mouths of the prophets; and the tyranny with which the rulers of the city exercised their sway was not without a decided effect in bringing on them the terrific consequences of the Divine vengeance. Nor in the whole range of literature is there anything to be found approaching to the sublimity, force, and terror with which Isaiah and others speak on this painful subject [Isaiah 14:2; 47:1; Jeremiah 51:39; Daniel 5:1]." (*Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Babylon," pp. 205–6.)

(G-3) Judah Failed to Heed the Prophetic Warnings

Abraham foresaw that Israel would be in bondage in Egypt and not have an inheritance in the promised land because, as the Lord revealed, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:16; see also v. 13). The Canaanites, of whom the Amorites were a part, had not yet "ripened in iniquity" (see Ether 2:9; 9:20). By the time Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, however, the Canaanites had become so degenerate that the Lord commanded that they be utterly destroyed (see Deuteronomy 7:1–5).

Of all peoples who ought to have understood that wickedness will be punished, it should have been the people living in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. They had seen the Northern Kingdom fall to Assyria, and they themselves had been miraculously delivered from the Assyrian army because they had heeded the words of Isaiah (see Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 18–19 and Enrichment D).

God has clearly taught that He is no respecter of persons (see Acts 10:34). He does not show favoritism. All who are obedient receive blessings; all who are ripened in iniquity lose their blessings. As Nephi told his brothers, the Canaanites were destroyed because of their iniquity, and if the Jews were no better, they faced a similar fate (see Leviticus 18:24–28; 1 Nephi 17:32–35).

But Judah did not learn the lesson. After Assyria was overthrown, the pressures on the Southern Kingdom lessened while the new empire, Babylon, consolidated its power. Like her northern sister, Judah was soon deeply entrenched in idolatry and wickedness, so much so that the Lord said that king "Manasseh seduced them [Judah] to do more evil than did the nations whom

the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel" (2 Kings 21:9). In that state, Judah lost the promise of divine protection. And Babylon, hungry for power, stood waiting to conquer the world. The Lord sent His prophets to warn the people of their impending destruction. Jeremiah, Lehi, and many others were called (see 1 Nephi 1:4), but their warnings fell on deaf ears.

Under King Josiah (640–609 B.C.), one last attempt was made at reformation (see 2 Kings 22–23), but it was short-lived, and soon the people had forsaken Jehovah. The political rulers looked to Egypt for protection and power against Babylon's growing influence, even though Jeremiah had again and again warned Judah not to trust in Egypt for deliverance. Thus the stage was set for a second tragedy among the people of Israel.

(G-4) The Fall of Judah to Babylon

The events of the twenty or so years that followed Josiah's reign saw the fruits of Judah's disobedience brought to maturity. Judah was caught in the power struggle between Egypt and Babylonia. Jehoahaz succeeded his father and reigned three months. Then he was taken to Egypt, and his half brother who was given the throne name of Jehoiakim ruled as an Egyptian vassal. He exacted heavy taxes from his people for Egypt.

Babylon defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605 B.C. Judah became a vassal of the new conquerors. Jehoakim paid tribute to Babylon for three years before unsuccessfully attempting to free his people. The rebellious king was killed, and many of his people were exiled to Babylon. The king's wickedness had accelerated the deterioration of the people of Judah. He was succeeded by his young son Jehoiachin, who continued to resist the Babylonians but was defeated within three months.

The Babylonians deported many of the educated, skilled, and religious to weaken the leadership capability of Judah. Jehoiachin was likewise exiled, and his uncle, who took the throne name Zedekiah, ruled in his stead. He pledged loyalty as a vassal king but in time found resistance among the people. A spirit of nationalism rose against the weight of foreign servitude. Revolt in Babylon caused the withdrawal of the caretaker forces from Judah, and a growing patriotic feeling among the people brought Zedekiah to seek the support of Egypt in rebellion against the power of the north.

With matters quieted at home, the Babylonians returned with swift vengeance against Judah. Jerusalem was besieged and other fortresses in the land of Judah were attacked and reduced to rubble. The siege against Jerusalem continued after the rest of the nation had fallen. The conditions during this time were almost beyond imagination.

An eyewitness recorded the following description: "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is

become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills." (Lamentations 4:1-5.)

"They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people." (Lamentations 4:9-10.)

Bible historian Harry Thomas Frank wrote of the demise of this people and their city:

"In July of 587 Zedekiah sought to surrender the city and end the suffering. Once before, ten years ago, the Babylonians had treated Jerusalem with what was for those days extraordinary mercy. Not now. This time they meant to be done with the center of intrigue. Food ran out. So did the king. In the evening of the day Babylonian soldiers poured into the city, Zedekiah and some of his men fled, making for the Jordan and hoping to escape to safety in the desert. They got as far as Jericho before they were captured. Nebuchadnezzar was in Syria at his headquarters. There the Judahite and his sons were taken. No more Hebrew kings were to live in luxurious exile as Jehoiachin had done. With despatch Zedekiah was brought into the presence of the great king of Babylon, his sons were slain in his presence, and then he was blinded and dragged off northward in chains.

"Jerusalem had meanwhile passed into Babylonian hands. What the Babylonians found in the city, and what they did to what they found does not require a very fertile imagination. At the same time, somewhat surprisingly, there seems not to have been any prior decision as to what should be done with the city when it fell. For a month further horrors and indignities were visited upon the sorely tried people, who must have believed that they were indeed abandoned by God himself. Then Nebuzaradan, chief of Nebuchadnezzar's bodyguard and thus a person of considerable importance, arrived in Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan was not a herald of good news. Upon his orders high officials of the state, and with them certain leading persons in various professions, were taken to Riblah, the Syrian headquarters, where they were executed. Others were herded together to be taken into exile in Babylonia. Jeremiah 52:29 mentions the number 832. But this doubtless refers only to adult males and likely only to inhabitants of Jerusalem. The number of deportees was much larger. Finally the walls of Jerusalem were leveled, and what remained after a year and a half of siege, and a month of occupation and terror brought by Nebuzaradan, was put to the torch.

"Not for the last time smoke hung heavy over the Judean hills and blew gently across the Mount of Olives and toward the wilderness near the Jordan. But on that day, in the heat of the summer of 587, it rose from Judah's funeral pyre." (*Discovering the Biblical World*, p. 130. See Maps, "The First Exile and Return of Judah," for a detailed layout of this period of history.)



As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap

(23-1) Introduction

It was Jeremiah's privilege (or burden) to predict and then live through the fall of Judah to Babylon. One of the first things the Lord told Jeremiah was, "I will hasten my word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:12). Jeremiah, like Mormon, was called to labor among a people for whom there was no hope because they refused to repent, and "the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually" (Mormon 2:15). Mormon, after witnessing the destruction of the Nephite nation, cried out for his people (see Mormon 6:17–19). Here was a righteous man, one of the best, lamenting over his people who were so blind, so foolish, so spiritually dead. Jeremiah, too, mourned his people's wickedness. You may think of Jeremiah as a harsh man as you read his scorching denunciations of the Jewish people and the lives they were living, but he was not. His motivation, like Mormon's, was love.

A prophet does not select where and when he serves. God chooses when and to whom a prophet is sent. One may be an Enoch and build Zion, or a David O. McKay and preside over the Church in times of peace and prosperity. Another may be a Mormon or a Jeremiah and try in vain to save a rebellious and backsliding people. Each has his calling. Each has his time. Each has his lesson for you to learn. Look for Jeremiah's lesson as you study this great prophet.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Jeremiah 1–19.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 1–19

(23-2) Jeremiah 1:1–3. The Setting

Jeremiah, a Levite, came from Anathoth, a town of the priests that lay a few miles northeast of Jerusalem in the tribal territory of Benjamin. He labored in his prophetic calling during the reign of at least four kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. He began his labors as a youth in approximately 627 B.C. and was the leading prophet in Jerusalem, serving with Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Lehi, and others (see 1 Nephi 1:4). Since Lehi and Nephi refer to Jeremiah's prophecies, it is safe to assume that some of them were recorded on the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 5:14).

"With the exception of Josiah, all of the kings of Judah during Jeremiah's ministry were unworthy men under whom the country suffered severely. Even during the reign of an earlier king, the wicked Manasseh, the Baal cult was restored among the Jews, and there was

introduced the worship of the heavenly planets in accordance with the dictates of the Assyro-Babylonian religion. Jeremiah therefore found idolatry, hill-worship, and heathen religious practices rampant among his people. Heathen idols stood in the temple [Jeremiah 32:34], children were sacrificed to Baal-Moloch (7:31; 19:5; 32:35), and Baal was especially invoked as the usual heathen deity. The worship of the 'queen of Heaven' ought also to be mentioned. (7:18; 44:19) The corruption of the nation's religious worship was, of course, accompanied by all manner of immorality and unrighteousness, against which the prophet had continually to testify. The poor were forgotten. Jeremiah was surrounded on all sides by almost total apostasy. But professional prophets there were aplenty. Says Dr. H. L. Willett:

"He was surrounded by plenty of prophets, but they were the smooth, easy-going, popular, professional preachers whose words awakened no conscience, and who assured the people that the nation was safe in the protecting care of God. This was a true message in Isaiah's day, but that time was long since past, and Jerusalem was destined for captivity. Thus Jeremiah was doomed to preach an unwelcome message, while the false prophets persuaded the people that he was unpatriotic, uninspired, and pessimistic. (14:13, 14).'" (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 153.)

(23-3) Jeremiah 1:4–5. The Call of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:4–5 is a powerful proof of our premortal existence as individuals. The Lord certified to Jeremiah that his calling to a mission as a prophet unto the nations antedated his birth. The phrase "I knew thee" (Jeremiah 1:5) means more than a casual acquaintance. The Hebrew word *yada*, which is translated *knew*, connotes a very personal, intimate relationship. (See J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 145.) Indeed, Jeremiah's premortal appointment consisted of being foreordained, sanctified, and sent forth (compare Abraham 3:23).

(23-4) Jeremiah 1:6–10. The Charge

Jeremiah, like others called by the Lord to such heavy and humbling assignments, expressed his feelings of inadequacy. Compare Jeremiah's feelings with those of such others as Enoch (see Moses 6:31), Moses (see Exodus 4:10), and Gideon (see Judges 6:15).

In Jeremiah 1:9 the role of a prophet is succinctly set forth. A prophet does not necessarily say what he wants to say, for the Lord puts His own words into the mouth of the prophet. That is why it does not matter whether the word comes direct from God or through His servant: "it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

(23-5) Jeremiah 1:11–16. "What Seest Thou?"

Jeremiah's first vision was of a branch of an almond tree (see *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], p. 207, for the

significance of Aaron's rod being an almond branch). An almond branch was evidently chosen because it is the first tree to bud in spring. As the almond tree hastens to come into blossom, so would the word of the Lord through Jeremiah hasten to fulfillment.

Next, the vision of a "seething pot" was shown to Jeremiah, symbolizing the disaster and pain which, like the contents of a boiling cauldron, would spill over and run down the kingdoms of the north to overwhelm Judah (see C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 8:1:43–44).

The burning of incense (see Jeremiah 1:16) is a symbol of prayer (see Revelation 5:8; 8:3). Far more is implied in the Lord's accusation than just a ritual of burning incense to false gods. The people were seeking help and guidance from the false gods rather than from the Lord.

(23-6) Jeremiah 1:17–19. Arise and Speak

Jeremiah was told to stand stout and strong, to brace himself, and to declare the Lord's word without fear of man. The Lord likened him to an invincible city, preparing Jeremiah to stand firm against the onslaught that would pour out on him on every hand once he started his ministry and condemned the people's sins.

(23-7) Jeremiah 2:1–19. The Waters of Life Forsaken

The sequence of Israel's spiritual development is outlined in Jeremiah, chapter 2:

- Israel's early devotion and righteousness (see vv. 2–3).
- Israel's apostasy (see vv. 4–13). The Lord asked what fault the people found in Him that justified their turning away from Him.
- Tragic results of apostasy (see vv. 14–19). The Lord's people had forsaken Him, "gone far from" Him (v. 5), and changed "their glory for that which doth not profit" (v. 11).

In verse 13 the two evils committed by Judah are told in figurative terms: They have forsaken the fountain (Jehovah) of living water (life), and they have hewn out broken cisterns (gods) which can hold no water (life). Then the image is changed, and the Lord states that Israel had partaken of the waters of "Sihor" (the Nile) and of "the river" (v. 18) (the Euphrates). In other words, they drank the spiritual waters of Egypt and Babylon and were filled with the lifeless water of idolatry.

Verse 19 teaches the important truth that one is punished *by* as well as *for* one's transgressions. The phrase "my fear is not in thee" (v. 19) refers to the fear of God. *Fear* in the Hebrew denotes a sense of reverent awe and profound respect. If the Jews had this fear in them, they would not need to learn through the consequences of their transgressions.

(23-8) Jeremiah 2:20–37. Judah Denounced

Jeremiah used vivid imagery in denouncing Judah: "Broken thy yoke and burst thy bands" (v. 20). The Lord had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. "Playing the harlot" (v. 20). Judah had committed idolatry, or spiritual adultery, with false gods as well as actually engaging in unchaste practices.

"The degenerate plant of a strange vine" (v. 21). This wild vine brought forth poisonous berries, or evil works.



Judah, the lion of the Lord, is symbolized on the Lion Gate of Jerusalem.

"Wash thee with nitre [lye], and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked" (v. 22). The most powerful means of purification could not cleanse Judah's sins.

"In the valley" (v. 23). Probably this valley was the Hinnom Valley, where children were sacrificed to Molech (see Jeremiah 7:31).

"A swift dromedary traversing her ways; a wild ass . . . that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure" (vv. 23–24). The imagery indicates that as a camel or a wild ass in heat runs back and forth during the mating season, so did Israel run after false gods.

"Withhold thy foot from being shod and thy throat from thirst" (v. 25). In their anxiety to follow after the peoples of the world and worship false gods, they ran out of the house barefoot and would not even stop to slake their thirst.

"Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth" (v. 27). Israel worshiped images of wood and stone as the gods to whom they owed life and being.

"Where are thy gods?" (v. 28). The Lord challenged Judah to find help from the false idols now that destruction threatened her.

"In vain have I smitten your children" (v. 30). Even the judgments of the past, such as the fall of the Northern Kingdom and the siege of Judah by Assyria, were not enough to bring the people to repentance.

"Your own sword hath devoured your prophets" (v. 30). The people killed the prophets sent by God to warn them.

"Can a maid forget her ornaments?" (v. 32; see also vv. 33–34). Unlike the bride who adorns herself with chastity and faithfulness to her husband, this bride of Judah was found with soiled skirts, which were

so obvious that a search was not required to find them. Israel had become so skilled in doing evil that she could teach even the experienced harlots of idolatry (see v. 33).

(23-9) Jeremiah 3:1–11. “Played the Harlot”

Jeremiah continued the marriage symbolism he began in Jeremiah 2:32 (see Notes and Commentary on Hosea for other uses of this same symbolism).

Jeremiah 3:1, 6, 9, 14, and 20 show that the children of Israel had broken their vows to the Lord and had “played the harlot” (v. 1) with other gods. Northern Israel (the ten tribes), Judah’s sister, had also committed adultery (idolatry) with false gods, and the Lord had given her a bill of divorcement and sent her out of the land (she was taken captive by the Assyrians).

(23-10) Jeremiah 3:12–19. A Latter-day Prophecy and Promise

In the midst of condemning Judah for their apostasy, Jeremiah turned to the future when Israel will again become a faithful wife and be reclaimed. The Lord reminded Israel that He is merciful and that all they need do to be reclaimed is to turn back to Him. The Lord’s promises include the following:

- Missionary work and gathering to Zion (see v. 14).
- Knowledge and understanding taught by faithful pastors (church leaders) (see v. 15).
- The fulfillment of the old covenant and the establishment of a new covenant (see v. 16).
- The restoration of Jerusalem to righteousness (see v. 17).
- The gathering of Israel, including the return of the lost tribes from the north and the reuniting of the children of Judah in the lands of their inheritance (see vv. 18–19; see also Isaiah 11:16; 35:8–10; 51:9–11; D&C 133:26–35).

(23-11) Jeremiah 4:1–4. “Circumcise Yourselves to the Lord”

Circumcision was a token given to Abraham as a sign that a child was born into the covenant and was not accountable for sin until he was eight years old (see JST, Genesis 17:3–12). The Lord taught in numerous places in the scriptures that the true circumcision after a person is accountable is that of the heart (see Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 9:25–26; Romans 2:25–29). One must accept the covenant in his heart and become sinless through faith, repentance, and baptism.

(23-12) Jeremiah 4:5–31. Approaching Disasters

The Lord used various figurative images in Jeremiah 4:5–31 to foretell the catastrophe that was about to befall Judah.

“The lion” (v. 7). Renowned for its destructive killing power, the lion, Babylon, was about to come out of the thicket where it stayed hidden until it sallied forth on the hunt.

The “dry wind” (v. 11). The scorching desert winds were devastating in the Holy Land if they blew very long or hard, for they sucked the moisture from plants, animals, and people with terrible effect. This wind was not the gentle breeze used to fan away the chaff

while winnowing grain, but a full, hard wind (see v. 13).

“Clouds” and a “whirlwind” (v. 13). Babylon’s troops would be like a huge thundercloud covering the sky, and its effect would be that of a tornado.

Earth “without form, and void” (v. 23). See Genesis 1:2. So great would be the destruction that it would be as if the Creation had been undone.

Clothed “in crimson” (v. 30). In her extremity, like a harlot rejected by her former lovers, Judah would seek for help from her false gods in an ever more desperate search for relief, but she would find none.

(23-13) Jeremiah 5:1–31. National Corruption

Jerusalem had reached the point of no return. In an offer similar to the one He made to Abraham for the deliverance of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 18:23–33), the Lord promised to spare Judah if anyone could be found who lived justly or sought the truth (see Jeremiah 5:1).

But in a searing condemnation of Judah, Jeremiah showed that there were none such. Instead of doing righteous works, the people swore falsely (see v. 2); their faces were as hard as rock—they showed no repentance or compassion (see v. 3); they turned to the houses of prostitution in troops (see v. 7); like horses in the mating season, they neighed wildly for their neighbor’s wife (see v. 8); they had “a revolting and a rebellious heart” (v. 23); like those who trap birds, the people laid snares for other men and grew fat with the illegal gains (see vv. 26–28).

Nephi, a contemporary of Jeremiah, taught that the Canaanites in the time of Moses “had rejected every word of God, and they were *ripe in iniquity*; . . . and the Lord did curse the land against them . . . unto their destruction.” He used similar language to describe the children of Israel: “They have become wicked, yea, nearly unto *ripeness*,” and warned that they too faced destruction (1 Nephi 17:35, 43; emphasis added). It was bad enough that the society of Judah was filled with corrupt prophets and priests, but the real national tragedy, described in Jeremiah’s summary comment, was: “my people love to have it so” (Jeremiah 5:31). Further, in Jeremiah 8:10, the prophet said: “Every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.”

Is it any wonder Judah had no hope? Is it surprising that Jeremiah was so scathing in his denunciation?

(23-14) Jeremiah 6:14–15. “Peace, Peace”

Speaking of Jeremiah’s time, one scholar said: “The prophets and priests of the day dressed the nation’s wounds, but skin-deep only. Nor did they have any sense of shame for the loathsome deeds they perpetrated. They neither felt shame nor did they know how to blush. They had become completely insensitive to the evils in which they and their nation were immersed. But continued active involvement in evil has a way of dulling the conscience until a point is reached when all awareness of evil is lost. Thereafter leaders fall with the rest of those who fall. In the day of divine reckoning they too would go down, for it would be the day of their own doom.” (Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, p. 258.)

(23-15) Jeremiah 7:1–28. The Temple Would Not Save Judah

The boldness of Jeremiah's statement can be realized only when one recalls the importance given to the temple by the reforms of Josiah in 621 B.C. Josiah had made it the sole place of sacrificial worship of Jehovah for all Jews in an attempt to stamp out idol worship. The temple and its priests thus had acquired by this time greater importance than ever before. Then, in the name of Jehovah, Jeremiah issued a challenge that struck at the very existence of the temple. He plainly told the Jews that if they would mend their ways and become righteous, they would be spared; otherwise, not even the temple would save them, because they had made the temple a "den of robbers" (v. 11). Because of the great reverence the people had for the temple, though it was a false reverence, it is not surprising that Jeremiah was quickly arrested and imprisoned (see Jeremiah 26).

The language of Jeremiah 7:11, combined with that of Isaiah 56:7, was used by Jesus when He cleansed the temple (see Matthew 21:13).



The temple at Jerusalem was completely destroyed.

(23-16) Jeremiah 7:12. Why Did the Lord Tell Them to Go to Shiloh?

After the Israelites under Joshua conquered the land of Canaan, the tabernacle, the equivalent of the temple, was set up at Shiloh. Eventually Israel became so wicked that they set up graven images and worshiped them in direct competition with the tabernacle (see Judges 18:30–31). A short time later the Philistines attacked the Israelites and defeated them. They overran Shiloh and took the ark of the covenant in the battle (see 1 Samuel 4:10–12).

The parallel between Israel and Judah should have been evident. For the wicked to look to the temple as a source of protection was foolish. Jeremiah 7:21–23 reminded the people that obedience is more critical to God than the outward rituals of sacrifice performed in the temple.

(23-17) Jeremiah 7:29. "Cut Off Thine Hair"

"For their sins the people must *take up a lament*. The cutting off of the hair was a symbol of grief (Job 1:20; Mic. 1:16). The Hebrew text reads literally 'Cut off your crown (*nezer*).' The hair was looked on as, in a sense, a diadem. To cut off the hair was to bring down Israel's pride. But there may be here an overtone of something

else. The long hair of the Nazirite was a sign of his consecration to Yahweh [Jehovah] (Num. 6:2–8). The removal of the hair signified an abandonment of his consecration (Judg. 16:15–22). In Jeremiah's view, Israel, now represented only by Judah and Jerusalem, had abandoned her consecration to Yahweh and was not worthy to wear the crown of her long hair." (Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, p. 293.)

(23-18) Jeremiah 8:1–3. "Bring out the Bones"

"In order to pour the utmost contempt upon the land, the victorious enemies dragged out of their graves, caves, and sepulchers, the bones of kings, princes, prophets, priests, and the principal inhabitants, and exposed them in the open air; so that they became, in the order of God's judgments, a reproach to them in the vain confidence they had in the *sun, moon, and the host of heaven*—all the planets and stars, whose worship they had set up in opposition to that of Jehovah. This custom of raising the bodies of the dead, and scattering their bones about, seems to have been general. It was the highest expression of hatred and contempt." (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:276.)

(23-19) Jeremiah 8:22. "There Is No Balm in Gilead"

Gilead was famous for its healing ointment (see Genesis 37:25). Nevertheless, no healing ointment, or medication, was available for rebellious Israel. The balm of salvation could be administered only through Israel's Savior, Jehovah, whom they had rejected.

(23-20) Jeremiah 9. Jeremiah's Lament

Except, perhaps, for David's cry over his son Absalom (see 2 Samuel 18:33), or Jesus' prophetic lament over Jerusalem (see Matthew 23:37), or the lament of Mormon over the destroyed Nephite nation (see Mormon 6:16–22), few passages lamenting the results of sin in the scriptures are as moving as Jeremiah 9.

In Jeremiah 9:17–22, the Lord referred to the custom in ancient Israel of hiring professional mourners, women who were paid to wail and lament for long periods of time at someone's death. Jeremiah was told to hire professional mourners to lament over Judah.

(23-21) Jeremiah 9:16. Was Judah to Be Completely Consumed?

To be consumed does not mean to become extinct. Being consumed and destroyed, in the context of the prophecies of the scattering of Israel, meant to be utterly disorganized and disbanded so that Israel's power, influence, and cohesiveness as a nation was gone. Moses, in Deuteronomy 4:26, told all Israel that they would "utterly be destroyed." Yet the verses following show that Israel still existed as homeless individuals.

(23-22) Jeremiah 10:1–16. Some Common Logic about Idols

In a profound and yet simple chain of reasoning, Jeremiah showed the stupidity and sheer illogic of worshipping an idol. People take such materials as wood and precious metals which they work and shape at their own will, making all kinds of objects of

service. Then they take those same materials, make them into an idol by the work of their own hands, and suddenly expect the idol to be filled with supernatural power and be able to provide miraculous aid for the person who made it.

(23-23) Jeremiah 11:1-14. None Shall Escape

Jeremiah 11:1-14 refers to the covenant the Lord made with the house of Israel at the time of the Exodus. "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exodus 6:7). Even as the Jews' forefathers broke the covenant, so had their children in Judah (see Jeremiah 11:10). Therefore, none would escape the punishment decreed, nor would the prayers of Jeremiah or those of the people help (see vv. 11-14).

Sperry wrote: "Jeremiah's warning was in vain. The Lord pointed out to him that there was a conspiracy among the Jews and that they had turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers. Their gods were as numerous as their cities, and the number of altars set up to Baal was according to the number of streets in Jerusalem. But, warned the Lord, their gods would not save them in the time of their trouble. In view of their spiritual condition *the prophet was commanded not to pray* for the people. Nor would the Lord hear their cries unto Him. (11:9-14)." (*Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 165-66; emphasis added.)

(23-24) Jeremiah 12:1-4. Why Do the Wicked Prosper?

Jeremiah raised age-old questions: Why do the wicked sometimes prosper while the righteous do not? (see Jeremiah 12:1). How much time will pass before their wickedness will be punished? (see v. 4; Malachi 3:13-18).

"The enmity experienced by Jeremiah at the hands of his countrymen at Anathoth excites his displeasure at the prosperity of the wicked, who thrive and live with immunity. He therefore begins to expostulate with God, and demands from God's righteousness that they be cut off out of the land (vers. 1-4); whereupon the Lord reproves him for this outburst of ill-nature and impatience by telling him that he must patiently endure still worse.—This section, the connection of which with the preceding is unmistakable, shows by a concrete instance the utter corruptness of the people; and it has been included in the prophecies because it sets before us the greatness of God's long-suffering towards a people ripe for destruction." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 8:1:219.)

(23-25) Jeremiah 12:5. "How Canst Thou Contend with Horses?"

To Jeremiah's question about why the wicked prosper, the Lord gave a vivid answer that has helped many to build up their courage. Clarke wrote: "If the smallest evils to which thou art exposed cause thee to make so many bitter complaints, how wilt thou feel when, in the course of thy prophetic ministry, thou shalt be exposed to much greater, from enemies much more powerful? *Footmen* may here be the symbol of *common evil events*; *horsemen*, of evils much more terrible. If thou have sunk under small difficulties, what wilt thou do when great ones come?

"I believe the meaning is this, 'If in a country now enjoying peace thou scarcely thinkest thyself in safety, what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? in the time when the enemy, like an overflowing torrent, shall deluge every part of the land?'

"The overflowing of Jordan, which generally happened in harvest, drove the lions and other beasts of prey from their coverts among the bushes that lined its banks; who, spreading themselves through the country, made terrible havoc, slaying men, and carrying off the cattle." (*Commentary*, 4:287.)

(23-26) Jeremiah 12:9. How Is Judah like a "Speckled Bird"?

Thompson explained the symbol of the speckled bird in this way:

"Israel with her proud plumage has attracted the attention of birds of prey (enemies) who move in to attack her. An alternative translation arises from rendering *sabua* as a noun, 'hyena,' which is possible. This understanding of the word combined with the [Septuagint] substitution of the word 'cave' for 'bird of prey' leads to the translation:

"'Is this land of mine a hyena's lair

"'With birds of prey hovering all around it? (NEB)'

"The picture that results is of a hyena's lair with vultures hovering around waiting to swoop down on what is left of a carcass after the hyena has eaten. In either case the people and land are under attack from foes. There is a feast prepared for all the wild beasts (lit. 'beasts of the field'). The destruction of Judah will provide pickings for all." (*Book of Jeremiah*, p. 358.)



Ancient Jerusalem was despoiled and destroyed.

(23-27) Jeremiah 12:14-17. Can the Spoilers of Judah Ever Be Blessed of the Lord?

"The spoilers of the Lord's heritage are also to be carried off out of their land; but after they, like Judah, have been punished, the Lord will have pity on them, and will bring them back one and all into their own land. And if the heathen, who now seduce the people of God to idolatry, learn the ways of God's people and be converted to the Lord, they shall receive citizenship amongst God's people and be built up amongst them; but if they will not do so, they shall be extirpated [pulled out by the roots; wiped out]. Thus will the Lord manifest Himself before the whole earth as

righteous judge, and through judgment secure the weal [health or prosperity] not only of Israel, but of the heathen peoples too. By this discovery of His world-plan the Lord makes so complete a reply to the prophet's murmuring concerning the prosperity of the ungodly (vers. 1–6), that from it may clearly be seen the justice of God's government on earth." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 8:1:228.)

(23-28) Jeremiah 13:1–11. The Parable of the Loincloth

The linen girdle represents the priestly nation of Judea, since linen was used for priestly garments (see Leviticus 16:4). Sperry wrote: "The parable, so it seems to me, should not be pressed too far by logical Westerners. Its general outlines and explanation, however, seem reasonably clear. The girdle represents the whole house of Israel, including Judah. 'For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord, . . .' (13:11) By reason of the iniquities of the Lord's people (in this case the Jews), they will become separated from Him. The coming Captivity into Babylon could well be represented by the hiding of the girdle near the Euphrates. The fact that the girdle was 'marred' in its hiding place simply indicates that the close relationship between God and the Jews had been strained to the breaking point." (*Voice of Israel's Prophets*, p. 167.)

(23-29) Jeremiah 13:22–27. Can a Leopard Change His Spots?

Skin color, like a leopard's spots, cannot be changed. But what of Israel's sins?

"So inured in this corrupt behavior have the people become that they are hopelessly fixed in it. They are no more capable of changing their ways than an Ethiopian could change his skin or a leopard his spots. Therefore they will be scattered, because they forgot the Lord and 'relied on what was false' (Moffatt).

"It is hardly necessary to point out that Jeremiah is not speaking in vs. 23 of 'natural evil' or of any 'radical defect in human nature.' He is not saying that men are so necessarily sinners that they are like the Ethiopian or the leopard and can do nothing about it. He is, however, saying that whether totally black or only spotted the perspective of evil in the people is so fixed that they *will* do nothing about it. The cause of it is the foundation cause: they have forgotten the Lord. Therefore the disasters come." (*The Interpreter's Bible*, 5:928.)

(23-30) Jeremiah 14–15. A Prophet's Prayer

Jeremiah 14–15 presents a discussion between Jeremiah and the Lord concerning a great drought and the effects attending it. Both people and animals were affected greatly, as Keil and Delitzsch wrote: "The distress arising from a lengthened drought [Jeremiah 14:2–6] gives the prophet occasion for urgent prayer on behalf of his people [Jeremiah 14:7–9, 19–22]; but the Lord rejects all intercession, and gives the people notice, for their apostasy from Him, of their coming destruction by sword, famine, and pestilence [Jeremiah 14:10–18; 15:1–9]. Next, the prophet complains of the persecution he has to endure, and is corrected by the

Lord and comforted [Jeremiah 15:10–21]. Then he has his course of conduct for the future prescribed to him, since Judah is, for its sins, to be cast forth into banishment, but is again to be restored [Jeremiah 16:1–17:4]. And the discourse concludes with general considerations upon the roots of the mischief, together with prayers for the prophet's safety, and statements as to the way by which judgment may be turned aside." (*Commentary*, 8:1:242–43.)

(23-31) Jeremiah 14:1–6. How Serious Was the Drought?

Everyone, even the wealthy, was affected by the drought, a calamity to which Judah was often subject. Ordinarily Judah's summers are dry, for little rain falls from April to the middle of October. This scanty rainfall leaves the rivers low, or even dry, and grass is scarce.

Speaking of the drought of Jeremiah's day, Keil and Delitzsch wrote that "the country and the city, the distinguished and the mean, the field and the husbandmen, are thrown into deep mourning, and the beasts of the field pine away because neither grass nor herb grows. This description gives a touching picture of the distress into which the land and its inhabitants have fallen for lack of rain. Judah is the kingdom or the country with its inhabitants; the gates as used poetically for the cities with the citizens. Not mankind only, but the land itself mourns and pines away, with all the creatures that live on it; cf. v. 4, where the ground is said to be dismayed along with the tillers of it." (*Commentary*, 8:1:244.)

(23-32) Jeremiah 14:7–18. Jeremiah's Intercession for Israel

Jeremiah besought God to turn His wrath aside, if only "for thy name's sake" (Jeremiah 14:7). The Lord refused to do that and instructed Jeremiah to "pray not for this people for their good" (v. 11). But Jeremiah refused to desist because false prophets had lulled the people into sin by assuring them of peace (see v. 13). The Lord rejected the excuse for the people's sins. Nothing, it seemed, would turn His wrath aside (see vv. 14–18). Still, Jeremiah persisted (see vv. 19–22). Compare Jeremiah's enduring love for his rebellious people with that of Moses (see Exodus 32:31–32) and Mormon (see Mormon 2:10–14).

(23-33) Jeremiah 15:1–14. "I Am Weary with Repenting"

Plainly, Judah had reached the point at which the Lord would no longer forgive them. Jeremiah represented the Lord as saying, "I am weary with repenting" (Jeremiah 15:6), that is, with repeatedly relenting and giving Israel another chance. Nothing God did had worked; further delay was useless.

The phrase "mother of the young men" (v. 8) is either a reference to the mother city, Jerusalem (see Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:295), or to the mothers of the youth or young warriors (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 8:1:257).

Even Jeremiah himself would be carried "into a land which [he] knowest not" (Jeremiah 15:14).

(23-34) Jeremiah 15:15–21. The Lord Sustained His Prophet

Jeremiah then began to plead for himself. He, at least, had been faithful, even if Judah had not. “I sat not in the assembly of the mockers” (Jeremiah 15:17), he reminded the Lord. The Lord sustained His prophet: “I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked” (v. 21). As it happened, Jeremiah was not taken into Babylon but went into Egypt and probably died there a few years later. The Lord’s promise, however, was more likely a promise of spiritual deliverance, a promise of an eternal reward for his faithfulness, since Jeremiah was taken into Egypt against his will.

(23-35) Jeremiah 16:1–12. “Thou Shalt Not”

Jeremiah’s day was a sad one for Judah. To symbolize that truth, the Lord told His prophet three things that he was not to do:

1. He was not to marry or father children (see Jeremiah 16:2). So universal was the calamity bearing down upon the people that God did not want children to suffer its outrage. This commandment, like the one to Hosea to take a wife of whoredoms (see Hosea 10), may not have been a literal one. Perhaps the meaning is that Jeremiah was not to expect that his people would marry themselves to the covenant again, nor was he to expect to get spiritual children (converts) from his ministry.

2. He was not to lament those in Judah who died by the sword or famine (see Jeremiah 16:5), since they brought these judgments upon themselves.

3. He was not to feast or eat with friends in Jerusalem (see v. 8), since feasting was a sign of celebration and eating together a symbol of fellowship.

In addition, Jeremiah was commanded to explain clearly to the people the reasons for his actions as well as the reasons for their coming punishment.

(23-36) Jeremiah 16:13–21. Doom and Delivery

In a general conference address Elder LeGrand Richards commented on these verses:

“Just contemplate that statement [vv. 14–15] for a few moments. Think how the Jews and the Christians all through these past centuries have praised the Lord for his great hand of deliverance under the hands of Moses when he led Israel out of captivity, and yet here comes Jeremiah with this word of the holy prophet, telling us that in the latter days they shall no more remember that, but how God has gathered scattered Israel from the lands whither he had driven them.

“And Jeremiah saw the day when the Lord would do this very thing, when he would call for many fishers and many hunters, ‘and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.’ (Jer. 16:16.) Where do you find those fishers and hunters that we read about in this great prophecy of Jeremiah? They are these 14,000 missionaries of this church, and those who have preceded them from the time that the Prophet Joseph Smith received the truth and sent the messengers out to share it with the world. Thus have they gone out, fishing and hunting, and gathering them from the hills and the mountains, and the holes in the rocks. I think that is more literal than some of us think!” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 143; or *Ensign*, June 1971, pp. 98–99.)



Elder LeGrand Richards

(23-37) Jeremiah 17:1–18. Metaphors and Similes

This chapter is full of metaphors and similes with which the prophet Jeremiah illustrated Judah’s fallen state.

Their sin is written “with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond” (Jeremiah 17:1). These metaphors speak of how deeply sin was imbedded in Judah’s consciousness.

“O my mountain in the field” (v. 3) is likely a reference to Jerusalem, which is nestled in the hill country of Judea.

The focus of one’s trust determines whether he is cursed or blessed (see vv. 5, 7).

“The heath in the desert” (v. 6) represents Judah as a withered tree without moisture or sustenance.

The Lord searches the heart and tries the reins (the inner self) to determine directions (see v. 10).

Like a bird (partridge) that sits on eggs that will not hatch, so those of Judah who get rich by dishonest means will leave empty-handed (see v. 11).

Jesus Christ (Jehovah in the Old Testament) is the very “hope of Israel,” the “fountain of living waters” (v. 13; see also John 4:9–14). Jesus is the Good Shepherd, a Pastor to those who follow Him (see v. 16; see also John 10:14; Psalm 23:1).

(23-38) Jeremiah 17:19–27. What Other Grave Sin, Besides Idolatry, Was Judah Guilty Of?

“Living as we do in an age when the spirit of Sabbath observance is so flagrantly violated, it may be well for us to observe the remarkable importance attached by Jeremiah to keeping this day holy. Not only did the prophet command the people to hallow the day and

not do any work therein, but he went so far as to promise that the city of Jerusalem would remain or be inhabited forever: . . .

“This teaching of Jeremiah’s . . . gives a strong indication of how important the Lord considers Sabbath observance to be. (Cf. D.&C. 59:9–24) Not only does one have a good opportunity on the Sabbath to meditate on God and His goodness, but also to worship Him and rest both mentally and physically. Moreover, the Sabbath gives men the opportunity of building up love in their own households and of kindling a good spirit in their neighbors. Probably Jeremiah thought that if his people would observe the spirit of the Sabbath they could eventually be turned from their wicked course and be worthy of the promises the Lord made.” (Sperry, *Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 172–73.)

(23-39) Jeremiah 18:1–10. How Was Judah Clay in the Hands of the Potter?

“Elder Heber C. Kimball preached at the house of President Joseph Smith, on the parable in the 18th chapter of Jeremiah, of the clay in the hands of the potter, that when it marred in the hands of the potter it was cut off the wheel and then thrown back again into the mill, to go in to the next batch, and was a vessel of dishonor; but all clay that formed well in the hands of the potter, and was pliable, was a vessel of honor; and thus it was with the human family, and ever will be: all that are pliable in the hands of God and are obedient to His commands, are vessels of honor, and God will receive them.

“President Joseph arose and said—‘Brother Kimball has given you a true explanation of the parable.’” (*History of the Church*, 4:478.)

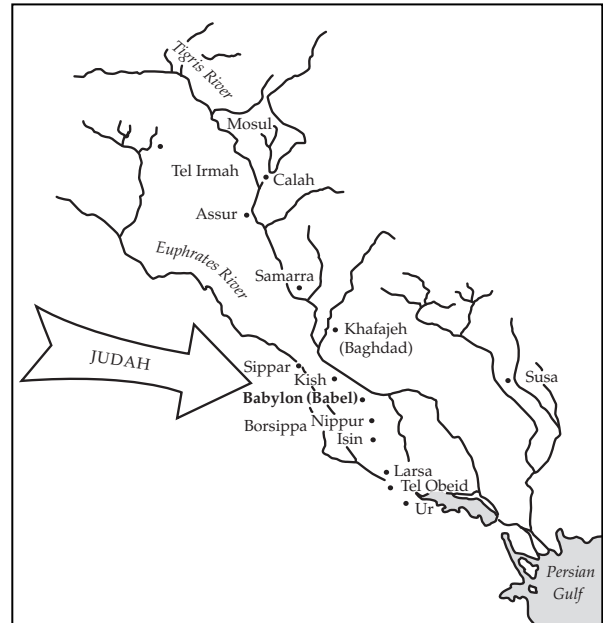
(23-40) Jeremiah 18:17–23. “Smite Him”

Because of Jeremiah’s boldness, the people entered into a league to punish the prophet. The phrase “let us smite him *with the tongue*” (v. 18) is better translated “smite him *on the tongue*.” “Lying and false testimony are punished in the eastern countries . . . by smiting the person on the mouth with a strong piece of leather like the sole of a shoe.” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:303.)

(23-41) Jeremiah 19:1–15. Judah Will Be Broken and Scattered

Jeremiah’s discourse in 19:1–15 was delivered during the reign of Jehoiakim. By the breaking of a potter’s bottle or jar, Jeremiah represented the sacking and captivity of Judah. Once broken, the bottle “cannot be made whole again.” Although the Jews did return from Babylonian captivity at the end of 70 years, nearly 1,900 years have elapsed since Jerusalem was destroyed and its inhabitants scattered by the Romans, and Israel is only now finally being gathered back into the covenant.

The grim prediction of cannibalism (see v. 9) was fulfilled during the siege of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar (see Lamentations 4:4–10).



Judah was broken off as a nation and taken to Babylon.

POINTS TO PONDER

(23-42) The Everlasting Warnings to the Wicked

In his last address before his departure, Moses set before the children of Israel both a blessing and a curse: “If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments . . . the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. . . . But . . . if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments . . . the Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke.” (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15, 20.)

The Lord’s word through Jeremiah is the same as that given through other prophets to God’s people throughout history. It holds the promise of doom or destiny, punishment or prosperity, all dependent upon faithfulness to those laws irrevocably decreed by God (see D&C 130:19–20).

Read and consider the following references: Doctrine and Covenants 63:58; 64:34–43; 101:7–16; 103:7–18.

Then read the words of a modern prophet to his own people:

“The growing permissiveness in modern society gravely concerns us. Certainly our Heavenly Father is distressed with the increasing inroads among his children of such insidious sins as adultery and fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, abortions, pornography, population control, alcoholism, cruelty expressed in wife-beating and child-abuse, dishonesty, vandalism, violence, and crime generally, including the sin of living together without marriage.

“We call upon our Church members everywhere to renew their efforts to strengthen the home and to honor their parents, and to build better communications between parent and child.

“Important as it is, building stronger homes is not enough in the fight against rising permissiveness. We therefore urge Church members as citizens to lift their voices, to join others in unceasingly combating, in their communities and beyond, the inroads of pornography and the general flaunting of permissiveness. Let us vigorously oppose the shocking developments which encourage the old sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, and which defile the human body as the temple of God. . . .

“God will not be mocked. His laws are immutable. True repentance is rewarded by forgiveness, but sin brings the sting of death. . . .

“As we think back upon the experiences of Nineveh, Babylon, Sodom and Gomorrah, we wonder—will history repeat itself? What of our world today? Are we forgetting in our great nations the high and lofty principles which can preserve the nations? . . .

“. . . There are among us those same vices which we have seen wreck empires, and we see them becoming flagrant in all nations. Shall we, like Belshazzar, sow the wind and reap the whirlwind? Shall we permit the home to deteriorate and marriage to become a mockery? Shall we continue to curse God, hate our enemies, and defile our bodies in adulterous and sensuous practices? And when the patience of the Lord with us is exhausted, shall we stand trembling while destruction comes upon us? Or shall we wisely see the handwriting on the wall and profit by the sad experience of the past and return unto the Lord and serve him?” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 5–7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, pp. 5–6.)



The Babylonian Captivity

(24-1) Introduction

Jeremiah, left behind in a desolate city by the Babylonian captors, asked some pointed questions. How did it happen that a city once full of people, visited by kings and queens of other nations, now lay desolate and empty? There was no echo of people calling in its streets. Anything of value now rested in other homes, in other temples. How could it happen? Indeed, why do great men and women—like great cities—fail to maintain their greatness and fall short of their destiny?

Jeremiah had the answers to these questions. What he needed was someone to truly listen.

This chapter surveys Jeremiah's teachings and warnings to his people in the context of the impending Babylonian captivity. (See 2 Kings 24–25.) But Jeremiah was not just a prophet of doom, although it may seem so in this lesson. Like Enoch (see Moses 7:41–69), Jeremiah was allowed to see the coming of the Savior and the restoration of God's church and people in the latter days. (See chap. 25.)

As you read Lamentations and the historical chapters of Jeremiah, observe the correlation between a nation's righteousness and its long-term power, the correlation between a people's leaders and the righteousness of the people, and the relationship between a prophet and God's dealings with His children.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Jeremiah 20–22; 24–29; 32; 34–45; 52; and Lamentations. These chapters are historical and deal with Judah's fall and captivity. The prophetic chapters of Jeremiah will be dealt with in the next chapter.

2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 20–22; 24–29; 32; 34–45; 52

(24-2) Jeremiah 20:1–6. Jeremiah in Stocks

Jeremiah 19:14–15 records Jeremiah's standing in the court of the temple, again reminding the people of the troubles that lay ahead because of their wickedness. When Pashur, the chief overseer of the temple, heard of the incident, he had Jeremiah beaten and placed in stocks. Stocks were an instrument of torture by which the body was forced into an unnatural position, much as the wooden stocks of medieval times confined parts of the body, such as the arms, legs, or head, by means of wooden beams that locked them into place.

Far from being cowed by this harsh treatment, Jeremiah used it as a further opportunity to teach. *Pashur*, in Hebrew, means "free." Jeremiah, upon being released, told Pashur that the Lord had a different name for him. Jeremiah said that God had not called him *Pashur*, or "free," but *Magor-missabib*, which means "fear on every side." (See Jeremiah 20:3–4.)

(24-3) Jeremiah 20:7–18. The Weight of God's Word

The great stress the prophetic calling caused Jeremiah is particularly discernible in Jeremiah 20:7–8, 14–18. The Hebrew word translated in verse 7 as "deceived" means literally "enticed" or "persuaded." The power that persuaded the prophet to continue to preach God's word at such great personal cost was "as a burning fire shut up in [his] bones" (v. 9). It could not be stayed. Verses 14–18 reflect Jeremiah's despair over the lonely ministry he was given. Some scholars believe these verses originally were meant to precede verses 7–13 because the tenor of the lament changes in verses 11–13, in which Jeremiah began to praise the Lord.

(24-4) Jeremiah 21; 22:1–9. Will the Lord Do What He Has Said?

King Zedekiah sent Pashur to inquire of the Lord through Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem. Jeremiah's response had three parts: (1) The answer to the king's hope that the Lord would intervene to save Jerusalem from the Chaldeans (see Jeremiah 21:4–7) was clear: there was no hope. (2) Counsel on how the people and the royal family could preserve their lives by surrendering to the Chaldeans rather than fighting them (see vv. 8–10). (3) A prophecy concerning the house of David (see 21:11–14; 22:1–9), to which Jeremiah gave an alternative: If the king and his people would turn back to righteousness, the throne of David would be preserved (see Jeremiah 22:4), but if not, it would "become a desolation" (v. 5).

Gilead symbolized the richest soil Israel knew, and Lebanon the highest mountain and the finest trees (see v. 6). But the Lord sent His destroyers, and the finest lands were desolated. The reason is given in verse 9.

(24-5) Jeremiah 22:10–30. Specific Condemnations for Judah's Rulers

"Weep not for the dead" (Jeremiah 22:10; see also vv. 11–12) refers to Josiah, king of Israel, who died of a wound received in the battle of Megiddo. "Weep sore for him that goeth away" (v. 10) refers to Shallum, or Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah and successor to the throne, who was carried away to Egypt. (See Enrichment G.)

The major teaching of Jeremiah 22:10–30 is that the Lord's fairest and most beloved people, Judah, faced great tragedy because of their iniquity. The people were not to mourn for their lost kings. Rather, they should mourn the impending tragedy and turn aside from their evil ways.

Jeremiah rebuked Jehoiakim for his self-centered life and his injustices to his people (see vv. 13–19), which were particularly evident when compared to the righteous deeds of his father, Josiah (see vv. 15–16).

An ass's burial (see v. 19) meant to be left unburied in the open field. This prophecy probably was fulfilled when Jehoiakim was taken captive during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. (See Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 24:5–7.)

The names *Lebanon* and *Bashan* (see Jeremiah 22:20) were used to describe the passage of Israel from Judah into Babylon. Just as the dry wind destroys the grazing land by eating the pastures, or pastures (see v. 22), so would Babylon destroy Judah's shepherds and leaders.

Verse 23 is somewhat caustic. Because of their loftiness and beauty, the cedars of Lebanon often were used as a symbol of pride. Here they are symbols of Judah's leaders, who are told to consider just how great they will be when the pains of war come.

(24-6) Jeremiah 22:24–30. Jehoiachin Shall Not Return

Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was called Coniah by Jeremiah. Coniah was likened to a signet, which is a seal or ring that is valued both as a symbol of power and as a jewel. Then Coniah, or Jehoiachin, was told that if he were all that God had of value, in Jehoiachin's present state of unrighteousness, Jehoiachin still would have to be delivered into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, never to return. (See vv. 25–27.)

Notes and Commentary on Jeremiah 23 are in chapter 25.

(24-7) Jeremiah 24. What Is the Meaning of the Parable of the Figs?

It was the Lord's will that Judah submit to Babylonia, take their punishment, and repent. Those who did so were carried away "for their good" (Jeremiah 24:5). Zedekiah and others, however, refused to submit. Adam Clarke said:

"Under the type of *good* and *bad figs*, God represents the state of the persons who had already been carried captives into Babylon, with their king Jeconiah, compared with the state of those who should be carried away with Zedekiah. Those already carried away, being the *choice* of the people, are represented by the *good figs*: those now remaining, and soon to be carried into captivity, are represented by the *bad figs*, *that were good for nothing*. The *state* also of the *former* in their captivity was vastly preferable to the *state* of those who were now about to be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. The *latter* would be treated as *double rebels*; the *former*, being the most respectable of the inhabitants, were treated well; and even in captivity, a marked distinction would be made between them, God ordering it so. But the prophet sufficiently explains his own meaning. . . .

"[The Lord says,] Those already carried away into captivity, I esteem as far more excellent than those who still remain in the land. They have not sinned so deeply, and they are now penitent; and therefore, *I will set mine eyes upon them for good*, ver. 6. I will watch over them by an especial providence, and they shall be restored to their own land." (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:316–17; see also Enrichments G and A.)

(24-8) Jeremiah 25:16–29. Who Will Drink the Cup of God's Fury?

Commentary on the phrase "cup of [the Lord's] fury" is found in Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 51:17–23. Beginning in Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, the bitter cup will be drunk by Egypt, the nations of the west and east, and Babylonia.

The last part of chapter 25 prophetically leaps forward into the future to the time of the battle of Armageddon. That battle is depicted here to show Judah that the wicked nations will not escape the Lord's judgment. The language of these scriptures shows that what Jeremiah saw was the time when all nations shall gather together against the Lord's people and be brought into judgment. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith specifically tied the Lord's controversy with the nations to the last days (see *The Signs of the Times*, pp. 138–75). And the language of Jeremiah 25:32–33 is similar to other scriptures about Armageddon. (See Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 38–39; Enrichment I.)

(24-9) Jeremiah 26:1–9. Jerusalem As Shiloh

The book of Jeremiah is not arranged chronologically. For example, Jeremiah 25 discusses the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. Then, Jeremiah 26:1–9 discusses the first year of his reign.

Jeremiah compared Jerusalem to Shiloh, which was the first permanent resting place for the tabernacle and the place at which the tribes cast lots for their inheritances. Shiloh was part of Ephraim's heritage and was the place where Hannah took Samuel to serve Eli. The Lord was saying in Jeremiah 26:1–9 that just as He allowed the tabernacle to be desecrated by the Philistines, so would He allow the temple to be desecrated by the Babylonians. And just as Shiloh was leveled for its wickedness, so would Jerusalem be destroyed. (See Jeremiah 7:12, 14.)



Shiloh, for many years the home of the tabernacle of Moses

(24-10) Jeremiah 26:14–15. "Do with Me As Seemeth Good"

Compare Jeremiah's words in verses 14–15 with those of Abinadi in Mosiah 17:9–10. Like Abinadi's, Jeremiah's message to his enemies was: "Do what you will, my word stands. If you choose to kill me, you

will shed innocent blood, but you will not do away with my words.”

(24-11) Jeremiah 26:20–24. The Case of Urijah

The case of Urijah, recounted here at Jeremiah’s trial, shows the wickedness of King Jehoiakim. When Urijah heard of the king’s intent to kill him, he fled into Egypt. But, evidently, Egypt offered him no asylum, for he was extradited and slain by Jehoiakim himself. That this is the only account there is of Urijah and his ministry suggests that there were probably many prophets of whom we know nothing.

Verse 24 implies that Jeremiah, although acquitted, would likely have suffered Urijah’s fate at the hands of the populace had it not been for Ahikam, who protected him.

(24-12) Jeremiah 27. The Yoke of Bondage

Although Jeremiah 27:1 dates the prophecy about Judah’s bondage to Jehoiakim’s reign, verses 3 and 12 suggest that it was given during Zedekiah’s reign, not Jehoiakim’s.

Ambassadors from several neighboring countries had come to Zedekiah with the proposal that unitedly they could defeat Babylon. Jeremiah was instructed to take bonds and yokes and wear them to symbolize that it was the Lord’s will that they submit to their would-be conquerors. The message that they not try to change the decrees of God was also given by Jeremiah. Their lands were assigned to Babylon until that country ripened in iniquity and reaped its own reward. A promise to Judah was given in verse 11 that submission was their only hope of retaining their lands.

Not every message that is claimed to be from God truly is (see v. 15), nor does every messenger bring His word. Jeremiah warned Zedekiah that the prophets who were saying that Babylon would not capture Judah should try to preserve the remnant of temple treasures left from the first and second conquests of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah was pointing out that his promises of captivity were realistic, whereas the promises of delivery from Babylon made by the false prophets ignored reality, since the Babylonians had already proven they could conquer Judah with impunity.

(24-13) Jeremiah 28. Hananiah’s Challenge

The intensity of the debate that raged in Jerusalem is clearly seen in Jeremiah 28. Hananiah claimed to know from God that not only would Zedekiah’s people not go into captivity but that Babylonia’s power (yoke) had been broken and the temple treasures and the captives would be returned within two years (see vv. 1–4).

In verse 6, Jeremiah’s “Amen, the Lord do so,” is sarcastic, a challenge to see whose prophecies would be fulfilled. Moses taught that one test of a true prophet is whether his words come to pass (see Deuteronomy 18:22). Jeremiah had prophesied destruction and captivity; Hananiah, return and restoration. Jeremiah’s response was simply that the prophet whose words come to pass is the one chosen by the Lord (see v. 9).

To dramatize his prophecy, Hananiah broke the yokes off Jeremiah’s shoulders, predicting that God would do the same to Judah’s Babylonian yoke. The Lord’s response was simple and powerful: the yokes of wood would become yokes of iron (see v. 13).

Hananiah’s death, prophesied by Jeremiah (see vv. 15–17), should have convinced Zedekiah and the people which of these two men was the true prophet, but they were too hardened to respond.

(24-14) Jeremiah 29. Letter to the Captives

“As in Jerusalem, so too in Babylon the predictions of the false prophets fostered a lively hope that the domination of Nebuchadnezzar would not last long, and that the return of the exiles to their fatherland would soon come about. The spirit of discontent thus excited must have exercised an injurious influence on the fortunes of the captives, and could not fail to frustrate the aim which the chastisement inflicted by God was designed to work out, namely, the moral advancement of the people. Therefore Jeremiah makes use of an opportunity furnished by an embassy sent by King Zedekiah to Babel, to address a letter to the exiles, exhorting them to yield with submission to the lot God had assigned to them. He counsels them to prepare, by establishing their households there, for a long sojourn in Babel, and to seek the welfare of that country as the necessary condition of their own. They must not let themselves be deceived by the false prophets’ idle promises of a speedy return, since God will not bring them back and fulfil His glorious promises till after seventy years have passed (vers. 4–14).” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 8:1:408–9.)

Notes and Commentary on Jeremiah 30–31 are given in chapter 25.

(24-15) Jeremiah 32:1–5. Jeremiah Imprisoned

From a strictly political point of view, one can understand why the Jewish leaders reacted so strongly against Jeremiah. In a time of national crisis, he called for surrender and submission to Babylon. But of course Jeremiah was not speaking from a political point of view; he spoke for the Lord. Zedekiah isolated Jeremiah from the people for prophesying in the midst of the siege of Judah’s imminent captivity and the king’s overthrow by the Babylonians (see v. 2). (For commentary on the seeming contradiction of Jeremiah’s prophecy with that of Ezekiel see Ezekiel 12:13; see also Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 25:1–7.)

(24-16) Jeremiah 32:6–44. Why Did Jeremiah Bury the Proof of His Purchase?

Jeremiah purchased his cousin’s estate because he had the right as next of kin (see Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4). He then sealed the evidence of the purchase in a jar (see Jeremiah 32:11–12) as proof of his faith in God’s promise that “houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land” (v. 15). After Jeremiah’s death, the right of ownership would pass to Jeremiah’s closest kin. The rest of chapter 32 is the Lord’s certification to Jeremiah that people would truly return from Babylon to inhabit the land (see vv. 26–44).

(24-17) Jeremiah 32:36–41. Restoration and an Everlasting Covenant

Jeremiah clearly signaled a full return of all of the Lord’s people and the establishment of an eternal covenant with them. The fulfillment of this promise is

yet to be fully realized in the dispensation of the fulness of times. (See 3 Nephi 20:29–46; 21.)

Notes and Commentary on Jeremiah 33 are found in chapter 25.

(24-18) Jeremiah 34:1–7. The Conquest of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 34:1–7 concerns the conquest of the city by Nebuchadnezzar as well as Zedekiah’s captivity and death (see Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 25:1–7).

(24-19) Jeremiah 34:8–22. In What Way Did Zedekiah Break His Covenant with the People?

“During the early period of the siege of Jerusalem, the men of the city released their Hebrew slaves. This may have been done partly because the old law required the release of slaves as provided for in Exo. 21:1 and Deut. 15:2, and partly because of the need of manpower to defend the besieged city. At any rate, the release was guaranteed by a solemn covenant. Then the advance of the Egyptians seems to have caused the Babylonians to lift the siege. In spite of their solemn oath, and by ignoring the claims of brotherly love and ordinary justice, the men of the city proceeded to re-enslave their unfortunate brethren. This unrighteous act immediately brought down the Lord’s denunciation and terrible condemnation.” (Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 182–83.)

(24-20) Jeremiah 35. The Example of the Rechabites

This chapter goes back in time to the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah (see Jeremiah 25). In it Jeremiah set before the Jews the righteous example of the Rechabites who, having made a covenant never to drink wine, refused to drink it when offered it by Jeremiah in the house of God. (These people had moved to Jerusalem to escape the invading Babylonians.)

Jeremiah was commanded to place the example of the Rechabites before the people of Judah (see vv. 13–14). The message was clear: the Rechabites observed their covenants faithfully, even though they were not the covenant people of the Lord. The Jews were transgressors of the Lord’s commands and broke their promises to God at every turn. Thus on the Jews would come “all the evil that I [the Lord] have pronounced against them” (v. 17).

(24-21) Jeremiah 36:1–8. The Word of the Lord Is Recorded

“In the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, bidding him commit to writing all the addresses he had previously delivered, that Judah might, if it were possible, still regard the threatenings and return (vers. 1–3). In accordance with this command, he got all the words of the Lord written down in a book by his attendant Baruch, with the further instruction that this should be read on the fast-day in the temple to the people who came out of the country into Jerusalem (vers. 4–8). When, after this, in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim, a fast was appointed, Baruch read the prophecies to the assembled people in the chamber of Gemariah in the temple. Michaiah the son of Gemariah mentioned the matter to the princes who were assembled in the royal palace; these then sent for Baruch with the roll, and

made him read it to them. But they were so frightened by what was read to them that they deemed it necessary to inform the king regarding it (vers. 9–19). At their advice, the king had the roll brought and some of it read before him; but scarcely had some few columns been read, when he cut the roll into pieces and threw them into the pan of coals burning in the room, at the same time commanding that Baruch and Jeremiah should be brought to him; but God hid them (vers. 20–26). After this roll had been burnt, the Lord commanded the prophet to get all his words written on a new roll, and to predict an ignominious fate for King Jehoiakim; whereupon Jeremiah once more dictated his addresses to Baruch (vers. 27–32).” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 8:2:93.)



Jeremiah’s record was read by Baruch.

(24-22) Jeremiah 37–39. A Prophet’s “Reward”

When King Jehoiachin rebelled against Babylon, he was deposed and his uncle, Zedekiah, was placed on the throne. By this time it should have been obvious that Jeremiah’s prophecies were coming to pass. Twice Nebuchadnezzar had come, and twice he had humbled Judah. But Zedekiah was no wiser than his brother, Jehoiakim, and his nephew, Jehoiachin. He too began to look for ways to break the Babylonian yoke. Ignoring the repeated warnings of Jeremiah, he rebelled, and once again the Babylonians came against Jerusalem. (See Enrichment G.)

It was in this setting that the events of these chapters took place. Jerusalem was under siege, and Jeremiah’s counsel to surrender was not welcome. He was viewed as a traitor and a subversive. At this point an army of the pharaoh moved north to meet Nebuchadnezzar’s forces (see Jeremiah 37:5). Nebuchadnezzar temporarily pulled away from Jerusalem to meet the threat from the south. The hopes of the Jews soared, but again

Jeremiah dashed them to pieces. He prophesied that the Egyptian army would return to Egypt (see v. 7) and that the siege would be reimposed. So helpless would Judah be, according to Jeremiah, that even if the entire Chaldean army were wounded in the battle with Egypt, they would still succeed in destroying Jerusalem (see vv. 8–10).

During the time that the siege was lifted, Jeremiah decided to return to the land of Benjamin, probably to visit his hometown. His enemies seized this opportunity to make their move. Accusing him of fleeing to join the Chaldeans, the Jewish leaders had Jeremiah arrested, beaten, and thrown into prison (see vv. 11–15).

The weak, vacillating character of King Zedekiah manifested itself. He called Jeremiah to him secretly, asking if there was any word from the Lord concerning Jerusalem's fate (see vv. 16–17). Yet when the other leaders demanded Jeremiah's death for preaching surrender (see Jeremiah 38:1–4), Zedekiah responded weakly, "Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you" (v. 5). But when Jeremiah's friends pleaded for his life, Zedekiah relented and had him secretly delivered out of the prison (see vv. 7–13).

Jeremiah's sarcastic question to Zedekiah is recorded in Jeremiah 37:19. The false prophets had promised that the Babylonians would not come against Jerusalem and the captives already taken would be returned. At that time Jeremiah cited the words of Moses for determining the true from the false prophets. Now, with the Babylonians surrounding the city, Jeremiah asked where all those other prophets were. Jeremiah's word had been proven true, and he was in prison. Their word had been proven false, and where were they?

Chapter 39 of Jeremiah details the fall of Jerusalem and the tragic end of Zedekiah and his family. Because Jeremiah had foretold Babylon's eventual success, he was released by the Chaldeans and allowed to remain in Jerusalem as a free person (see vv. 11–14).

(24-23) Jeremiah 40–44. After the Fall of Judah

"Earlier, we mentioned the fact that after the fall of Jerusalem Jeremiah was liberated and permitted to stay in Palestine. As a matter of fact, he was first taken in chains with all the other captured Jews as far as Ramah, a town about five miles north of Jerusalem. Here the Babylonian 'captain of the guard' loosed his bonds, 'gave him an allowance and a present,' and sent him back to Gedaliah, the new governor of Judah, with instructions permitting him to dwell among the people or to go wherever he chose. (40:1–6)

"Following Gedaliah's appointment as governor of Judah, many Jews in the lands round about regained confidence and returned to their own country. But one of them, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, seems to have been sent by Baalis, the king of Ammon, for the express purpose of slaying Gedaliah. (40:14) The good governor was warned of this, but he would not believe those who had informed him of the plot. The result was that he and the Jews and Chaldeans with him at Mizpah were slain in cold blood by Ishmael and his fellow conspirators. (41:1–3) Other Jews met their death at the

hands of Ishmael, but he escaped to Ammon before he could be apprehended. (41:4–15)

"After this incident, Jeremiah was approached by the people of Judah, who asked him to pray to God in their behalf and ask His advice and counsel. The prophet did pray, and the Lord advised the people to stay in Judah and be blessed. They were told not to be afraid of the king of Babylon; the Lord would save them and deliver them from his hand and have compassion upon them. On the other hand, if they went to Egypt to escape war and hunger, they should be severely disappointed. They were told that famine, pestilence, and the sword would be their terrible lot. (42:1–22) But the stubborn Jews refused to heed the Lord's words through Jeremiah and proceeded into Egypt, taking the hapless prophet and his scribe Baruch with them. (43:1–7)

"At Tahpanhes, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah predicting the destruction of Egypt at the hands of the same Nebuchadnezzar who had destroyed Jerusalem: [Jeremiah 43:8–13].

"Thus the disobedient Jews who had escaped from troubles in Judah would meet them head-on in Egypt. (See also 44:12–14.) Jeremiah continued to castigate them for their idolatrous worship of the 'queen of heaven,' but they refused to heed his words. (44:15–30)." (Sperry, *Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 184–85.)

(24-24) Jeremiah 45. Baruch

"The passage is a kind of appendix that belongs with ch. 36, and is valuable for insight it gives into Baruch's own life. He too could be beset by despair as was Jeremiah, and could say 'Woe is me' (v. 3). It may be that as he dictated Jeremiah's words of judgment, and knew in his heart that they were true and would certainly come to pass, he became depressed at it all and was filled with foreboding about his own future. He was deeply involved in Jeremiah's affairs. He wrote down his oracles for the first and second scrolls in 605/4 B.C. He certainly continued to record the prophet's sayings thereafter and went with him to Egypt, where he probably continued his work as a scribe. It is not impossible that Baruch eventually returned to Judah or even journeyed to Babylon to join the exiles there, and was able to relate what took place in Egypt, although there is no evidence one way or the other. At times he was associated with Jeremiah in dangerous situations (36:19, 26; 43:3). Much of the present book of Jeremiah must go back either directly or indirectly to him." (J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 683.)

(24-25) Jeremiah 52. Historical Appendix

The last chapter of Jeremiah is a summary of historical material previously covered (see Jeremiah 39) and a record of further events, such as the improved status of Jehoiachin in Babylon (see Jeremiah 52:31–34). Since Jeremiah did not go to Babylon but was taken to Egypt, it is doubtful that this chapter was written by him. Perhaps it was added by his scribe, Baruch. (See 2 Kings 24–25; Jeremiah 39.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON LAMENTATIONS

(24-26) Lamentations 1:1–11. Who Wrote Lamentations and Why?

Tradition has long ascribed the book of Lamentations to Jeremiah, though some modern critics question whether all of the book was written by him. Keil and Delitzsch concluded after an extensive examination of the arguments against Jeremiah's authorship "that the tradition which ascribes the Lamentations to the prophet Jeremiah as their author is as well-founded as any historical tradition whatsoever" (*Commentary*, 8:2:349–50).

The writer of Lamentations wrote to reveal Judah's pathetic condition as a despoiled people at the hands of the Babylonians. He likened abandoned Jerusalem to a woman whose husband was dead (see v. 1). All her "lovers" (the false gods she worshiped) abandoned her to her enemies (see vv. 2–3). All of this came about because of Judah's wickedness (see vv. 5–8). Even the Lord forsook her in the hour of her affliction. Her enemies "mock[ed] at her sabbaths" (v. 7).

The heading to the book of Lamentations in the Hebrew texts is *aychah* which is translated as "alas! how . . ." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 8:2:335). It was customary in ancient Judah to compose and sing lamentations about departed friends or relatives. Jeremiah did the same for his beloved Jerusalem.

The "pleasant things" in verses 10–11 are allusions, in part, to the precious vessels taken from the temple by the enemy. The few valuable items left had been sold to help relieve the hunger and distress that had come upon the people.

(24-27) Lamentations 1:12–22. "Zion Spreadeth Forth Her Hands, and There Is None to Comfort Her"

Jeremiah employed vivid images to depict Judah's great distress, likening it to fire in the bones, a net for the feet, a yoke around the neck, the crushing of grapes in a winepress. Each allusion is an apt one. The image of the yoke or bands around the neck is also used in Isaiah 52:2. According to the interpretation given in Doctrine and Covenants 113:10, the bands on Israel's neck "are the curses of God upon her, or the remnants of Israel in their scattered condition among the Gentiles." Judah's seventy-year captivity in Babylon was like that described in these scriptures.

In her captive condition, none appeared to comfort Judah. She put forth her hands in a plea for help, but no one responded (see Lamentations 1:16–17). Her false "lovers" and former allies deserted her (see v. 19). Zion was in great distress. She knew then that her wickedness was the cause of her sorrowful state. (See vv. 20–22.)

(24-28) Lamentations 2:1–10. As a Result of Her Wickedness, Judah Was Forsaken and Punished by the Lord

Judah's pitiful condition, caused by her iniquities, had come about by God's power. In Lamentations 2:1–10, God was credited with having brought about Judah's present calamity as a punishment for her former wickedness.

"The writer evidently could not get the harrowing scenes out of his mind. The elders or heads of families who shared in the administration were powerless to do anything. Grave magistrates and light-hearted maidens alike were reduced to grief-stricken silence (v. 10)." (D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 661.)

(24-29) Lamentations 2:11–22. "O Wall of the Daughter of Zion, Let Tears Run Down like a River Day and Night"

Jerusalem was an object not only of pity but of scorn. Innocent babies wasted away in her streets, crying in vain for food (see vv. 11–12). The prophets that Judah did listen to were untrue to their task of crying out against iniquity. They spoke flattering words and thus encouraged Judah in her transgressions. Hence, Jerusalem was a hiss and a byword in the eyes of the nations (see vv. 13–14). Clearly, there was nothing about Jerusalem in which to rejoice. In verses 18–22 she called the Lord's attention to her doleful plight. Her tears were real tears of godly sorrow for her iniquities as well as for her temporal losses to the Babylonians.



The western wall of Jerusalem has been called the Wailing Wall.

(24-30) Lamentations 3:1–66. Is There Hope Judah Can Recover from Her Fall, and If So, How?

Lamentations 3:1–66 contains the writer's individual lament over his and his people's distressed condition. His thoughts were expressed in a Hebrew poetic form.

"In true prophetic vein the elegist puts himself alongside his countrymen and entreats them to return to the Lord and to seek reconciliation with Him. Let them examine themselves in the light of His commandments which they have transgressed, and let the lifting up of their *hands to God in heaven* be accompanied by the lifting up of their *hearts* also, *i.e.* let their prayers for pardon be true and sincere. Let them know too what it feels like to be unpardoned,

to be under God's judgment still (v. 42b), and they will come to appreciate all the more the wonder of His forgiveness." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 662.)

Still, it would not be easy to obtain pardon. The rest of chapter 3 indicates that in spite of God's unwillingness to hear, the petitioner will continue to plead for relief. Verses 61–66 contain a plea that the Lord will also reward Judah's enemies for their harsh and evil ways.

(24-31) Lamentations 4. Which Specific Groups Are Responsible for Judah's Fall?

In Lamentations 4:1–22 the writer returned to his former theme and the mournful dirge began again. Various groups were responsible for Jerusalem's suffering. First, the "sons of Zion" once "comparable to fine gold" (v. 2) had become inferior vessels like those made of earthen clay. The mothers of Judah, unlike the monsters (whales and other large fish) of the sea who feed their young properly, had neglected their children. Wickedness was everywhere.

Verses 8–10 depict the bitter hunger experienced during the siege of Jerusalem, which finally led some to eat their own children.

(24-32) Lamentations 4:21–22. "O Daughter of Edom; He Will Discover Thy Sins"

Edom, at the time of Jerusalem's capture, had sought to enrich herself through Judah's tragedy (compare Obadiah 1:10–16), and her actions at that time were bitterly resented by the Jews (see Ezekiel 25:12–14; Psalm 137:7–9). But the Jews could console themselves with the thought that whereas their own punishment was now accomplished, that of Edom was still to come: "The cup also shall pass through unto thee" (Lamentations 4:21).

(24-33) Lamentations 5. "Remember, O Lord, What Is Come upon Us: Consider, and Behold Our Reproach"

Lamentations 5:1–22 is a prayer for aid. The Lord alone held the key to Judah's deliverance. Her plight was very sad, and her sins had made it so.

"Water and wood are mentioned in ver. 4 as the greatest necessities of life, without which it is impossible to exist. Both of these they must buy for themselves, because the country, with its waters and forests, is in the possession of the enemy. The emphasis lies on 'our water . . . our wood.' What they formerly had, as their own property, for nothing, they must now purchase." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 8:2:448.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(24-34) True Prophets Are Never Popular with the Wicked

Jeremiah was a living prophet in his day. The evil people, particularly the leaders of Judah, cast aside his words as naught. He delivered the message that the Lord gave him, but he ended up in prison. Eventually he was driven out of Israel and compelled to live in Egypt. President Ezra Taft Benson has said:

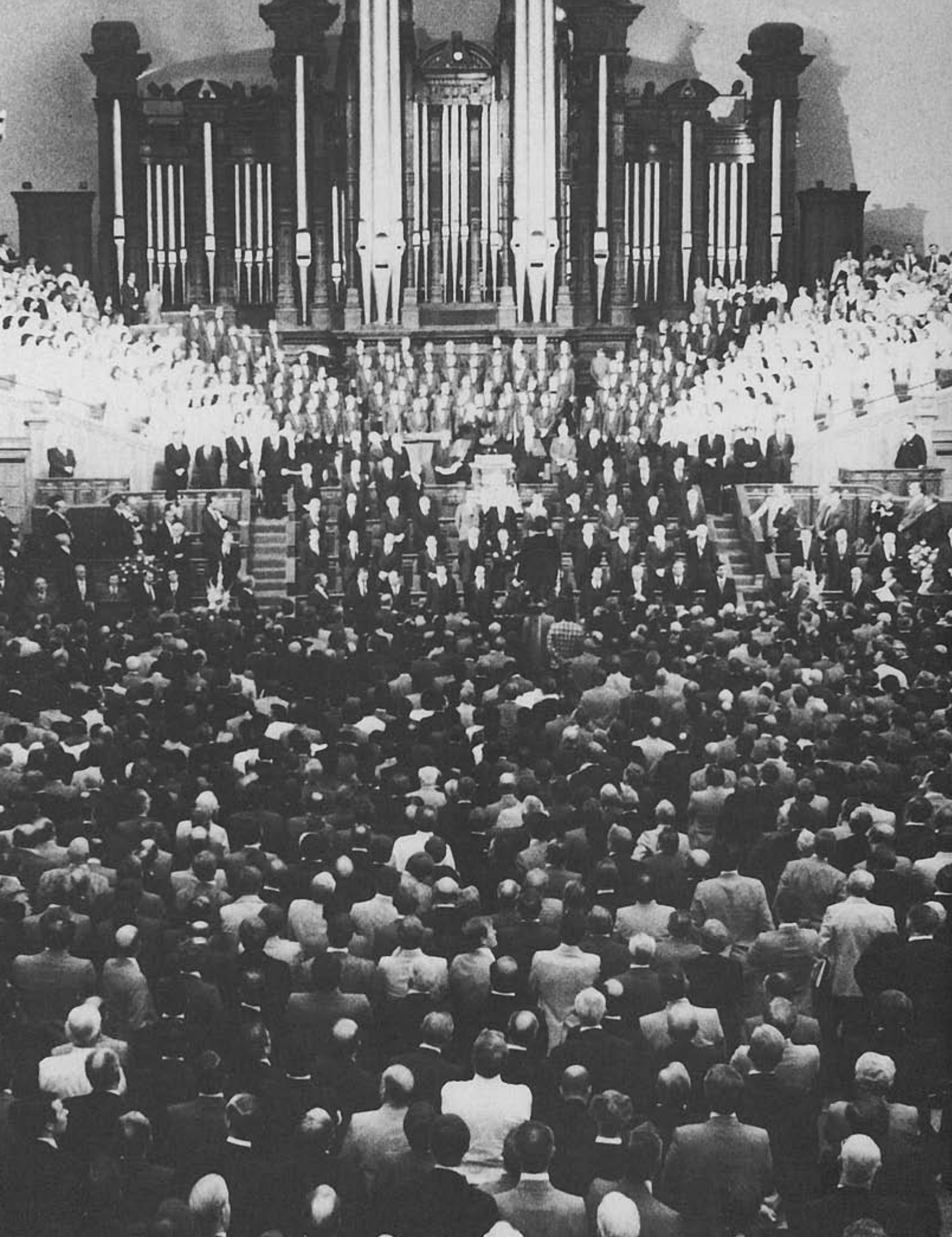
"As a prophet reveals the truth it divides the people. The honest in heart heed his words, but the unrighteous either ignore the prophet or fight him. When the prophet points out the sins of the world, the worldly either want to close the mouth of the prophet, or else act as if the prophet didn't exist, rather than repent of their sins. Popularity is never a test of truth. Many a prophet has been killed or cast out. As we come closer to the Lord's second coming, you can expect that as the people of the world become more wicked, the prophet will be less popular with them." ("Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet," in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1981], p. 29).

It is the living prophet who really upsets the world. "Even in the Church," said Elder Spencer W. Kimball, "many are prone to garnish the sepulchres of yesterday's prophets and mentally stone the living ones" ("To His Servants the Prophets," *Instructor*, Aug. 1960, p. 257).

Why? Because the living prophet tells us what we need to know and do now, and the world prefers that prophets either be dead or mind their own business. Some would-be authorities on politics want the prophet to keep still about politics. Some would-be authorities on evolution want the prophet to keep still about evolution. The list goes on and on.

"How we respond to the words of a living prophet when he tells us what we need to know, but would rather not hear, is a test of our faithfulness" (Benson, "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet," p. 28).

Those who covenant with God are bound to Him in righteousness. Ancient Judah cut that tie when she rebelled against the Lord and failed to heed Jeremiah's words. The result was that she was carried away captive into Babylon.



Prophecies of a Latter-day Gathering

(25-1) Introduction

The prophet Jeremiah lived through one of the most troubled periods of history in the ancient Near East. He witnessed the fall of a great empire (Assyria) and the rising of another (Babylon). In the midst of this turmoil the kingdom of Judah was ruled by five kings, four of them deplorable. Jeremiah declared God's message for forty years, warning of coming disaster and appealing in vain to the nation to turn back to God.

During Manasseh's long reign (687–642 B.C.), which was just before Jeremiah's time, Judah remained Assyria's vassal. This situation brought a resurgence of idolatry, in this case a mixture of belief in the Mesopotamian astrological gods and belief in the Canaanite fertility deities. As has been discussed, a great reformation was conducted by Josiah when the book of the law was discovered in the temple and its contents were made known to the people. Aside from this brief period of reform, Judah became increasingly insensitive to spiritual things during Jeremiah's time.

The Lord showed Jeremiah a vision of the future that put the calamities he had witnessed into a perspective of hope. Like other prophets of his time (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zechariah), Jeremiah was shown that scattered Israel would one day be gathered, that Judah would return to the lands of her possession, and that eventually all of Israel would become great. These visions and prophecies were recorded by Jeremiah and for centuries have provided hope to a nation of suffering people. They hold a very important place in the latter-day work of restoration.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Jeremiah 23; 30–31; 33; 46–51; and the book of Obadiah.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH 23; 30–31; 33; 46–51

(25-2) Jeremiah 23. Who Were the Evil Pastors?

Chapter 23 is primarily a scathing denunciation of the religious leaders of Jeremiah's day, but in the midst of this condemnation is a remarkable prophecy relating to Israel's future. A great gathering is predicted (vv. 3–4, 7–8) in which the "righteous Branch" (the Messiah) will become the king over Israel (vv. 5–6; see also Notes and Commentary on Jeremiah 23:3; 23:4–8). Jeremiah

showed that the pastors (religious leaders) of Judah had not fed and protected the sheep (Israel), but had scattered them and driven them away (enticed them away from God). That is why Jeremiah prophesied that sometime in the future righteous shepherds will be found to gather Israel again so they can serve their true king, Jehovah.

The rest of Jeremiah 23 is a catalog of the sins of the Jewish religious leaders, the priests and the "prophets." The following phrases are particularly noteworthy:

- Both prophets and priests are profane (see v. 11).
- They prophesied in the name of Baal and led the people into error (see v. 13).
- The prophets are adulterers, liars, and supporters of evil men. They are as evil as Sodom and Gomorrah in God's sight (see v. 14).
- They speak their own words, not those of the Lord (see v. 16).
- They tell the wicked they can have peace and that there is no evil in what they are doing (see v. 17).
- They called themselves to the ministry and prophesy without revelation (see v. 21).
- They say "Thus saith the Lord" when the Lord has not spoken through them (v. 31).

(25-3) Jeremiah 23:3. A Latter-day Gathering Promised

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that the gathering of Israel first of all means that they are converted to the Church:

"The gathering of Israel consists of receiving the truth, gaining again a true knowledge of the Redeemer, and coming back into the true fold of the Good Shepherd. In the language of the Book of Mormon, it consists of being 'restored to the true church and fold of God,' and then being 'gathered' and 'established' in various 'lands of promise.' (2 Ne. 9:2.)" ("Come: Let Israel Build Zion," *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 117.)

Speaking of the great latter-day restoration of the house of Israel, President Spencer W. Kimball said:

"A great group of people left the Old World at the time of the Tower of Babel.

"Another great group left the Old World [in] 600 B.C. And since the coming of Columbus to America, there have been numerous groups that have come to America from the Old World. The Lord had that in hand and watched it. He said through Nephi, 'The house of Israel [sooner or later will] be scattered upon all the face of the earth.' (1 Nephi 22:3.) And now He says, 'I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them.' (Jeremiah 23:3.)

"The gathering of Israel is now in progress. Hundreds of thousands of people have been baptized into the Church. Millions more will join the Church. And this is the way that we will gather Israel. The English people will gather in England. The Japanese people will gather in the Orient. The Brazilian people will gather in Brazil.

So that important element of the world history is already being accomplished.

“It is to be done by missionary work. It is your responsibility to attend to this missionary work.” (In Conference Report, Sao Paulo Brazil Area Conference, Feb.–Mar. 1975, p. 73.)

Once one understands that the great gathering of the last days consists first of all in coming into the covenant (joining the Church), then the Old Testament prophecies of the restoration of the house of Israel become much clearer. For example, the “shepherds . . . which shall feed them” (v. 4) are the righteous prophets and priesthood leaders who, unlike the priests and prophets of Jeremiah’s time, lead their people to do good and obey the Lord. (See Notes and Commentary on Jeremiah 30:3, 8.)

(25-4) Jeremiah 23:4–8. Who Is the Branch of David?

The “Branch” and the “new David” are explained in Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1. The Branch and the King are the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns to earth to reign as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14; see also Revelation 19:16).

(25-5) Jeremiah 30:3, 8. In the Last Days the Lord Will Gather Israel

Chapters 30–33 deal with the prophet’s predictions of the restoration of Israel and Judah in the last days and of the Lord’s making a new and everlasting covenant with them. They have great meaning for Latter-day Saints and should be studied carefully.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson spoke of the latter-day gathering as having “three phases: the gathering of Israel to the land of Zion, the American hemisphere; the return of the Ten Tribes from the countries of the north; and the reestablishment of the Jews in Palestine as God’s chosen people.

“This miracle of the return of the Jews was to be one of the events to precede Christ’s second coming, and the scriptures are very clear with reference to this fact. Isaiah said that they shall gather ‘the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth’ and ‘set them in their own land,’ that they will ‘build the old waste,’ and ‘repair the waste cities.’ (See Isa. 11:11–12.)

“Jeremiah, who predicted so clearly their dispersion, also states that the Lord will ‘cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it,’ and ‘build them, as at the first.’ (Jer. 30:3; 33:7.)” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1950, p. 75.)

Jeremiah 30:3 has several meanings. It refers to the return of the Jews after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. It also refers to the restoration of the Jews to their homeland in the last days after they have been scattered for the second time. And it refers to the return of the lost tribes from the lands of the north. Note that the Lord will bring them.

The yoke spoken of in verse 8 is the yoke of oppression of Nebuchadnezzar. Doctrine and Covenants 113:9–10 explains what the “bonds” are that are spoken of in Jeremiah 30:8.

(25-6) Jeremiah 30:9. Latter-day David, King of Israel

Once again there is a mention of the latter-day David who will be King in Israel. Sometimes He is called

“the Branch” (Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15) because Jesus, who is the King David of the latter days, is a branch of the ancient line of King David. (See Matthew 1:1; 12:23; 22:42; see also Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1.)

(25-7) Jeremiah 30:11–24. “In the Latter Days Ye Shall Fully Understand”

It is the Lord Jesus Christ who saves. He is Israel’s Savior and Redeemer. He does not, however, ignore the sins of His people (see v. 11). The “lovers” who forgot Israel were the false gods that Jehovah’s unfaithful wife, Israel, sought after. No one came to the rescue but the Lord, who has always loved Israel and who promised: “They [the Chaldeans] that devour thee shall be devoured” (by the Medes and Persians). The Assyrians were destroyed by the Babylonians; the Babylonians by the Medes and Persians; the Egyptians and Persians by the Greeks. All these empires have now vanished, but the Jews still exist as a distinct people. In the latter days Israel will be the Lord’s people, and He will be their God as He desired in the beginning. The Lord promised Israel: “In the latter days ye shall consider [or fully understand] it.” Only now, in the last days, as these promises are realized, can one fully understand what Jeremiah and the other prophets were saying.

(25-8) Jeremiah 31:6–9. The Lord Himself Will Gather Scattered Israel

The watchmen mentioned in verse 6 are the righteous prophets of the latter days (see also Ezekiel 3:16–21). In the last dispensation they will cry to all people to join together in proper worship of the Lord (see D&C 1:1–2). Verse 8 speaks of gathered Israel coming from the north country (see D&C 110:11; 133:26) and from the coasts (ends) of the earth.

Elder LeGrand Richards said of this gathering: “I will bring them . . . : a great company shall return *thither.*”



The Lord Himself will gather Israel.

This was something the Lord was going to do. Note that Jeremiah does not say that they will return *hither*, or to the place where this prediction was made, but *thither*, or to a distant place. He understood that Joseph was to be given a new land in the 'utmost bound of the everlasting hills.' (See Genesis 49:22–26; Deuteronomy 33:13–17.)" (*Israel! Do You Know?* pp. 177–78.)

Verse 9 refers to Israel returning with weeping. They will weep because they will realize that the sufferings they have endured throughout the centuries came about because they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall lead them in the last days (see Jeremiah 50:4; Zechariah 12:10).

(25-9) Jeremiah 31:10–14. "They Shall Not Sorrow Any More at All"

These verses picture the great joy and happiness that will accompany the return of Israel. The promises of great abundance (see v. 12) and rejoicing (see v. 13) and the end of sorrow (see vv. 15–16) are exactly opposite to the promises given in other chapters of tragedy, desolation, and lamentation for Judah. Though Judah did not heed Jeremiah's warning and his dire predictions came to pass, the hope of a brighter day was clearly given here.

While the ultimate fulfillment of these verses is yet in the future, Elder LeGrand Richards saw a parallel between verses 7–14 and the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Saints left Nauvoo with weeping and with supplications. They did not leave their beautiful homes because they wanted to. He saw the rivers of waters they walked by in a straight way as being the North Platte River, by which they traveled about six hundred miles. Singing in the height of Zion refers to the Tabernacle Choir, according to Elder Richards. Their mourning being turned into joy (see v. 13) refers to the Saints finding joy with one another in dancing and other activities as well as in testimony meetings.

"While the members of the Priesthood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not paid for their services, and thousands of them have left their families for years at a time to do missionary work in the nations of the earth, paying their own expenses and without remuneration from the Church, yet, in their hearts, they feel they are better paid than any other religious leaders in the world, because of the joy and satisfaction the Lord plants in their hearts, which could not possibly be purchased with money. Thus He has satiated 'the soul of the priests with fatness,' and His people are satisfied with His goodness." (Richards, *Israel! Do You Know?* pp. 179–80; see also pp. 177–79.)

(25-10) Jeremiah 31:15–17. Rachel Weeping for Her Children

Rachel, the beloved spouse of Jacob, earnestly desired children. She is here depicted as bitterly weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because she had none, for they had been taken captive.

"The lamentation of Rachel is heard at Ramah, as the most loftily situated border-town of the two kingdoms, whence the wailing that had arisen sounded far and near, and could be heard in Judah. . . . The destruction of the people of Israel by the Assyrians and Chaldeans is a type of the massacre of the infants at Bethlehem

[as cited by Matthew in his gospel (Matthew 2:18)], in so far as the sin which brought the children of Israel into exile laid a foundation for the fact that Herod the Idumean became king over the Jews, and wished to destroy the true King and Saviour of Israel that he might strengthen his own dominion." (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 8:2:25–26.)

(25-11) Jeremiah 31:22. What Is Meant by a "Woman Shall Compass a Man"?

Many times in Hebrew writing Israel is described as a woman and sometimes as a bride. The marriage relationship between the woman (Israel) and her husband (the Lord Jesus Christ) is used to depict a very tender, intimate association. The Lord used this relationship numerous times in the scriptures as an example of His commitment to care for, protect, and bless His covenant people.

"In the verse now before us, [the Hebrew word translated as 'compass'] signifies to encompass with love and care, to surround lovingly and carefully,—the natural and fitting dealing on the part of the stronger to the weak and those who need assistance. And the new thing that God creates consists in this, that the woman, the weaker nature that needs help, will lovingly and solicitously surround the man, the stronger. Herein is expressed a new relation of Israel to the Lord, a reference to a new covenant which the Lord, ver. 31ff., will conclude with His people, and in which He deals so condescendingly towards them that they can lovingly embrace Him. This is the substance of the Messianic meaning in the words." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 8:2:30.)

(25-12) Jeremiah 31:29–30. "The Fathers Have Eaten a Sour Grape, and the Children's Teeth Are Set on Edge"

This proverb conveyed the idea that children are affected by what their parents are and do. Apparently the Jews had erroneously set a stigma on the children of known sinners, overlooking the qualifying statement in Exodus 20:5–6. In this chapter, Jeremiah set the Jews straight (see also Ezekiel 18:1–4). Nothing in Exodus 20:5–6 justifies saying that, in a final sense, children are punished for their parents' sins. Nevertheless, as the following statement shows, children may suffer the consequences of parental sins:

"There is the man who resisted release from positions in the Church. He knew positions were temporary trusts, but he criticized the presiding leader who had released him, complaining that proper recognition had not been given; the time had not been propitious; it had been a reflection upon his effectiveness. He bitterly built up a case for himself, absented himself from his meetings, and justified himself in his resultant estrangement. His children partook of his frustrations, and his children's children. In later life he 'came to himself,' and on the brink of the grave made an about-face. His family would not effect the transformation which now he would give his life to have them make. How selfish! Haughty pride induces eating sour grapes, and innocent ones have their teeth set on edge. 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'

"When I was a child, we used the expression, 'He cut off his nose to spite his face.' To us, that meant that one was fighting against fate, rebelling against the

inevitable, damaging himself to spite others, breaking his toe to give vent to his senseless anger.

“Eight lovely children had blessed the temple marriage of a man and woman who in later years were denied a temple recommend. They would not be so dealt with by this young bishop. Why should they be deprived and humiliated? Were they less worthy than others? They argued that this boy-bishop was too strict, too orthodox. Never would they be active, nor enter the door of that Church as long as that bishop presided. They would show him. The history of this family is tragic. The four younger ones were never baptized; the four older ones never were ordained, endowed, nor sealed. No missions were filled by this family. Today the parents are ill at ease, still defiant. They had covered themselves with a cloud, and righteous prayers could not pass through. (See Lam. 3:44.)

“Sour grapes! Such unhappy food!” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1955, p. 95.)

(25-13) Jeremiah 31:31–34. The Restoration of the Gospel

Verses 31–34 deal with the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith and the day when God’s covenant will truly be established with His people. Joseph Smith said of that day: “The time has at last arrived when the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has set His hand again the second time to recover the remnants of his people, . . . and establish that covenant with them, which was promised when their sins should be taken away. [See Isaiah 11; Romans 11:25–27; Jeremiah 31:31–33.] This covenant has never been established with the house of Israel, nor with the house of Judah, for it requires two parties to make a covenant, and those two parties must be agreed, or no covenant can be made.



The Prophet Joseph Smith

“Christ, in the days of His flesh, proposed to make a covenant with them, but they rejected Him and His proposals, and in consequence thereof, they were broken off, and no covenant was made with them at that time. But their unbelief has not rendered the promise of God of none effect: no, for there was another day limited in David, which was the day of His power; and then His people, Israel, should be a willing people;—and He would write His law in their hearts, and print it in their thoughts; their sins and their iniquities He would remember no more.

“Thus after this chosen family had rejected Christ and His proposals, the heralds of salvation said to them, ‘Lo, we turn unto the Gentiles;’ and the Gentiles received the covenant, and were grafted in from whence the chosen family were broken off; but the Gentiles have not continued in the goodness of God, but have departed from the faith that was once delivered to the Saints, and have broken the covenant in which their fathers were established [see Isaiah 24:5]. . . .

“And now what remains to be done, under circumstances like these? I will proceed to tell you what the Lord requires of all people, high and low, rich and poor, male and female, ministers and people, professors of religion and non-professors, in order that they may enjoy the Holy Spirit of God to a fulness and escape the judgments of God, which are almost ready to burst upon the nations of the earth. Repent of all your sins, and be baptized in water for the remission of them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and receive the ordinance of the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power, that ye may receive the Holy Spirit of God; and this is according to the Holy Scriptures, and the Book of Mormon; and the only way that man can enter into the celestial kingdom. These are the requirements of the new covenant.” (*History of the Church*, 1:313–14.)

(25-14) Jeremiah 31:34. All Shall Know the Lord

President Joseph Fielding Smith, speaking of this prophetic promise, said: “The Lord has promised that the time shall come when every man shall be his own teacher, that is, he will know because of righteous living what to do. He will be so filled with the Spirit of the Lord that he will be guided and directed in doing right without the necessity of someone coming into his home to set it in order. Now is a good time for us to begin.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:319.)

(25-15) Jeremiah 31:36. A Warning to Israel

The Lord, who has worked so long and hard to establish His righteous people, said that if those saving and exalting priesthood ordinances cease to exist, then Israel also will cease to exist—forever. This statement surely indicates the importance of ordinances in the Lord’s plan.

(25-16) Jeremiah 33:3–14. Prophecy of the Latter Days

The Lord knows all things, including the future. Prophecy is future history, that is, history in reverse. In Jeremiah 33:3–14 the Lord again spoke of the restoration of Israel and Judah in the latter days. Notice the language He used to describe the process:

"I will cure them . . . I will cleanse them . . . I will pardon all their iniquities" (vv. 6, 8).

In the latter days even the desolate land will be restored to its former condition (see v. 12). The cities that were once desolate will again be full of people and their bounteous flocks ("to tell" means "to count") (see v. 13). In the latter days the Lord will perform all that He has promised to the house of Israel *and* the house of Judah (see v. 14).

(25-17) Jeremiah 33:15–16. The Branch of David

"The Branch of righteousness" that will "grow up unto David" and "execute judgment and righteousness in the land" (v. 15) is Jesus Christ (see Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5–6). When this millennial event occurs, the Jews will dwell safely in Jerusalem.

The last part of verse 16 is not a particularly good translation since it implies that Jerusalem herself will be called "the Lord our righteousness." According to Adam Clarke it should read: "And this one who shall call to her is the Lord our Justification," that is, Jesus Christ Himself, the Branch of David (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:344).

(25-18) Jeremiah 33:17–26. Becoming Sons and Daughters of Christ

The seed of David are those who repent of their sins, accept the ordinances of the gospel, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and follow the new David, Jesus Christ. King Benjamin explained this concept to his people, after they had signified their willingness to covenant with God to do His will and be obedient to His commandments (see Mosiah 5:7).

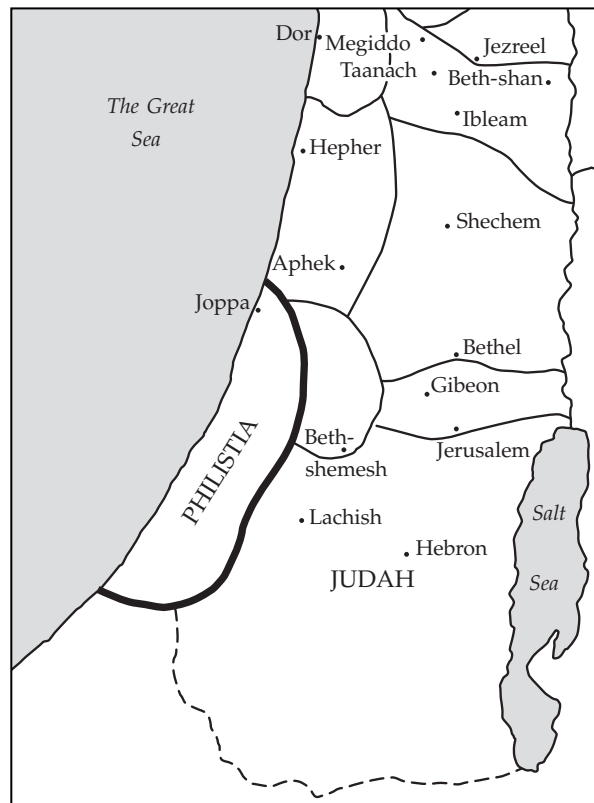
Abinadi also explained what it meant to see the seed of Christ (see Mosiah 15:11–13).

(25-19) Jeremiah 46. The Conquest of Egypt by Babylon: Israel to Be Saved

The "brigandines" in verse 4 were a coat of mail or armor, usually made of overlapping metal scales like the scales of a fish. The "day of the Lord" (v. 10) refers to the Second Coming (see Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18). It will be a "day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries" (v. 10). Verses 14 and 25 mention Egyptian cities. *No* is a name for Jupiter's city, or Thebes. Egypt is described as a fair heifer, but destruction would come to her from the north (Babylon) (see v. 20). Amidst all this turmoil, however, Israel was promised that the Lord would save her *and her seed* and that she would return, for the Lord Himself would be with her. The last two verses are the only ones in chapter 46 that were not fulfilled in Jeremiah's time or shortly thereafter.

(25-20) Jeremiah 47. The Destruction of the Philistines Foretold

The "waters" that "rise up out of the north" (v. 2) refers to a multitude of people coming from Chaldea. The stamping of hoofs, the rushing of chariots, and the rumbling of wheels describe a war. The destruction is attributed to the Lord, who allows wicked nations to do such things against those who have become ripe in iniquity.



Jeremiah predicted the destruction of the Philistines.

(25-21) Jeremiah 48. Moab Is Destroyed for Contempt of God

Moab was doomed to destruction, and the Lord pronounced a curse upon her enemies if they did not proceed to destroy her. God is the author of life and has the right to give and take it. These people had forfeited their lives by their idolatry and other crimes. The wrath of God is seen in verse 35 where He pronounces doom on those who deceive the people in attempting to practice their idolatry in the holy places. Verse 42 predicts that Moab will be destroyed as a people. The implication is not that all the Moabites would be destroyed, but that their identity as a people would cease. This prophecy was fulfilled literally, even though people continued to live in the land of Moab. They were taken captive by the Chaldeans and never afterward resumed their status as a nation. Verse 47 promises that the Lord will "bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days." This passage could mean the conversion of the remnants of these people to the gospel in the last days.

(25-22) Jeremiah 49. Destruction to the Ammonites, Edom, Kadar, Hazor, and Elam

It is believed that this prophecy was given after the capture of Jerusalem. The Ammonites had taken advantage of the depressed condition of Israel and invaded their territories, hoping to make them their own. Jeremiah intimated that God would preserve the descendants of Israel and bring them home again one day to their inheritances (see v. 2). The promise to the Ammonites (v. 6) was fulfilled when they returned

with the Moabites and Israelites with permission given by the edict of Cyrus.

The Lord said He had made Edom bare (see vv. 7–22), meaning He had uncovered all her hiding places and made them known to her enemies. The widows and orphans of Esau would be cared for by the Lord, who is the best of husbands to the one and the most loving father to the other.

Verse 39 speaks of the Lord's bringing again the captivity of Elam in the latter days. Again, it is supposed that this passage means their conversion, as with the Moabites.

(25-23) Jeremiah 50. Babylon to Be Destroyed Forever

Scattered Israel will be brought again into the lands of their inheritance. They shall seek the Lord and join with Him in a perpetual covenant which cannot be broken. The "assembly of great nations from the north country" (v. 9) is discussed by Clarke: "The army of Cyrus was composed of Medes, Persians, Armenians, Caducians, Sacae, &c. Though all these did not come from the *north*; yet they were arranged under the *Medes*, who did come from the north, in reference to Babylon." (*Commentary*, 4:383.)

By these captors Israel would be "scattered as sheep" (v. 17), and the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, would be punished. In the future, however, Israel will be brought again to their lands of inheritance (see v. 19) and will be forgiven (see v. 20). They will be led by the Lord Jesus Christ (see v. 34). He is the advocate with the Father (see D&C 29:5) and pleads our cause before Him.

Verses 41–46 describe the destruction of Babylon, which was a wonder to all the surrounding nations, because they thought Babylon was impregnable. Here Babylon is seen not only as a national power but as the symbol of worldliness and spiritual wickedness. (Compare D&C 133:14.)

(25-24) Jeremiah 51. The Lord Destroyed Babylon

This chapter is a continuation of the prophecy in chapter 50. "A destroying wind" (v. 1) is the east wind because it is hot and dry from the desert and carries with it particles of sand that do much damage. The metaphor here is used to mean the power of the Lord in destroying Babylon. With reference to the fanners (see v. 2), Clarke said: "When the corn is trodden out with the feet of cattle, or crushed out with a heavy wheel armed with iron, with a shovel they throw it up against the wind, that the chaff and broken straw may be separated from it. This is the image used by the prophet; these people shall be trodden, crushed, and fanned by their enemies." (*Commentary*, 4:387.)

In all this, Israel was promised that she had not been forgotten (see v. 5) and that she would be redeemed. Because Babylon is also a symbol of the world, a charge was given Israel to flee from her wickedness and to be responsible for saving their own souls (see v. 6). God would have healed them, as He would all His children, before their destruction, but sometimes, like Babylon, they resist turning to the Lord and therefore are not healed (see v. 9).

Jeremiah 50–51 was written and sent to Babylon in the days of Zedekiah (see Jeremiah 51:59–64). They are difficult to interpret unless two principles of Hebrew

prophecy are accepted: the dual nature of many prophecies, and the recurring use of archetypes and metaphors.

The dualism of these chapters is evident, for some verses refer specifically to the destruction of the Babylon of that day by nations from the north, and yet, the destruction of Babylon is associated again and again (see Jeremiah 50:4–5, 19, 20, 33–34) with events that will not occur until the time of the gathering and restoration of Israel and Judah. For example, Israel did not participate in the return from Babylon, but Israel and Judah will be restored together in the last days.

Jeremiah predicted the downfall not only of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon but of spiritual Babylon as well. His vision swept across the centuries from 600 B.C. to beyond A.D. 2000. And the downfall anciently of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was a prototype of the future downfall of "Babylon the Great" (see Revelation 18–19).

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON OBADIAH

(25-25) Who Was Obadiah?

Obadiah was a seer who was privileged to see in vision the salvation of Israel and other important events of the latter days. His book is the shortest of those of the prophets and, indeed, of all the books of the Old Testament. Nothing more is known about him than what is in the book. A man named Obadiah protected the Lord's prophets during Ahab's reign (see 1 Kings 18), but it is not likely he was the author of this book. The book of Obadiah is included with Jeremiah's writings because he prophesied of the destruction of Edom in ways similar to Jeremiah.

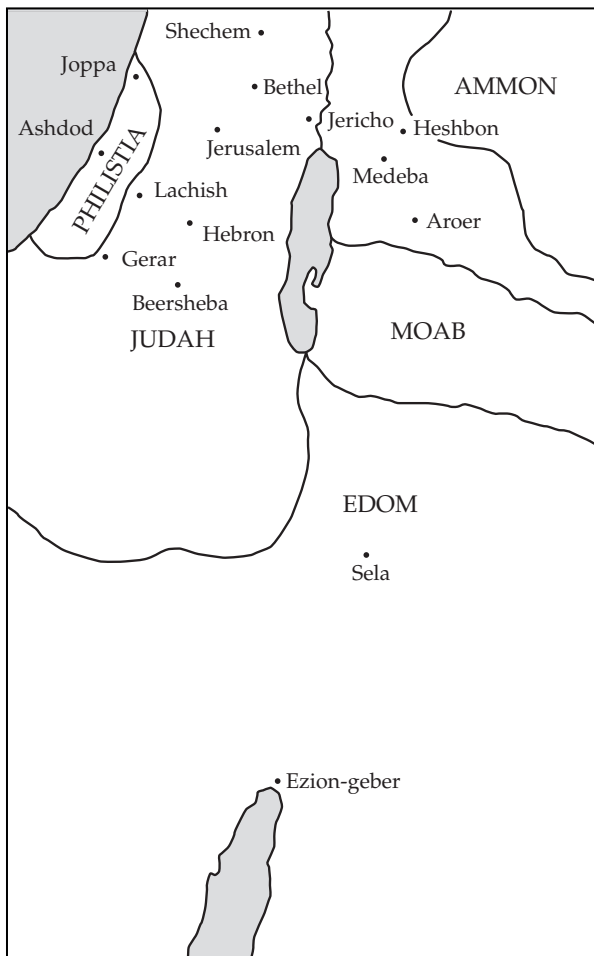
(25-26) Obadiah 1:1. What and Where Was Edom?

Edom is another name for Esau, Jacob's brother. The Greek form of the word *Edom* is *Idumea*. Those who settled in Edom were close kin to the residents of Judah. Sidney B. Sperry said: "The history of the relations between Israel and Edom is from the beginning fraught with envy and hate. In Gen. 36:1 we have the following statement: 'Now these are the generations of Esau—the same is Edom.' This recalls to us the struggle for supremacy from birth, or even before, of Esau and his younger brother Jacob (Israel). . . . Esau sold his birthright to his brother for a mess of pottage and finally the holy patriarchal inheritance also. Esau, it will be recalled, married among the Canaanites, which fact was a great trial to his parents." (*The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 318–19.)

Because of their wickedness and lasting hatred for Israel, Edom, like Babylon, became a symbol of the world (see D&C 1:36).

(25-27) Obadiah 1:3–9. Edomites Lived in False Security

The world famous ruins of Petra, in modern Jordan, are remarkable. A whole city was carved out of rock cliffs. It could be entered only through a narrow gorge. From the high cliffs, the Edomites could protect



Edom was the land of Esau.

themselves from invading enemies with great success. Petra, or Mount Seir, was in the land of Edom, and many scholars think it was the capital of Idumea. Though many of the ruins now visible at Petra date from a later period, they still give dramatic impact to Obadiah's words.

(25-28) Obadiah 1:10-15. The Reasons for Edom's Mighty Fall

These verses summarize the reasons for Edom's mighty fall: the violence shown against their brother Jacob, and their rejoicing at the destruction of the children of Judah in "the day of distress" (v. 12). J. R. Dummelow believed that Edom's destruction was partly due to their assisting Nebuchadnezzar during his siege and capture of Jerusalem (see *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 574).

(25-29) Obadiah 1:16-21. A Day of Deliverance and Rejoicing

These verses have both a temporal and a spiritual meaning for Latter-day Saints. If Esau (Edom) represents the worldly wicked, these verses may be seen as referring to that day when Israel will be completely restored and evil eliminated. Mount Zion, a symbol for deliverance and holiness (see v. 17), will be the inheritance of the "house of Jacob," whereas the "house

of Esau" will be stubble, fit only to be burned. The "house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame . . . and they shall kindle in them [Esau], and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau" (v. 18). Eventually, "saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (v. 21).

POINTS TO PONDER

(25-30) Prophecies Fulfilled

Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 have been referred to on numerous occasions in this manual and in *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003]. They are two of the most important chapters in all scripture because the whole history of Israel is foreshadowed in them. Some of the major calamities of the human race are explained in the doctrine revealed in these two chapters. President Kimball referred to Leviticus 26 again and again as it pertains to our day (see Conference Report, Apr. 1977, pp. 5-6; Oct. 1977, p. 5). These two chapters give the conditions upon which Israel could remain in the promised land.

(25-31) Saviors on Mount Zion

In yet another example of prophetic dualism, Obadiah's prophecy of the destruction of Edom or Idumea and the restoration of Israel refers also to the last days. Elder Theodore M. Burton spoke of the role we ourselves play as "saviors on Mount Zion" (see Obadiah 1:21). You may wish to write in your journal the things that are of particular worth to you.

"As revealed by the scriptures, one of the characteristics of these last days is the appearance of saviors on the earth. This was prophesied in Old Testament times: [Obadiah 1:21].

"It was prophesied by Paul in New Testament times, referring to people who had lived on the earth in times of old: [Hebrews 11:39-40].

"It has also been prophesied of us who live today: [D&C 86:11].

"So the Lord himself has placed his seal of approval upon this work.

"A logical question then follows: For *whom* am I to be a savior? In section 127 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 6, the Prophet Joseph Smith used these words: 'for your dead.' . . .

"Our dead, then, are clearly our own progenitors or direct ancestors, as Joseph Smith explained:

"But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations, and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah.' (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, [Deseret Book, 1968], p. 330.)" (In Conference Report, Oct. 1972, pp. 47-48.)



כ.ת



לעיני

שרה בת יהודה עה
נפטרה י' טבת תשל"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

נדבת יששכר וחוה פלנצור
שיהי



קרוב בן ישו

מז



ביום רביעי וט"ו שבט ה'תשל"ה



רננים

מואל בן יששכר זל
זיכל
אדר ב תש"ח
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה
טוני זיכל

התא
זל

The Lasting Effects of the Fall and Captivity of Judah

(H-1) Introduction

The Northern Kingdom of Israel had ripened in iniquity, and the results were inevitable. The Assyrians took them captive in 721 B.C. Now Judah was facing the same fate.

Judah had a history of wars and treaties with neighboring countries and suffered constant internal turmoil. Twenty kings ruled Judah from the time of the separation into two kingdoms until Judah fell to the Babylonians, but only a few kings were righteous. These few righteous kings may have been the reason Judah lasted a hundred years longer than the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

After the people of Israel were taken north by the Assyrians, the people of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, were governed by King Hezekiah, who, as the scriptures state, “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Kings 18:3). He removed the high places of idolatry and prostitution and the images of false gods from among the people. “He clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.” (2 Kings 18:6–7.) With the miraculous aid of the Lord, Hezekiah and his people were spared from the powerful Assyrian army.

At the death of this good and righteous king, Judah forgot their miraculous deliverance, and the nation began to move inevitably toward a captivity of their own. Hezekiah’s twelve-year-old son, Manasseh, was placed on the throne. He built again the high places, made a grove, and set up a graven image in it. Later he made his son pass through the fire of the god Molech, used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. The people followed him, and “they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Kings 21:9).

When Josiah, a righteous king, tried to restore righteousness among the people, the people would not respond. The Lord said, “I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there” (2 Kings 23:27). Just before the captivity, Ezekiel compared Judah to her “elder sister” Samaria (another name for the Northern Kingdom), and to her “younger sister” Sodom.

The people of Judah continued to follow the pagan and idolatrous practices of their heathen neighbors instead of the commandments Jehovah had given them through Moses and the prophets. Cunningham Geikie described this period of time:

“The strong Egyptian faction in Jerusalem . . . had introduced the animal worship of the Nile Valley, and

had even turned a large room in the temple into a chapel for its services. . . .

“ . . . The sun worship of the East had also found a footing in its court. . . . In the very holiest spot of the sanctuary, about twenty-five men, presumably representatives of the high priest . . . stood with their backs to the temple—the open sign of apostasy—and worshipped the rising sun, their faces turned to the east.” (*Hours with the Bible: From Manasseh to Zedekiah*, 5:235.) They even offered their children in sacrifice to the god Molech (see Jeremiah 32:35).

Jeremiah and other prophets told them that alliance with a decadent Egypt was a vain hope, for Egypt could not save them from a strong and ambitious Babylon, which had conquered Assyria and was now flexing its muscles in the east. But the leaders of Judah would not listen to the prophets. They threw Jeremiah into a pit (see Jeremiah 38:1–11) and tried to kill Lehi (see 1 Nephi 1:20). The Lord withdrew His Spirit, and the stage was set for another national tragedy. Twice Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Judah; twice he took captives; and twice he left Judah intact, thinking they had learned a lesson. But they had not, and when Nebuchadnezzar finished his third assault, Jerusalem lay in ruins, hundreds of thousands were dead, and all but a handful of the survivors were taken to Babylon. Like their northern sister, Judah now reaped the whirlwind they had sown with their own wickedness.

It would not, however, be quite the same. Judah would not be lost to history. Eventually, after the time of Christ, they would endure another exile that would last for centuries. Even in their best years, they would be a captive nation subject to foreigners. In the eyes of their persecutors they would become a hiss and a byword. Yet every effort to stamp them out would fail. Throughout the centuries of dispersion they would make many important contributions in art, literature, music, politics, philosophy, and history. But such gifts came out of their sorrow and persecution.

(H-2) How Did the Captivity Affect the Jewish Nation?

Nebuchadnezzar came against Judea and her neighbors with two armies. One was sent against Tyre and Sidon, cities of Phoenicia, for their rebellion; the other besieged Jerusalem. The siege lasted for eighteen months, during which time the people of Jerusalem were starved to the point of cannibalism (see Lamentations 4:8–10). As the final defenses broke down and the Babylonians became victorious, King Zedekiah and his army fled toward the Jordan River but were captured. He was forced to watch as his family was murdered, and then the Babylonians put out his eyes and took him captive to Babylon.

The city was burned, Solomon's temple was destroyed, and the kingdom of Judah came to an end. According to Jeremiah, the Babylonians took the remnant of the people captive to Babylon except for some who were left behind under Babylonian rule (see Jeremiah 39:8–10). Thus Nebuchadnezzar was able to control Judah by keeping the leaders in captivity, and some few of the people were allowed to remain behind to harvest the crops. The breakup and displacement of the Jews removed the threat of national revival.

Life in captivity was not necessarily one of horror or slavery. The Jews were given a good deal of social freedom and economic opportunity. They proved to be enterprising in business and economic affairs, a gift valued by the Babylonians. The Babylonian Jews were allowed to move about freely, to live in their communities within or near the great cities, and to carry on their way of life. (See Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, p. 376.) In fact, so secure was their life in Babylon that when Cyrus allowed the captive people to return to Judah to rebuild the temple seventy years later, many of them refused to leave Babylon.

Nevertheless, the captivity had a profound effect on Judaism. Scholars almost universally agree that the Jews never returned to image worship after the captivity. The fall of Jerusalem was a great turning point in Israel's religious life. From earliest times the sin of idolatry had existed in Israel, and the prophets of every age had combated it. After the fall, idolatry ceased to be a problem for the Jews.

The captivity seemed to impress upon the minds of the Jewish people that the God of Israel was, indeed, a jealous God. The prophets had been right in their warnings of the doom and destruction that would follow if the people did not repent and follow their God and Him only. The nation as a whole accepted the verdict that God's wrath had been poured down upon them for the sin of image worship. They reached the conclusion that only the God of Israel should be worshipped.

Henceforth, Israel became a very zealous nation for its God. This zeal took the form of devotion to Jehovah's law, which led over the years to the creation of numerous rules of conduct that went beyond the law itself. This has been described as building "a hedge around the Law to render its infringement or modification impossible" (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967], 1:3). Christ chastized the Pharisees, Sadducees, and others for putting so much emphasis on these rules that they overlooked "the weightier matters of the law" (Matthew 23:23), which after all was given to prepare the hearts of the people to accept the Messiah. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob refers to this spiritual blindness as "looking beyond the mark" (Jacob 4:14).

(H-3) The Development of Scripture

For over eight hundred years, the scriptures that came from Moses were used more for special occasions such as the Sabbath than for reading daily. At times they were even lost to public knowledge (see 2 Kings 22:8–13).

While it is true that knowledge alone will not keep a people on the straight and narrow path, it is just as true that without the word of God (the iron rod) they have no hope of staying on the path. This lesson was impressed on the Jews during the captivity. Their leaders resolved to see to it that never again would the Jews be ignorant of the covenants and laws of the Lord. The great prophet and scribe Ezra did much to establish the tradition and practice of studying the law. (See Nehemiah 8:1–12.)

"The great work of Ezra was, his collecting together and setting forth a correct edition of the Holy Scriptures, which he laboured much in, and went a great way in the perfecting of it. Of this both Christians and Jews gave him the honour; and many of the ancient fathers attribute more to him in this particular than the Jews themselves; for they hold that all the Scriptures were lost and destroyed in the Babylonish captivity, and that Ezra restored them all again by Divine revelation. . . .

". . . All that Ezra did in this manner was to get together as many copies of the sacred writings as he could, and out of them all to set forth a correct edition. . . . He collected together all the books of which the Holy Scriptures did then consist, and disposed them in their proper order; and settled the canon of Scripture for his time. These books he divided into three parts: 1. The Law. 2. The Prophets. 3. The *Cethubim*, or *Hagiographa*; i. e., the Holy Writings: which division our Saviour himself takes notice of, Luke xxiv. 44, where he says: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things might be fulfilled which are written in the law, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." (Prideaux, *The Connected History of the Old and New Testaments*, in Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:722–23.)

Having the scriptures was not enough. They needed to be read and heard by all. So Ezra and other scribes took steps to see that the scriptures were taught to everyone. There were special challenges, however, because the Jews in Babylon had begun to adopt some of the language and culture of the Chaldeans. That meant that the scriptures were read in Hebrew by the scribes, who then translated them and often explained them in the Chaldean or other local language. This practice was one of the reasons the scribes became a religious necessity and consequently gained social and religious prestige among the Jews. (See Enrichment J.)

Through the years, each religious group—scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and others—referred to the written word, quoted it, enlarged upon it, interpreted it, and in other ways continued to add to what their fathers had established. The commentaries, explanations, interpretations, and inferences became known as oral tradition. In time, these traditions, written and oral, took on so much importance that they often overshadowed the law and became a stumbling block for the Jews. The Savior referred to such traditions, both in ancient times and in our day, when He said: "And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the *tradition of their fathers*" (D&C 93:39; emphasis added). Such traditions blinded many to the Messiah when He came.

(H-4) The Synagogue Grew in Importance during the Captivity

From the time of the captivity, the Jews have been scattered to different locations. Nearly always some Jews have remained in the homeland, called *Eretz* Israel. (*Eretz* means "earth" or "land," and therefore is used to mean that portion of Israel who live in the homeland.) Dispersed or scattered Israel is often called the *Diaspora* (meaning "the dispersion").

Although the Jews have been scattered geographically since the exile in Babylonia, they have been kept united religiously through the institutions that developed out of the exile. One of these institutions is the synagogue. The fact that the Nephites had synagogues suggests that they were important in worship in Judah before the exile (see for example 2 Nephi 26:26). Some Jewish scholars claim the synagogue goes back to Moses, but most place its emergence in Babylon, and it seems likely that it at least grew in importance at that time. According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, "the Exiles, deprived of the Temple, in a strange land, feeling the need for consolation in their distress, would meet from time to time, probably on Sabbaths, and read the Scriptures" (s.v. "synagogue," 15:579–80.) The word *synagogue* means "assembly," though often it is used to mean the building. In fact, there is reason to believe that for many years before buildings were erected, the Jews assembled in the streets to hear the scriptures read and translated. Thus it is the people, or the assembly, that is the real synagogue.



A synagogue at Safed

(H-5) The Jews Have Been Captives and Exiles Since the Captivity

Though some of the Jews returned to their homeland and rebuilt the temple, the Jewish community in Babylon remained a focal point of rival importance. Later Alexandria, Athens, Rome, and even such farflung outposts of the Roman Empire as Barcelona, London, and the Germanic frontier had Jewish colonies with their assemblies and rabbis. Wherever they went, they were a separate people, usually by their own choice and request. As the centuries rolled on and Europe became heavily settled, there grew up in the larger cities Jewish quarters called ghettos. In the ghettos the Jews continued their worship and their institutions, the practices that kept them from being absorbed into the community and losing their identity. They remained a nation in exile, sometimes persecuted, sometimes admired as producing some of the most successful merchants, philosophers, scholars, musicians, and tradesmen of their times. The ghettos were not centers of poverty and degradation except in times of acute persecution. They were, rather, the center of family and religious life, the place where education was most prized and most available.

(H-6) Conclusion

Many are familiar today with Jewish people, customs, and the struggles in the Holy Land. Much of modern Judaism had its origins in the first major captivity, the Babylonian captivity, and the period after the return. The following is a list of some of the lasting effects of the Babylonian captivity:

1. The Jews abandoned the worship of graven images and began to lay great emphasis on tradition and the law.
2. Through the efforts of Ezra the scribe and others, much of the Old Testament was preserved.
3. Volumes of commentary were compiled during this period and later.
4. The principal religious groups in Israel—the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and others—originated during this time.
5. The Hebrew writing was preserved, even though the language of the people changed. This change created the need for experts in the law.
6. The Jewish synagogue took on new importance.
7. The refusal to integrate is evidenced by the Jewish quarter, or the ghetto, and other efforts of the people to band together for mutual support.

Knowing and understanding these effects not only aids one in a study of the Bible but also gives one insight into events now taking place in the Holy Land.



Ezekiel: Watchman of Israel

(26-1) Introduction

Through Ezekiel, the Lord gave wayward and backsliding Israel a message of warning and reproof, of justice and judgment, of mercy and love that left no doubt of His indignation at their unrighteousness nor of His desire for their repentance. Ezekiel taught that all are responsible for their own actions and will be rewarded or punished according to the way they use the agency given them. He taught that no one can reject the Lord's counsel and escape the judgments that invariably follow justice and that are intended to purge the soul of iniquity. He taught also that all who repent and turn from their iniquities will lose the blessings of God's mercy, love, and forgiveness.

These principles apply to individuals and to nations. They applied to the individual Israelite and the whole nation of Judah (Israel) to whom Ezekiel prophesied. God will not justify the sinner nor forsake those with whom He has made covenants if they will but fulfill their part of the agreement. In Ezekiel's time the Lord's covenant people had rejected Him and needed to be refined in the fires of tribulation and sorrow in order to be turned from their iniquitous way of life. Although, because of His justice, God allowed those tribulations, because of His infinite love and mercy, He continued to extend the promise of forgiveness and life to the repentant soul and of the restoration of all former blessings to Israel if they would return to Him.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Ezekiel 1–24.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EZEKIEL 1–24

(26-2) Ezekiel: A Contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel

The Lord had one great prophet, Jeremiah, in the court at Jerusalem; another, Daniel, in the court at Babylon; and a third, Ezekiel, among the exiles in Babylonia. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were of priestly lineage; Daniel may have been of royal lineage (see Daniel 1:3). Jeremiah served the Lord by delivering His warnings and instructions to the kings and leaders of the soon-to-be conquered; Daniel, to the conquerors; and Ezekiel, to the exiles.

Ezekiel, whose name means "God is strong," or "God will strengthen," was the son of Buzi and a priest of the family of Zadok. He was carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in the captivity of Jehoiachin. (See Sidney B. Sperry, *The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 189–90.)

"[Ezekiel's] family must have been considered prominent and influential, for, according to the account in 2 Kings 24:14–16, mostly the 'chief men of the land' were taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar [an alternate spelling of Nebuchadnezzar] when Jehoiachin was deposed as king of Judah. Most scholars assume that this event took place in 597 B.C., but the fact that Zedekiah succeeded Jehoiachin leads us to assign it a little earlier, to 601 B.C., following the lead of certain chronological data in the Book of Mormon." (Sperry, *Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 190–91; see also Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 10, chap. 6, par. 3; Ezekiel 4:14.)

(26-3) Ezekiel 1:1, 4–28. Ezekiel's Record of His Vision

It is very difficult, if not impossible, for a mortal to convey in writing the message and spirit of a vision or other revelation from God so that the reader will have a complete understanding of what took place and what was communicated. Such was the challenge of Ezekiel in describing his transcendent visions of heaven. Others, too, have faced the same challenge (see 2 Corinthians 12:4; 3 Nephi 28:12–14; D&C 76:114–17). Joseph Smith said that "could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject" (*History of the Church*, 6:50). One must experience revelation to understand it fully.

Those, including Ezekiel, who have had visitations or visions from the eternal worlds have often used symbolism, metaphor, simile, comparisons, and other kinds of figurative language to try to convey the experience they had and the message they received (see D&C 110:2–3; JS—H 1:32; Daniel 10:5–9; Revelation 1:12–18; 12:1–6). Therefore, everything Ezekiel said need not be taken literally, for he used many figurative expressions to try to tell that which was far beyond mortal experience. Many times, for example, he used words like *as*, *likeness*, and *appearance* (see Ezekiel 1:4–5, 7, 10, 13–14, 16, 24, 26–28).

Another difficulty in understanding Ezekiel and other Old Testament writers is the cultural differences between the Jews of Ezekiel's day and the modern reader. Where it is important, Notes and Commentary on the book of Ezekiel explain the cultural aspects of Ezekiel's writing.

(26-4) Ezekiel 1:4. "Whirlwind"

The words *wind*, *tempest*, or *storm* would better fit the meaning intended in Ezekiel 1:4. A wind that revolves on its own axis with great rapidity is not what is meant by the Hebrew word translated "whirlwind"; rather, the idea of a furious or powerful wind is what was intended (see Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "whirlwind"). The metaphor signifies the power of God. For instance, the power of God's presence was indicated to Job through allusion to a whirlwind (see Job 38:1). When the Lord poured out His Spirit with great power at the dedication of the

Kirtland Temple in this dispensation, “a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple” (*History of the Church*, 2:428).

(26-5) Ezekiel 1:4, 13. Cloud, Fire, Brightness, Color of Amber, Lamps, Lightning

These figures are used throughout the scriptures in association with the glory, power, and majesty of God’s presence or that of His messengers. (See “cloud” and “fire” in Exodus 13:21–22; 16:10; 19:9–16; 24:16; Leviticus 16:2; Matthew 17:5; D&C 34:7. See “fire,” “brightness,” “colour of amber,” “lamps,” and “lightning” in Exodus 3:2; Hebrews 12:29; 1 Nephi 1:6; D&C 29:12; 110:2–3; 133:41; Habakkuk 3:3–4; Acts 26:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; JS—H 1:16–17, 30–32; Daniel 10:6.)



Light and clouds of fire symbolize the presence of God.

(26-6) Ezekiel 1:5–6, 10. Four Creatures with Four Faces

In his vision, Ezekiel saw four creatures, each of which had four faces. “They four had the face of a man, . . . a lion, . . . an ox . . . [and] the face of an eagle” (Ezekiel 1:10). The Apostle John had a similar vision. In his vision, the creatures were described as being “like a lion, . . . like a calf, . . . [having] a face as a man, and . . . like a flying eagle” (Revelation 4:7). The Prophet Joseph explained that the four beasts in John’s vision were representative of classes of beings (see D&C 77:3). The faces of the creatures in Ezekiel’s vision seem to represent the same thing. The following interpretation, from an ancient Jewish commentary, is in harmony with that view: “Man is exalted among creatures; the eagle is exalted among birds; the ox is exalted among domestic animals; the lion is exalted among wild beasts; and all of them have received dominion, and greatness has been given them, yet

they are stationed below the chariot of the Holy One” (*Midrash Shemoth Rabbah* 23; in D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 667).

Ezekiel saw that the throne of God was above the creatures (Ezekiel 1:26–28). That placement represents His having dominion over all living things, though He provides the means for all His creations, both human and animal, to enter into eternal glory, each in their appropriate order (see D&C 77:2–3).

(26-7) Ezekiel 1:6. What Is Represented by the Wings the Creatures Had?

The Lord taught Joseph Smith that the wings of the beasts John saw in his revelation (see Revelation 4:8) “are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.” (D&C 77:4). That interpretation also seems to apply to the creatures in Ezekiel’s vision.

(26-8) Ezekiel 1:7. Feet like Burnished Brass

The word *straight* in Ezekiel 1:7 means “standing upright, not bent, as when sitting or kneeling” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 9:1:23). That is, the creatures did not travel as a person travels when walking.

The comparison of the sole of their feet to that of a calf seems to refer to the smoothness of a cow’s hoof to indicate the shininess of the feet of the beasts. “There is scarcely any thing that gives a higher lustre than highly *polished* or *burnished brass*.” (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:425). In the King James Version of the Bible, polished brass is translated “amber.” It signifies beauty and glory (see D&C 110:3–4; Daniel 10:6; Revelation 1:15; 2:18).

(26-9) Ezekiel 1:9, 11. Their Wings Were Joined Together

The creatures of Ezekiel’s vision were in complete harmony and unity. They moved as one, symbolizing the total unity that exists among all living things who submit to God’s will.

(26-10) Ezekiel 1:15–21. What Is Represented by the Wheels That Ezekiel Described?

Because Joseph Smith received from the Lord some keys for interpreting the meaning of the beasts in John’s vision (see D&C 77:2–4), the parallels between John’s vision and Ezekiel’s give some clues to the meaning of the beasts Ezekiel saw. There is, however, no parallel in John’s vision to the wheels seen by Ezekiel.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “I make this broad declaration, that whenever God gives a vision of an image, or beast, or figure of any kind, He always holds Himself responsible to give a revelation or interpretation of the meaning thereof, otherwise we are not responsible or accountable for our belief in it. Don’t be afraid of being damned for not knowing the meaning of a vision or figure, if God has not given a revelation or interpretation of the subject.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 291.)

At present the interpretation of Ezekiel’s vision has not been given to the Church, so the Lord does not hold His Saints accountable for understanding what is represented by the wheels.

(26-11) Ezekiel 1:26–28. Ezekiel Saw God upon His Throne

Ezekiel saw a firmament, or expanse, above or over the creatures. Above the firmament Ezekiel saw God sitting on His throne in His glory. Ezekiel used several terms to describe the brilliance, beauty, and glory of God. Then, as a humble witness to such glory, beauty, and majesty, he fell upon his face in awe and reverent submission. (Compare Isaiah 6:1–5; Revelation 1:10–18; D&C 76:19–23; 110:1–4. Note especially the parallels between Ezekiel’s language and John’s in Revelation 4:2–11.)

(26-12) Ezekiel 2:9–10; 3:1–3. What Is Meant by the “Roll of a Book” the Lord Caused Ezekiel to Eat?

In a similar experience, the Apostle John, too, was commanded to eat a book. The Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, explained that this action represented a mission given to John among the tribes of Israel (see D&C 77:14).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that “John’s act of eating a book containing the word of God to him was in keeping with the custom and tradition of ancient Israel. The act signified that he was eating the bread of life, that he was partaking of the good word of God, that he was feasting upon the word of Christ—which was in his ‘mouth sweet as honey.’ But it made his ‘belly bitter’; that is, the judgments and plagues promised those to whom the Lord’s word was sent caused him to despair and have sorrow of soul. ‘How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!’ (Psalm 119:103.) Such is the exulting cry of the Psalmist. And, conversely, how bitter is the penalty for rebellion and disobedience. Ezekiel had a similar experience. He was commanded to eat a roll (a book),



Anciently, books were written on scrolls.

which was in his mouth ‘as honey for sweetness,’ but in the writing itself there was ‘lamentations, and mourning, and woe.’ (Ezek. 2:6–10; 3:1–3.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:507.)

(26-13) Ezekiel 3:8. “I Have Made Thy Face . . . and Thy Forehead Strong”

The words of Ezekiel 3:8 are a Hebrew idiom suggesting essentially the English idiom “face up to it.” The Lord promised Ezekiel power, courage, and firmness, since his mission was to a very rebellious and stubborn people (see Jeremiah 1:17–19). The Lord gives His humble servants sufficient strength to withstand the world’s opposition as they seek to do His will.

(26-14) Ezekiel 3:17–21. There Can Be Jeopardy in Being a Watchman

Ezekiel’s prophecies did not fall on friendly ears. But, as a watchman, he had to raise the warning voice. The analogy of the watchman referred to the military watchman who had to stay awake and who faced execution if he failed to warn the city when the enemy appeared. Such a watchman was in jeopardy always: the enemy sought to destroy him to keep him from raising the warning and, if he did not raise the warning when it was needed, his life was in jeopardy at the hands of those he was responsible to warn. Likewise, watchmen in the Lord’s kingdom have a serious responsibility with far-reaching consequences, as Elder Ezra Taft Benson taught:

“As watchmen on the tower of Zion, it is our obligation and right as leaders to speak out against current evils—evils that strike at the very foundation of all we hold dear as the true church of Christ. . . .

“As one of these watchmen, with a love for humanity, I accept humbly this obligation and challenge and gratefully strive to do my duty without fear. In times as serious as these, we must not permit fear of criticism to keep us from doing our duty, even at the risk of our counsel being tabbed as political, as government becomes more and more entwined in our daily lives.

“In the crisis through which we are now passing, we have been fully warned. This has brought forth some criticism. There are some of us who do not want to hear the message. It embarrasses us. The things which are threatening our lives, our welfare, our freedoms are the very things some of us have been condoning. Many do not want to be disturbed as they continue to enjoy their comfortable complacency.

“The Church is founded on eternal truth. We do not compromise principle. We do not surrender our standards regardless of current trends or pressures. Our allegiance to truth as a church is unwavering. Speaking out against immoral or unjust actions has been the burden of prophets and disciples of God from time immemorial. It was for this very reason that many of them were persecuted. Nevertheless, it was their God-given task, as watchmen on the tower, to warn the people.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, pp. 49–50; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 38.)

(26-15) Ezekiel 3:25–27. What Is Meant by Ezekiel’s Being Bound?

Ezekiel was called to prophesy to a very obstinate people, and, as Nephi later said, “the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center” (1 Nephi 16:2). Hearing messages of reproof and warning, the unrighteous rose up against Ezekiel. They sought to quiet his preaching and hinder his work, either by physical binding and confinement (though there is no scriptural record that this did actually happen), or by rejecting his message, refusing to listen, and seeking to get others to do the same, thus “binding” Ezekiel’s effectiveness.

(26-16) Ezekiel 4:1–3. Ezekiel’s Representation of the Siege of Jerusalem

Ezekiel was instructed to make a representation of the city of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and portray to the people the events that would befall the city. The Lord wanted to make very clear to the people through many means the message He had for them. Ezekiel was instructed to present other visual representations before the people to teach His messages more effectively (see Ezekiel 4:4–17; 5). Other prophets have been instructed to use similar teaching techniques (see Jeremiah 27:1–11; 1 Kings 11:29–39; 13:1–11; 19:1–18; Acts 21:11).

During the events described in Ezekiel 4, Ezekiel himself was in captivity with other Jews in Babylon. Twice Nebuchadnezzar had gone to war against Judah and taken captives both times. Both times, however, he retreated, thinking he had taught Judah a lesson. So Jerusalem was still intact until the third siege, which brought the destruction of Judah. Ezekiel dramatized that destruction in verses 1–3.

The “iron pan” (v. 3) represented the wall that the Chaldeans erected around Jerusalem during their siege. It prevented escape and allowed no entry of supplies.

(26-17) Ezekiel 4:4–8. Why Was Ezekiel Told to Lie on His Sides for 430 Days?

Ezekiel 4:4–8 contains another example of a figurative teaching device that has not been fully interpreted. After forming the image of Jerusalem under siege (vv. 1–3), Ezekiel was told to lie on his side for 390 days and to bear the iniquity of Israel (in this case it appears the Northern Kingdom is meant). Then he was to change sides and lie for another 40 days to bear the iniquity of Judah.

The symbolic meaning of the act seems clear enough. Ezekiel was to be fettered to the bed (v. 8) and bound down to show that the two kingdoms were bound down, or brought into bondage, because of their iniquity. But whether Ezekiel actually performed this act is not known. It seems strange that the Lord would ask a prophet to lie immobile for fifteen months. Perhaps Ezekiel performed the act in some kind of symbolic way.

Why the numbers 390 and 40 were used is not clear. Though Ezekiel was told that each day represented a year (v. 6), the years do not fit any known history.

Keil and Delitzsch, using the total of 430 days or years (390+40), suggested that this is the number of years Israel was in bondage in Egypt (see Exodus 12:40–41). They explain the split of 390 days and 40 days as referring to the forty years after Moses killed the

Egyptian and fled into the wilderness of Midian (see Exodus 2:11–15; Acts 7:23, 30). This time, just before Moses returned to deliver them, was probably the most intense period of suffering for Israel. (See *Commentary*, 9:1:74–76.) Others, however, believe that the 430 years included the time from Abraham to the Exodus. (See *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel*, pp. 119–20.)

Without a revealed key for interpreting these numbers, one cannot definitely interpret this passage.

(26-18) Ezekiel 4:9–11, 16–17. Why Was Ezekiel Instructed to Eat Specific Foods and to Do So by Weight and Measure?

Another symbolic act Ezekiel was commanded to perform represented the conditions that would prevail during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem.

“In times of *scarcity*, it is customary in all countries to mix several kinds of coarser grain with the finer, to make it last the longer. This *mashlin*, which the prophet is commanded to take, of wheat, barley, beans, lentiles, millet, and fitches, was intended to show how scarce the necessities of life should be during the siege.

“. . . The whole of the above grain, being ground, was to be formed into one *mass*, out of which he was to make *three hundred and ninety loaves*; one loaf for each day; and this loaf was to be of *twenty shekels* in weight. Now a *shekel*, being in weight about half an ounce, this would be *ten ounces* of bread for each day; and with this *water* to the amount of one *sixth* part of a *hin*, which is about a pint and a half of our measure. All this shows that so reduced should provisions be during the siege, that they should be obliged to eat the *meanest* sort of aliment, and that by *weight*, and their *water* by *measure*; each man’s allowance being scarcely a *pint and a half*, and *ten ounces*, a little more than *half a pound of bread*, for each day’s support.” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:434.)

The phrase “I will break the staff of bread” (Ezekiel 4:16) indicates that the time would come when the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be without bread. See 2 Kings 25:3 for a record of the prophecy’s fulfillment.

(26-19) Ezekiel 4:12–15. What Was the Purpose of Ezekiel’s Being Instructed to Cook with Dung?

“Dried ox and cow dung is a common fuel in the east; and with this, for want of wood and coals, they are obliged to prepare their food. Indeed, dried excrement of every kind is gathered. Here, the prophet is to prepare his bread with *dry human excrement*. . . . This was required to show the extreme degree of wretchedness to which they should be exposed; for, not being able to *leave the city* to collect the dried excrements of beasts, the inhabitants during the siege would be obliged, literally, to use dried human ordure for fuel. The very circumstances show that this was the plain fact of the case. However, we find that the prophet was relieved from using this kind of fuel, for *cows’ dung* was substituted at his request. See ver. 15.” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:434–35.)

As Ezekiel 4:13 indicates, the Jews would be driven to Babylon where they would be compelled to eat “defiled bread.” Because foreign lands were considered unclean (see Hosea 9:3–4; Amos 7:17), living and eating in other lands was considered unclean.

(26-20) Ezekiel 5:1–4, 12. What Was Meant by the Cutting and Dividing of Ezekiel’s Hair?

In Ezekiel 5:12 the Lord briefly explained the next symbolic act He instructed Ezekiel to perform (see vv. 1–4). Ezekiel represented the Jewish nation and particularly the city of Jerusalem. That which he was to do to his hair would also be done to Judah. The razor represented the Babylonians who would cut Judah asunder with the sword and would be the means of bringing judgments upon them. “To make the head bald, or to shave or pluck the beard, was a sign of mourning among the Hebrews and many other nations” (James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 256; see also Ezra 9:3; Job 1:20; Isaiah 22:12; 48:37–38). As Ezekiel was to burn one-third of the hair in the city, so also would one-third of Judah’s inhabitants perish in Jerusalem during its siege. The third of the hair Ezekiel cut with a knife represented the people who would be destroyed by the sword in the environs of Jerusalem. The third that was scattered in the wind represented those who would be taken captive and scattered far from their homeland. There would further be a sword drawn after them who would be scattered (see Ezekiel 5:2, 12), which was signified by those hairs Ezekiel bound to his skirts and later cast into the fire. This act signified that even among those who were taken captive and preserved from the original destruction, some would later be “cast . . . into the midst of the fire” (v. 4) to be destroyed, or to be cleansed and purified from iniquity by tribulations. That all of Judah would not be completely destroyed is attested to by the Lord’s promise of eventual escape for some (see Ezekiel 6:8–10).

(26-21) Ezekiel 5:10. “The Fathers Shall Eat the Sons”

As had been earlier prophesied by Moses (see Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:53), the siege of Jerusalem would be so severe and the famine would be so dreadful that parents would eat their children and children would eat their parents (see Ezekiel 16–17; Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 2:20; 4:10). These tragedies also took place during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 (see Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, bk. 5, chap. 10, pars. 1–5; bk. 6, chap. 3, pars. 3–5).

(26-22) Ezekiel 6:9. What Is Meant by the Phrase “Whorish Heart”?

The expression “whorish heart” refers to the idolatry practiced by Israel. Some may think it strange that ancient Israel was guilty of such infidelity to Jehovah. Yet modern Israel is often guilty of the same thing. Though today men rarely worship idols of wood or stone, they may devote themselves to serving certain governments that have set themselves up as the state religion, or they devote themselves to acquiring material things, or they dedicate themselves to other pursuits that take them away from service to God. (See Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 40–42; *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel*, pp. 245–48.)

The Jews worshiped strange gods because they put their trust in the power of men and earthly governments instead of in Jehovah and righteousness as the solution to human happiness and welfare. Modern idolatry is essentially the same as ancient idolatry, though the outward form has changed.



Layered ruins of the destroyed city of Jerusalem south of the temple mount

(26-23) Ezekiel 7:7. “Not the Sounding Again of the Mountains”

The phrase “sounding again of the mountains” in Ezekiel 7:7 refers to the impending destruction of Jerusalem.

Clarke said: “The hostile troops are advancing! Ye hear a *sound*, a *tumultuous noise*; do not suppose that this proceeds from festivals upon *the mountains*; from the joy of *harvestmen*, or the treaders of the *wine-press*. [Great rejoicing was common at harvest time.] It is the *noise* of those by whom ye and your country are to fall; . . . and not the reverberation of sound, or reflected sound, or *reechoing* from the mountains. ‘Now will I shortly pour out,’ ver. 8. Here they come!” (*Commentary*, 4:439–40.)

Throughout chapter 7, Ezekiel sounds the same theme sounded by Jeremiah: because of the people’s wickedness, Jerusalem will be destroyed.

(26-24) Ezekiel 7:20. What Is the Ornament?

The ornament mentioned in Ezekiel 7:20 is a reference to the temple, the most beautiful ornament of Jerusalem. The temple will be despoiled and desecrated by conquerors because the people had despoiled and spiritually desecrated it with their idols.

(26-25) Ezekiel 8:3–18. Ezekiel’s Vision of Idolatrous Abominations in Jerusalem

Though Ezekiel was residing in Babylon among the exiles, he was “brought . . . in the visions of God” (Ezekiel 8:3) to the temple in Jerusalem. “Here, in the temple, Jehovah shows to the prophet the various kinds of idolatry which Israel is practising both publicly and privately, not merely in the temple, but throughout the whole land. The arrangement of these different forms of idolatry in four groups or abomination scenes (vers. 5, 6, 7–12, 13–15, and 16–18), which the prophet sees both in and from the court of the temple, belong to the visionary drapery of this divine revelation.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:116–17.)

(26-26) Ezekiel 8:7–12. Worship of Beasts in the Dark

In his vision of the second abomination shown him (see Ezekiel 8:7–12), Ezekiel saw all manner of beasts and creeping things.

"It is very likely that these images portrayed on the wall were the objects of *Egyptian* adoration: the *ox*, the *ape*, the *dog*, the *crocodile*, the *ibis*, the *scarabaeus* or *beetle*, and various other things. It appears that these were privately worshipped by the sanhedrin or great Jewish council, consisting of *seventy* or *seventy-two* persons, *six* chosen out of every tribe, as representatives of the people. The images were portrayed upon the wall, as we find those ancient idols are on the walls of the *tombs of the kings and nobles of Egypt*." (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:443.)

It is significant that such worship took place in the dark (see v. 12). This fact, in addition to the necessity Ezekiel was under to dig through the wall to see in, indicates that ancient Israelites knew of the Lord but sought to hide their abominable practices from Him. They said, "The Lord seeth us not" (v. 12). Such is often the case among those who perform unrighteous acts. How foolish it is for any to assume that they can hide their acts from God's all-seeing eye!

The statement made by Elder Spencer W. Kimball concerning God's omniscience was as applicable in Ezekiel's time as it is today: "There are no corners so dark, no deserts so uninhabited, no canyons so remote, no automobiles so hidden, no homes so tight and shut in but that the all-seeing One can penetrate and observe" ("Message of Inspiration," *Church News*, 30 May 1970, p. 2).

(26-27) Ezekiel 8:14. Who Was Tammuz and Why Did Women Weep for Him?

According to J. R. Dummelow, Tammuz was "a deity worshipped both in Babylonia and in Phoenicia—the same as the Greek Adonis. He appears to have been a god of the spring, and the myth regarding him told of his early death and of the descent of Istar his bride into the underworld in search of him. The death of Tammuz symbolised the destruction of the spring vegetation by the heat of summer, and it was celebrated annually by seven days of women's mourning in the 4th month (June–July), which was called Tammuz. This superstition had been introduced into Jerusalem." (*A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, pp. 497–98.)

(26-28) Ezekiel 8:16. Worship of the Sun with Backs toward the Temple

"Sun worship was practised by the Canaanites, but lately had been reintroduced from Assyria (2 Ki. 23:5, 11; Je. 8:2). *Between the porch and the altar* was the place where the priests offered prayer (Joel 2:17), with their faces, of course, towards the Temple; in this spot, *with their backs to the temple*, the adoration of the sun took place, as complete a renunciation of Yahweh [Jehovah] as possible." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 670; see also 2 Chronicles 29:6.)

(26-29) Ezekiel 8:17. What Is Meant by Putting the "Branch to Their Nose"?

Although it is not clear what the expression "put the branch to their nose" means, and there are differences of opinion among the scholars, a comment from Dummelow may be helpful. He wrote that the expression was "usually explained as a ceremony

connected with sun-worship. Persian sun-worshippers held bunches of the twigs of certain trees before their mouths, that they might not contaminate the sun with their breath." (*Commentary*, p. 498.)

(26-30) Ezekiel 9:4. Why Was a Mark Put on the Foreheads of the Righteous in Jerusalem?

"This mark was to be put on these faithful ones for their protection when the faithless were to be destroyed. It showed that they belonged to God. The allusion is to a very ancient custom. In Egypt a runaway slave was freed from his master if he went to the temple and gave himself up to the god, receiving certain marks upon his person to denote his consecration to the deity there worshipped. Cain had a mark put on him for his protection, as an evidence of God's promise to spare his life notwithstanding his wickedness. [Genesis 4:15.] To this day all Hindoos have some sort of mark upon their forehead signifying their consecration to their gods. Several passages in the book of Revelation represent the saints as having a mark on their foreheads. [See Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4.] The followers of the 'beast' are also said to be marked in the forehead or in the hands. [See Revelation 13:16–17; 14:9; 20:4.] The Romans marked their soldiers in the hand and their slaves in the forehead. The woman in scarlet, whom John saw, had a name written on her forehead. [Revelation 17:5.]" (Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 301–2.)

In this case the mark represented the allegiance of the faithful to God. As those who belonged to God, they would be preserved.

(26-31) Ezekiel 9:5–8. Slaying of Those Who Were Not Marked on the Forehead

None were to be slain who were marked on the forehead! This passage shows that even in war, plagues, and starvation, the Lord can preserve whom He will and leave the rest to die. In the great destructions in the Americas before Christ's visit, though thousands were killed, the more righteous were spared (see 3 Nephi 10:12). Even though there will be martyrs and other exceptions, the Saints of this day have a promise that generally the righteous will be preserved in the tribulations to come (see 1 Nephi 22:16–17; 2 Nephi 30:10; D&C 97:25–27; 115:6; Moses 7:61–62). To a great extent, the preservation of the righteous is a natural expectation since they follow inspired counsel by which they are led to make choices favorable to their well-being. (See Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 21:4.)

It is not just association with God's kingdom that preserves individuals; it is individual righteousness. In fact, the Lord has reserved His most severe judgments for those who profess His name but do not obey Him. Orson Pratt said: "Where shall these great and severe judgments begin? Upon what people does the Lord intend to commence this great work of vengeance? Upon the people who profess to know his name and still blaspheme it in the midst of his house. They are the ones designated for some of the most terrible judgments of the latter days." (In N. B. Lundwall, comp., *Inspired Prophetic Warnings to All Inhabitants of the Earth*, p. 139.) Compare Ezekiel 9:6 with Doctrine and Covenants 112:24–26.

(26-32) Ezekiel 10. Ezekiel Received Another Vision Similar to His Earlier One

Ezekiel's description in chapter 10 of a later vision contains many elements that correspond to the vision described in chapter 1. Compare items to similar ones in the first account.

A significant difference in chapter 10 is the frequent reference to cherubim. The substitution of the face of a cherub in chapter 10 (see v. 14) for the face of an ox in chapter 1 (see v. 10) raises a question of interpretation. If the faces represent various classes of living creatures in God's kingdom that function in harmony with His will, the problem is not difficult. The cherub, which is an angelic servant of God, is in the same category with all living creatures that serve God. In fact, all of the creatures Ezekiel saw are referred to as cherubim (see Ezekiel 10:20). All follow the dictates of His Spirit and perform His work.

Ezekiel 10:12 tells of eyes on the body, backs, hands, and wings of the cherubim and on the wheels. These eyes represent light and knowledge. All creatures who serve God with complete dedication may have the blessing of receiving the Light of Christ, by which Spirit they function in complete harmony, agreeable to His will.

(26-33) Ezekiel 10:1. What are Cherubim?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

"Apparently a *cherub* is an angel of some particular order or rank to whom specific duties and work are assigned. That portion of the Lord's word which is now available among men does not set forth clearly either the identity or work of these heavenly beings. . . .

"In English, the plural of cherub is *cherubs*; in Hebrew, the plural is *cherubim*, except that the King James Version of the Bible erroneously translates the plural as *cherubims*. The Book of Mormon (Alma 12:21; 42:2-3), the Pearl of Great Price (Moses 4:31), and the [Joseph Smith Translation] of the Bible (Ex. 25:20-22), give the plural as *cherubim*." (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 124-25.)



A depiction of cherubim on the ark of the covenant

(26-34) Ezekiel 10:2, 6-7. What Is Meant by the Coals of Fire Scattered over Jerusalem?

The part of Ezekiel's vision found in Ezekiel 10:2, 6-7 is a reference to the judgments and eventual burning and destruction which would come upon the city.

(26-35) Ezekiel 11:3, 7, 11. "It Is Not Near; Let Us Build Houses: This City Is the Caldron, and We Be the Flesh"

Keil and Delitzsch gave the following explanation of Ezekiel 11:3: "Jeremiah had called upon those in exile to build themselves houses in their banishment, and prepare for a lengthened stay in Babylon, and not to allow themselves to be deceived by the words of false prophets, who predicted a speedy return; for severe judgments had yet to fall upon those who had remained behind in the land [see Jeremiah 29]. This word of Jeremiah the authorities in Jerusalem ridiculed, saying 'house-building is not near,' *i.e.* the house-building in exile is still a long way off; it will not come to this, that Jerusalem should fall either permanently or entirely into the hands of the king of Babylon. On the contrary, Jerusalem is the pot, and we, its inhabitants, are the flesh. The point of comparison is this: as the pot protects the flesh from burning, so does the city of Jerusalem protect us from destruction. . . . This saying expresses not only false confidence in the strength of Jerusalem, but also contempt and scorn of the predictions of the prophets sent by God. Ezekiel is therefore to prophesy, as he does in vers. 5-12, against this pernicious counsel, which is confirming the people in their sins." (*Commentary*, 9:1:144-45.)

(26-36) Ezekiel 12:1-14. Zedekiah's Escape, Abandonment, and Blinding Were Described in Prophetic Types

Ezekiel's prophecy of Zedekiah's fate seemed to contradict the prophecies of Jeremiah and caused Zedekiah to reject both (see Notes and Commentary on 2 Kings 25:1-7).

(26-37) Ezekiel 12:27. "He Prophesieth of the Times That Are Far Off"

A common mistake that uninspired people make is to ignore prophetic warnings, thinking that the fulfillment is not imminent and that they still have time to "eat, drink, and be merry" (2 Nephi 28:7-8). They think that repentance can come later. The Lord warned of such foolishness during His ministry (see Matthew 24:37-44; 25:1-13). How much wiser it is to repent at the first voice of warning from the Lord's anointed!

(26-38) Ezekiel 13:1-16. Ezekiel's Reproof of False Prophets

Chapter 13 in Ezekiel closely parallels Jeremiah's condemnation of false prophets (see Jeremiah 23:9-40).

It is common among the people of the world to reject the words of true prophets and accept the words of false ones (see Helaman 13:24-38). Such is the easy way in the beginning, for it allows people to accept only that which they want to hear. It is, however, the path to destruction.

False prophets pacify and lull people into carnal security (see 2 Nephi 28:21). Like the cunning foxes in the desert (see Ezekiel 13:4), they obtain their prey by subtlety. False prophets have not provided for the people a secure defense against spiritual destruction (see v. 5). Ezekiel compared the work of the false prophets to daubing a wall "with untempered mortar" (v. 10). Freeman explained:



A house of untempered mortar

“Kitto is of the opinion that reference is here made to ‘cob-walls;’ that is, walls which are made of beaten earth rammed into molds or boxes, to give shape and consistence, and then emptied from the molds, layer by layer, on the wall, where it dries as the work goes on. Such walls cannot stand the effects of the weather, and houses built on this principle soon crumble and decay. . . . To protect them from the weather a very fine mortar is sometimes made, which is laid thickly on the outside of the walls. When this mortar is properly mixed with lime, it answers the purpose designed; but where the lime is left out, as is often the case, the ‘untempered mortar’ is no protection. . . .

“Some commentators, however, translate *taphel*, which in our version is rendered ‘untempered mortar,’ by the word ‘whitewash.’ They represent the idea of the text to be the figure of a wall of unendurable material, and coated, not with cement which might protect it, but with a mere thin covering of lime, which gives the wall a finished durable appearance, which its real character does not warrant.” (*Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 302.)

(26-39) Ezekiel 13:17–23. Denunciation of Sorceresses and Diviners

The word *pillows* (see Ezekiel 13:18) would better be translated *bands* or *coverings*. The kerchief was a kind of veil used as part of the trappings in the magical arts (see *The Interpreter’s Bible*, 6:132–33).

Ezekiel prophesied against women who, by divination (see Ezekiel 13:23), led people away from God and gave them a false sense of security. They brought destruction upon those who might otherwise live (spiritually) and held up and sustained those who ought to have been condemned (see vv. 19, 22). They promised prosperity and freedom (see v. 20) which they could not deliver (compare 2 Nephi 28:22–23; Alma 30:53, 60).

(26-40) Ezekiel 14:9. Does the Lord Ever Deceive Prophets?

In Joseph Smith’s inspired translation of the Bible, he corrected Ezekiel 14:9 to read: “And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have *not* deceived that prophet.”

(26-41) Ezekiel 14:13–20. Noah, Job, and Daniel Could Not Save the Unrighteous from God’s Judgments

Daniel, who was a contemporary of Ezekiel in Babylon, was one of the most righteous men on the earth at the time and was highly favored of God. He was even respected by Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, kings of Babylon and Persia (see Daniel 2:48; 6:1–3). The Lord referred to both Noah and Job as being perfect (see Genesis 6:9; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3), meaning that they were completely upright before God in living the commandments He had given them. But, Ezekiel said, even they could not save the people of Judah from the consequences of their sins. All people stand or fall in accordance with their own actions and cannot rely on the righteousness of others (see Ezekiel 14:18, 20). Also, it is not the personal power of the Lord’s spokesman that turns people to God but the willingness of the recipient to respond to the promptings and witness of the Spirit of God. (Consider, for example, the message of the Lord’s parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31.)

(26-42) Ezekiel 15:1–8. Inhabitants of Jerusalem Compared to a Useless Vine

The people at Jerusalem in Ezekiel’s day were similar to those referred to by Isaiah in his parable of a vineyard (see Isaiah 5:1–25). Though they had been set up as the Lord’s vineyard to produce fruit, they did not produce and were of little value.

“The worthlessness of a vine save only for its fruit was set forth by the Lord through His prophet Ezekiel (15:2–5); and truly it is so, that the wood of the grape plant is fit for nothing but burning; the whole vine as wood is inferior to a branch from a forest tree (verse 3). And Israel is represented as such a vine, precious if but fruitful, otherwise nothing but fuel and that of poor quality.” (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 542.)

(26-43) Ezekiel 16:3–5. The People of Jerusalem Were as Children of Heathens

The Lord referred to Jerusalem (which means Judah in general) as having the Amorites for their father and the Hittites for their mother.

“The descent and birth referred to are not physical, but spiritual descent. Spiritually, Israel sprang from the land of the Canaanites; [though they should have sprung from their spiritual father, Jehovah] and its father was the Amorite and its mother a Hittite, in the same sense in which Jesus said to the Jews, ‘Ye are of your father the devil’ (John viii. 44). The land of the Canaanites is mentioned as the land of the worst heathen abominations; and from among the Canaanitish tribes, the Amorites and Hittites are mentioned as father and mother, . . . because they were recognized as the leaders in Canaanitish ungodliness.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:196.)

The Lord said, “Thy navel [umbilical cord] was not cut” (Ezekiel 16:4). That is, they were still being nourished in their wickedness by the degrading practices of their heathen neighbors who had given them birth in iniquity. Neither were they “washed . . . salted . . . nor swaddled” (v. 4). They had not been cleansed from the corruptions they had obtained from their parents.

The reference to not being salted comes from an ancient practice wherein “new-born babes were rubbed with salt in order to harden their skin, as this operation was supposed to make it dry, tight, and firm. . . . The salt may also have been applied as an emblem of purity and incorruption.” (Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 304.) Swaddling means being wrapped in a cloth or bandage, which would have been somewhat of a protection to a tender infant. The message being conveyed by Ezekiel is that the Jews had never really been cleansed from the corruptions of the world and born as God’s children. Without God’s care they had no one as their protector.

(26-44) Ezekiel 16:30–34. Judah’s Iniquities Were Worse Than Those of a Harlot

The imagery Ezekiel uses in 16:30–34 is some of the most scathing in all the scriptures. Comparing idolatry to adultery, Ezekiel condemned Judah for being far worse than a harlot who takes men for personal gain and the presents they give her. Judah was not like this. She scorned personal presents (see v. 31) and took strangers to her simply for the change and the pleasure of being with other men (see v. 32). A harlot takes presents from her lovers, and that is her motivation; in Judah’s case, not only did she not receive such presents from her lovers (the false gods gave no benefits to Israel) but instead she gave the presents to her lovers (the false gods; see v. 33).

Thus, so deeply sunk in her idolatry (adultery), Judah should not have been surprised to be punished accordingly (see vv. 35–43).

(26-45) Ezekiel 16:44–52. Judah’s Sins Were Worse Than Their Neighbors’

Judah was in dire circumstances, for their sins were greater than the sins of Samaria or Sodom, both of which had already fallen under the chastening hand of the Lord. To understand the message of this passage, it is helpful to know the meaning of several figurative terms in these verses.

Ezekiel 16:45. The words *mother* and *father* refer to the Hittites and Amorites who were leaders in Canaanite idolatry. *Daughter* indicates Jerusalem, a representative of Judah or Israel. The *husband* represents the Lord (see Ezekiel 16:8, 32, 38). The antecedents of both *that* and *her* are “daughter,” not “mother.” *Children* were offered in sacrifice to Molech as part of heathen worship. The *sisters* were Samaria and Sodom (see v. 46). They and Jerusalem were all motivated by the same spirit of idolatry.

Ezekiel 16:46. The words *elder* and *younger* could more clearly be rendered *greater* and *lesser*. Perhaps they are a reference to the degree of iniquity, that is, Samaria’s was greater, Sodom’s lesser. *Left hand* equals the direction north; *right hand* means south. The word *daughters* is used here and throughout the rest of the chapter with a different meaning than the word *daughter* in verse 45; *daughters* are cities under the domination of Samaria and Sodom, lesser cities in the surrounding areas. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:221–23; *Interpreter’s Bible*, 6:148–49.)

(26-46) Ezekiel 17:1–21. Ezekiel’s Parable of the Cedar Tree

Though the Bible speaks of Zedekiah’s sons being killed (see 2 Kings 25:7), the Book of Mormon tells of the escape of his son Mulek (see Omni 1:15; Mosiah 25:2; Helaman 6:10; 8:21).

Elder Orson Pratt said: “When Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon, the Lord took one of his sons, whose name was Mulok [Mulek] with a company of those who would hearken unto His words, and brought them over the ocean, and planted them in America. This was done in fulfillment of the 22nd and 23rd verses of the seventeenth chapter of Ezekiel, which read thus: [Ezekiel 17:22–23.] By reading this chapter [17], it will be seen that the Jews were the ‘high cedar,’ that Zedekiah the king was the ‘highest branch,’ that the ‘tender one’ cropped off from the top of his young twigs, was one of his sons, whom the Lord brought out and planted him and his company upon the choice land of America, which He had given unto a remnant of the tribe of Joseph for an inheritance, in fulfillment of the blessing of Jacob and Moses upon the head of that tribe [Genesis 48–49; Deuteronomy 43].” (*Orson Pratt’s Works on the Doctrines of the Gospel*, pp. 280–81.)

(26-47) Ezekiel 18:1–20. “The Soul That Sinneth, It Shall Die”

The Lord has given individuals the freedom to exercise their own agency. They are therefore accountable for their own actions while they work out their salvation. No one is punished for the sins of someone else. The second article of faith teaches this principle.

Ezekiel used the example of a man, his son, and his grandson to teach the principles of accountability as they relate to spiritual life and death. He said that if a man (the grandfather in this case) is just, he shall live (see Ezekiel 18:5–9). If his son, having seen the good example and been exposed to the good teachings, turns to iniquity, he shall not live (see vv. 10–13). “His blood shall be upon him” (v. 13), that is, he will be punished for his own sins. If he, in turn, has a son who sees his father’s iniquities and yet lives righteously, “he [the son] shall not die for the iniquity of his father” (v. 17; see also vv. 14–18). Verse 20 is a clear summary of these principles. (See Notes and Commentary on Jeremiah 31:29–30.)

(26-48) Ezekiel 18:24, 27. A Person Cannot Be Saved by His Former Righteousness

The Lord has made it clear that all who wish to be saved must endure to the end in righteousness (see Matthew 10:22; Mosiah 4:30; 3 Nephi 15:9; 27:17; D&C 18:22; 53:7; 82:7).

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Having received the necessary saving ordinances—baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, temple ordinances and sealings—one must live the covenants made. He must endure in faith. No matter how brilliant was the service rendered by the bishop or stake president or other person, if he falters later in his life and fails to live righteously ‘to the end’ the good works he did all stand in jeopardy.” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 121.)

(26-49) Ezekiel 19:1–9. The Allegory of the Lioness and the Whelps

“The interpretation of this allegory seems fairly clear. The lioness, if not the doomed country [Judah], is Hamutal, the mother of Zedekiah. (2 Kings 24:18) The first of her whelps would then be Jehoahaz, who after reigning for a short time was taken prisoner to Egypt by Pharaoh-nechoh. (2 Kings 23:31–33) Jehoahaz was in turn succeeded by Jehoiakim, a son of Josiah by a wife other than Hamutal. Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin. When the last-named was taken captive by the Babylonians, Hamutal’s second son, Zedekiah, was appointed king in his stead. He must, therefore, be the other ‘whelp’ of the allegory. When taken captive by Nebuchadrezzar and carried to Babylon, Zedekiah fulfilled the requirements of the last two verses.” (Sperry, *Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 211.)

(26-50) Ezekiel 19:10–14. The Allegory of the Vine and Its Branches

The allegory in Ezekiel 19:10–14 deals with the conditions in Israel at the time of Ezekiel: “Israel resembled a vine planted by the water. . . . This vine sent out strong shoots for rulers’ sceptres; that is to say, it brought forth powerful kings, and grew up to a great height, . . . It was torn up in fury by the wrath of God, cast down to the ground, so that its fruit withered. . . . The uprooting ends in the transplanting of the vine into a waste, dry, unwatered land,—in other words, in the transplanting of the people, Israel, into exile. The dry land is Babylon, so described as being a barren soil in which the kingdom of God could not flourish.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:261–62.)

With the destruction of Judah by Nebuchadrezzar and the killing of Zedekiah’s sons, “she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule” (Ezekiel 19:14). Clarke summarized: “None of the blood-royal of Judah [was] left. And from that time not one of her own royal race ever sat upon the throne of Israel.” (*Commentary*, 4:474.)

(26-51) Ezekiel 20:3, 31–32. “I Will Not Be Enquired of by You”

When the elders of Israel came to inquire of Ezekiel concerning the Lord’s word (see v. 1), the Lord would not respond (v. 3). The reason is given in the rest of chapter 20. The Lord told Ezekiel to remind them of the covenant He had made with Israel and the great blessings He had given them and also of how the people had rebelled against Him. He then instructed Ezekiel to remind them of their current apostate condition, which was just like their fathers’ (see JST, Ezekiel 20:30; see also Ezekiel 20:31–32). If the elders really wanted God’s word, they would have obeyed that which they already had from His prophets. God will not be mocked. He will not give more to those who reject that which He has already given (see Alma 12:9–11).

(26-52) Ezekiel 20:33–44. Israel to Be Gathered by Revelation and with Power

Ezekiel prophesied of the captivity and scattering of Israel and also of the gathering in the latter days. He said this gathering would be accomplished through revelation (see v. 35) and would be accompanied by manifestations of the Lord’s power (see vv. 33–34).

Elder Orson Pratt, in a discourse in Salt Lake City on 26 March 1871, spoke of the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy:

“You young men who sit here on these seats will live to see the times of the Gentiles fulfilled; . . . the mission which you will receive, young men, will be to go to the scattered remnants of the house of Israel among all the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles. To search them out and proclaim to them the message restored by the angel, that it may be preached to Israel as well as to the Gentiles. That is your destiny; that, young men, is what the Lord will require at your hands. [See 1 Ne. 13:42] . . .

“ . . . And you will have the pleasure of gathering them up by thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands, from the islands of the sea and from all quarters of the earth; for that will be a day of power far more than it is while the Gospel continues among the Gentiles.

“ . . . When the day of his power comes they [Israel] will be willing to hearken, they will gather up to their promised land, for it will be the day of the Lord’s power. In what respect will there be power manifested then? As power was manifested when the Lord brought Israel from the Egyptian nation into the wilderness of Sinai and spoke to them by his own voice, so will the power of Almighty God be made manifest among all the nations of the earth when he brings about the redemption and restoration of his people Israel; or, in other words, the former display of power will be eclipsed, for that which was done in one land, among the Israelites and Egyptians in the wilderness, will be performed among all nations. . . .

“ . . . So will he plead with Israel in the latter days, and show forth his mighty hand and power, when he gathers them from the nations; and he will give revelation as he did to their fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 14:64–66.)

The prophecies of Ezekiel and the interpretation of Orson Pratt are now being fulfilled.

Passing under the rod (see Ezekiel 20:37) is a figure of speech that “alludes to the custom of *tithing the sheep*. . . . The sheep were all penned; and . . . only one sheep could come out *at once*. . . . [The shepherd] counted . . . and as the *tenth* came out, he marked it with the rod [dipped in vermilion], and said, ‘This is . . . set apart for the Lord.’” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:477.) Thus, the converted Israelites will be the Lord’s, just as tithing is.

(26-53) Ezekiel 20:45–48. What Is the Forest of the South Field and What Did the Lord Mean by Saying He Would Kindle a Fire There?

“The forest of the field in the south is a figure denoting the kingdom of Judah [the southern part of the land of Israel]. . . . The forest is a figure signifying the population, or the mass of people. Individual men are trees. The green tree is a figurative representation of the righteous man, and the dry tree of the ungodly (v. 3, compare Luke xxiii. 31). The fire which Jehovah kindles is the fire of war. . . . From the terrible fierceness of the fire, which cannot be extinguished, every one will know that God has kindled it, that it has been sent in judgment.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:288–89.) The Lord further described in the next chapter the terribleness of the wrath of war that would come upon Judah (see Ezekiel 21:1–17).

(26-54) Ezekiel 21:4. The Righteous Sometimes Suffer with the Wicked

When righteous people live among the wicked, they sometimes experience tribulations resulting from the unrighteousness of their neighbors. Sometimes the “innocent are compelled to suffer for the iniquities of the guilty” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 34).

In speaking of the judgments of the last days, Joseph Smith said: “It is a false idea that the Saints will escape all the judgments, whilst the wicked suffer; for all flesh is subject to suffer, and ‘the righteous shall hardly escape;’ still many of the Saints will escape, for the just shall live by faith; yet many of the righteous shall fall a prey to disease, to pestilence, etc., by reason of the weakness of the flesh, and yet be saved in the Kingdom of God. So that it is an unhallowed principle to say that such and such have transgressed because they have been preyed upon by disease or death, for all flesh is subject to death; and the Savior has said, ‘Judge not, lest ye be judged.’” (*History of the Church*, 4:11.)

Clarke gave the following commentary on Ezekiel 21:4 that is helpful in understanding why the righteous, along with the wicked, sometimes find their lot in life full of distress:

“And when all the provisions were consumed, so that there was no more bread in the city, during the siege by Nebuchadnezzar, the righteous must have suffered as well as the wicked; for they could not be preserved alive, but by miracle, when there was no bread; nor was their perishing for want any loss to them, because the Lord would take them straight to his glory. And however men in general are unwilling to die, yet there is no instance, nor can there be, of any man’s complaint that he got to heaven *too soon*. Again, if God had permitted *none* to be carried off captive but the *wicked*, the case of these would be utterly hopeless, as there would be none to set a good example, to preach repentance, to reprove sin, or to show God’s willingness to forgive sinners. But God, in his mercy, permitted many of the *righteous* to be carried off also, that the wicked might not be totally abandoned, or put beyond the reach of being saved. Hence, both *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, and indeed several *others*, *prophets* and *righteous men*, were *thus cut off from the land*, and carried into captivity. And how much was God’s glory and the good of men promoted by this! What a seed of salvation was sown, even in the heathen countries, by thus *cutting off the righteous with the wicked!* To this we owe, under God, many of the *Psalms*, the *whole of the Book of Ezekiel*, all the prophecies of *Daniel*, the *bright example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*, the *decrees passed in favour of the religion of the true God by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, &c.*” (*Commentary*, 4:479–80.)

(26-55) Ezekiel 21:6–7. “Breaking of Thy Loins”

To depict the terror and pain of the judgments that would come upon Judah, Ezekiel was told to sigh and mourn like a woman in the pains of travail, or childbirth.

(26-56) Ezekiel 21:10, 13. “It Contemneth the Rod of My Son, as Every Tree”

The sword of Nebuchadnezzar, meaning his destructive force, had contempt for any strength or power promised to Judah (compare Genesis 49:9–10). His sword destroyed the regal government of Judah

just as it had brought down other nations over which it had been wielded in power. (See Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 20:45–48.)

(26-57) Ezekiel 21:12, 14. “Smite . . . upon Thy Thigh” and “Smite Thine Hands Together”

Ezekiel 21:12, 14 expresses signs of great emotion—in this case great alarm and horror at the impending calamity (see also Ezekiel 6:11; Jeremiah 31:9). Smiting the hands also showed contempt (see Job 27:23), anger (see Ezekiel 22:13), or triumph (see Ezekiel 25:6), or indicated a pledge (see Ezekiel 21:17).

(26-58) Ezekiel 21:21. “He Made His Arrows Bright, He Consulted with Images, He Looked in the Liver”

Three methods of divination used by idolaters were shaking arrows and drawing one out or watching them fall, consulting with idols, and examining the entrails of animal sacrifices—customs no more ridiculous than consulting cards and tea leaves or reading palms. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem because Jehovah allowed it, not because an arrow, an image, or a liver bespoke good omens. (See Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 305–7.)

(26-59) Ezekiel 21:26–27. “Remove the Diadem . . . until He Come Whose Right It Is”

Judah would be overturned and her king deposed until He comes who has the right to reign over Israel and all flesh: Jesus Christ the King (see D&C 133:25; Micah 4:7; Revelation 11:15).



King of Kings

(26-60) Ezekiel 23:1–49. Allegory of the Two Sisters

Ezekiel 23 tells about the idolatry of the ten tribes (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem). All the references to whoredoms, to other impure sexual practices, and to various parts of the female anatomy are metaphorical. These metaphors are used in the same way as those used by Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others in which Jehovah is the husband and the nation Israel is the wife. Infidelity and fornication are similar, and both words have dual meanings. One meaning relates to marriage (adultery) and the other to worship (idolatry). Ezekiel plays these meanings against each other and draws out lessons on both. Dummelow summarized the relationships referred to in the allegory:

“The idolatries and foreign alliances of Jerusalem and Samaria are here described under the same strong figure which is used in c. 16. Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem) were two sisters, both seduced in Egypt in their youth (v. 3), both espoused by God (v. 4), and both unfaithful to Him. Samaria took as her lovers first the Assyrians (vv. 5–7), and then the Egyptians (v. 8), and was at length slain by the former (vv. 9, 10). Jerusalem, not warned by her sister’s fate, made first the Assyrians and then the Babylonians her paramours (vv. 11–16). Being alienated from the latter she has turned to her early lovers of Egypt (vv. 17–21), but she will be destroyed, like her sister, by the lovers whom she has just forsaken (vv. 22–35). The sin and judgment of the two sisters are described afresh (vv. 36–49).” (*Commentary*, p. 507.)

In his inspired translation, Joseph Smith made small but significant changes in Ezekiel 23:17, 22, and 28. The sisters’ minds were turned not from their lovers (the false gods) but from God by their lovers.

(26-61) Ezekiel 24:1–14. The Parable of the Boiling Pot

The pot in this parable represents the city of Jerusalem. Its inhabitants are symbolized by the flesh and bones in the pot. The choice pieces denote the strongest and most important inhabitants of the city (Zedekiah and his family would be part of this group). Boiling the contents of the pot on the fires represents the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The scum in the pot indicates impurity and bloodshed in Jerusalem, the inhabitants of which are in a very sinful state. As the contents of the pot are brought out piece by piece, so will the city of Jerusalem be emptied of its inhabitants one by one, either by death or by captivity. The phrase “let no lot fall upon it” (v. 6) means that the contents of the pot will be pulled out indiscriminantly, at random, without preference. The heating of the empty pot represents the burning of the city of Jerusalem after the siege. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:340–47; Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:488–89; Dummelow, *Commentary*, pp. 507–8.)

Ezekiel 24:7–8 refers to blood being set on the top of a rock: “The city has shed blood, which is not covered with earth, but has been left uncovered, like blood poured out upon a hard rock, which the stone cannot absorb, and which cries to God for vengeance, because it is uncovered [compare Genesis 4:10; Job 16:18; and Isaiah 26:21]. The thought is this: she has sinned in an

insolent and shameless manner, and has done nothing to cover her sin, has shown no sign of repentance or atonement, by which she might have got rid of her sin. This has all been ordered by God. He has caused the blood that was shed to fall upon a bare rock, that it might lie uncovered, and He might be able to execute vengeance for the crime.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:345.)

(26-62) Ezekiel 24:15–27. Why Was Ezekiel Told Not to Mourn for the Death of His Wife?

Although the Lord took away “the desire of [his] eyes” (Ezekiel 24:16), meaning his wife (see v. 18), Ezekiel was instructed to make no mourning. Putting ashes on the head, making one’s feet bare, covering the lips, and eating bread of mourning were all signs of grief (see Joshua 7:6; 2 Samuel 13:19; Isaiah 20:2–3; Micah 3:7; Hosea 9:4; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:348–49.)

“When Ezekiel thus abstained from all lamentation and outward sign of mourning on the death of his dearest one, the people conjectured that such striking conduct must have some significance, and asked him what it was that he intended to show thereby. He then announced to them the word of God (vers. 20–24). As his dearest one, his wife, had been taken from him, so should its dearest object, the holy temple, be taken from the nation by destruction, and their children by the sword. When this occurred, then would they act as he was doing now; they would not mourn and weep, but simply in their gloomy sorrow sigh in silence on account of their sins, and groan one toward another.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:1:349.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(26-63) Ezekiel As a Prophet

The prophecies of Ezekiel could be roughly grouped into the following three time phases:

1. Close: from a few days to a few years.
2. Intermediate: from a few years to a few hundred years (mostly fulfilled by about 200 B.C.).
3. Distant: from 2500 to 2700 years in the future.

What might be the benefit of such prophecies? Who would benefit most from the close ones? the intermediate ones? the distant ones?

Read Deuteronomy 18:22. What is one way to tell a true prophet from a false one? Use this criterion to evaluate Ezekiel. Can you think of at least three prophecies in the first twenty-four chapters of Ezekiel that were given in such a way that no one could dispute their accuracy once they were fulfilled?

(26-64) An Age-Old Message

What is the message common to the following scriptures: Ezekiel 7:1–9, 25–27; 3 Nephi 8:23–25; Mormon 4:10–12 with Mormon 5:2; 6:7–8, 16–18; D&C 101:1–8; Moses 8:19–23, 28–30; D&C 43:23–27? What commitment should you make to yourself as a result of studying these examples and many other similar ones that could be shown in the scriptures?

BOOK OF
MORMON
DOCTRINE
AND
COVENANTS
PEARL OF
GREAT
PRICE

HOLY
BIBLE

KING JAMES
VERSION

THE
CHURCH
OF
JESUS
CHRIST
OF
LATTER-
DAY
SAINTS

THE
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OF
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Prophecies of the Restoration

(27-1) Introduction

After the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel no longer spoke of God's judgments on his contemporaries but of Israel's redemption in the latter days. It was as though he had done all he could to stave off the destruction of his people, and when that was impossible and they were actually experiencing the suffering that captivity had imposed upon them, he turned their hearts to the future and the source of their ultimate hope in the Lord.

So Saints of the latter days should be most enthusiastic about Ezekiel's prophecies in chapters 25–48. Of Ezekiel's twelve, precisely recorded visions, seven were given after the fall of Jerusalem and dealt with such events of the last days as the building of the great Jewish kingdom under a shepherd named David, the gathering of scattered Israel, the unification of all the tribes of Israel, the joining of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the battle of Armageddon, and the building of a modern temple in Jerusalem. Truly, Ezekiel was a prophet of the Restoration.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Ezekiel 25–48.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EZEKIEL 25–48

(27-2) Ezekiel 25–32. Ezekiel Prophesied against Foreign Nations

These eight chapters contain prophecies against several foreign nations: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt. (See "Old Testament Canaan" and "The Old Testament World" in Maps to locate these nations.)

"Although the prophets concentrated mainly on Israel/Judah, all of them were very conscious that God was Lord of the whole world. There is no nation beyond the reach of his judgement; and what he condemns and punishes in his own people, he condemns and punishes in other nations too. This collection of prophecies effectively marks the break in Ezekiel's ministry before, and his ministry after, the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C." (David Alexander and Pat Alexander, eds., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 423.)

These chapters in Ezekiel are similar to those in Isaiah and Jeremiah where prophetic burdens are pronounced on certain foreign nations (see Isaiah 13–23; Jeremiah 46–51).

(27-3) Ezekiel 25:3. What Is the Significance of the Interjection "Aha"?

Aha was used as an expression of malicious joy. Because the Ammonites rejoiced when Judah fell and the temple was profaned, the Lord was displeased and promised to punish them. (See Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, s.v. "aha"; Ezekiel 26:2; 36:2.)

(27-4) Ezekiel 25:8. What Is Seir?

Seir is the original name of the mountain ridge extending along the east side of the valley of Arabah, from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. This area was the dwelling place of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau. Seir in the Bible became synonymous with Edom. Compare this prophecy about Edom in Ezekiel 25:8–11 with those in Isaiah 16:1–5 (where *Sela*, which in Hebrew means "the rock," is assumed to be Mount Seir) and in Jeremiah 49:7–22.

(27-5) Ezekiel 25:16. Who Were the Cherethims?

The word *cherethims* would better be translated "Cretans," a branch of the sea peoples of whom the Philistines were a part. The Cretans dwelt in southwest Canaan. (See C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 9:1:369.)

(27-6) Ezekiel 26:1–14. A Remarkable Fulfillment of Prophecy

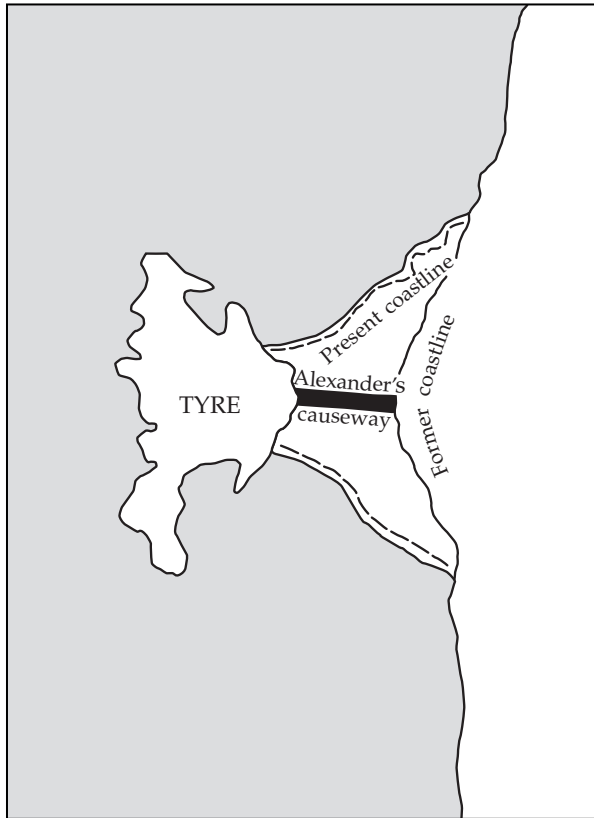
Korihor, the Book of Mormon anti-Christ, told Alma that "no man can know of anything which is to come" because "ye cannot know of things which ye do not see" (Alma 30:13, 15). Again and again in the Old Testament, one can find examples that prove Korihor wrong. The prophets foretold in great detail many future events. Ezekiel's prophecies concerning Tyre (Tyrus) are some of the most remarkable.

Tyre was situated on the coast about halfway between Carmel in Israel and Beirut in Lebanon.

But it was a peculiar geographic feature of Tyre that gave it its most remarkable prophetic destiny. Merrill F. Unger noted that Tyre "once consisted of two parts—a rocky coast defense of great strength on the mainland, and a city upon a small but well-protected island, about half a mile from the shore" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Tyre," p. 1121).

Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would lay siege to Tyre (see Ezekiel 26:7–11), but a skeptic like Korihor might say that this prediction was not remarkable since Nebuchadnezzar was conquering nearly every major city in the area, and Tyre was a particularly ripe plum because of its wealth. But "before a generation had passed away, according to Josephus, Philostratus, and Seder Olam, Nebuchadnezzar came up, as had been predicted [Ezekiel 26:7–15], making a fort, casting a mound, and lifting up the buckler. At the end of thirteen years [about 605 B.C.] he took the city, at least that on the mainland, and Tyre was forgotten seventy years, as had been foretold by

Isaiah [23:15].” (Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. “Tyre,” p. 1682.)



Coastlines of Tyre

Some of Ezekiel’s peculiar promises seemed to be unfulfilled, including the following:

“I will also scrape her dust from her” (Ezekiel 26:4).

Tyre will become “like the top of a rock” (Ezekiel 26:4).

“It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea” (Ezekiel 26:5).

“They shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water” (Ezekiel 26:12).

“Thou shalt be built no more” (Ezekiel 26:14).

For nearly three hundred years these prophecies appeared to be inaccurate. Nebuchadnezzar conquered the mainland city but was unable to subdue all of Tyre because of its strategic position on the island. After a few decades Tyre regained her wealth and splendor, though the ruined city on the shore was not rebuilt, and the island fortification became the central city.

Then in 332 B.C., Alexander the Great swept out of the northern Mediterranean world. He moved south with his forces and camped on the ruins of ancient Tyre, isolating the inhabitants on the island offshore. Tyre had supposedly made a peaceful alliance with the Greeks, but when Alexander requested permission to bring his troops into Tyre to worship their gods and was refused, he laid siege to Tyre—a difficult task since the city lay on an island a half mile off the shore.

James Hastings described what followed: “The memorable siege began. Alexander built a mole [causeway] 200 ft. wide out towards the island. It was repeatedly destroyed. The defense was desperate and successful, till Alexander invested the city with a fleet

of 224 ships. Tyre was stormed, 8000 of her inhabitants massacred, 2000 crucified on the shore, and 30,000 sold into slavery. Tyre ceased to be an island, and henceforth was permanently joined to the mainland. Only a blunt headland to-day suggests the existence of the former island fortress. The mole is now 1/2 mile broad.”

(*A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Tyre.”)

Fallows noted how Ezekiel’s prophecy that Tyre would be scraped clean and made like the top of a rock was fulfilled: “So utterly were the ruins of old Tyre thrown into the sea, that its exact site is confessedly undeterminable, although the ruins of nearly fifty cities near Rome, which perished almost 2,500 years ago, testify that the extinction of every trace of a city is a sort of miracle.” (*Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Tyre,” p. 1682.)

Today there is no island opposite Tyre, but a close examination of the coastline in that vicinity will show a small peninsula jutting into the sea. Because of its configuration and the prevailing breezes, local fishermen come to the barren, rocky outcrop to spread their nets to dry.

The prophet Ezekiel certainly met the criteria outlined in Deuteronomy 18:18–22 for determining whether a prophet speaks for the Lord.

(27-7) Ezekiel 27:5, 10, 13–14, 16. Geographical Locations

Senir (see Ezekiel 27:5) is Mount Hermon. Phut (see v. 10) is Libya. Javan (see v. 13) is Greece. Togarmah (see v. 14) is Armenia. Syria (see v. 16) was known in ancient times as Aram (see v. 16a).

(27-8) Ezekiel 28:20–23. “Set Thy Face against Zidon”

Zidon, or Sidon, a sister city with Tyre, also had been a thorn in Israel’s side. If the Israelites had followed Moses’ instructions to destroy all the Canaanites (see Deuteronomy 7:1–5; Judges 1:31), Tyre and Sidon would have been Israelite cities for nearly eight centuries by Ezekiel’s time and their history significantly different.

(27-9) Ezekiel 29:1–16. Egypt Will Learn Who Is God

Alexander and Alexander wrote: “By his insufferable pride in placing himself among the gods, Pharaoh has exposed his whole land to God’s anger. But he will learn who is God!” (*Eerdmans’ Handbook*, p. 425.)

Syene (see Ezekiel 29:10) was a city in the south of Egypt, far up the Nile. Pathros (see v. 14) was the name for upper Egypt, or the south part of Egypt. Once the seat of leadership for Egypt was driven up to Pathros, Egypt became “the basest of the kingdoms” and never did “exalt itself any more above the nations” (v. 15). From that point on, Egypt ceased to play an important role in world affairs.

(27-10) Ezekiel 29:18–20. Nebuchadnezzar Lost Tyre

Nebuchadnezzar had not been able to conquer the island city (see Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 26:1–14). When the long siege of Tyre was ended, many of the Tyrians loaded their wealth on their ships and escaped to Carthage. Thus Nebuchadnezzar lost some of the spoil of one of the world’s richest cities (see Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:503).

(27-11) Ezekiel 30:13–17. Locations of the Lord’s Judgments upon Egypt

Noph. The city of Memphis in lower Egypt.

Zoan. The city of Rameses in lower Egypt in the Nile River delta.

No. The city of Thebes in upper Egypt.

Aven. The sacred city of Heliopolis, or On, in lower Egypt.

Pi-beseth. A town of lower Egypt, the same as Bubastis, about forty miles from Memphis.

(27-12) Ezekiel 32. The Fearful Fall of Egypt

Ezekiel 32 is written in poetic and figurative style and relates to Egypt’s pending downfall and the decimation of her people, especially the leaders—the “bright lights” (v. 8). In verse 22 the Lord says Ashur (Assyria) is already in hell, which was where Egypt was headed. The reference to the “nether parts of the earth” in verses 18 and 24 is typical of the ancient belief that hell is below the earth. Pharaoh was to join the kings of Tyre, Sidon, Damascus, Assyria, Persia, Idumea, and so forth, in hell, with their armies, and be comforted to know that they share a common fate (see v. 31; Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:510).

(27-13) Ezekiel 33:2–9. “I Have Set Thee a Watchman unto the House of Israel”

Ezekiel 33:2–9 reiterates the teachings about the watchman found in Ezekiel 3:17–21. Elder Spencer W. Kimball explained the need to have a watchman:

“I am sure that Peter and James and Paul found it unpleasant business to constantly be calling people to repentance and warning them of dangers, but they

continued unflinchingly. So we, your leaders, must be everlastingly at it; if young people do not understand, then the fault may be partly ours. But, if we make the true way clear to you, then we are blameless [Ezekiel 33:3–6].

“So, I wish today to help define meanings of words and acts for you young people, to fortify you against error, anguish, pain and sorrow.” (*Love versus Lust*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [5 Jan. 1965], pp. 6–7.)

(27-14) Ezekiel 33:12–19. Repenting of Sin

Ezekiel 33:12–19 says that one’s righteous deeds will not cancel out one’s works of iniquity. If a sinner “turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right” (v. 14), however, his sins will not be mentioned on his account (v. 16).

Repentance is not to be procrastinated (see Alma 34:32–34), nor is it to be “trifled with every day,” said Joseph Smith. “Daily transgression and daily repentance [incomplete or insincere] is not that which is pleasing in the sight of God.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 148.) But the Prophet also said, “There is never a time when the spirit is too old to approach God. All are within the reach of pardoning mercy, who have not committed the unpardonable sin.” (*Teachings*, p. 191.)

Elder Spencer W. Kimball further commented on the need to provide restitution for sin, as noted in Ezekiel 33:15:

“When one is humble in sorrow, has unconditionally abandoned the evil, confessed to those assigned by the Lord, he should next restore insofar as possible that which was damaged. If he burglarized, he should return to the rightful owner that which was stolen. Perhaps one reason murder is unforgivable is that having taken a life, the murderer cannot restore it. Restitution in full is not possible. . . .

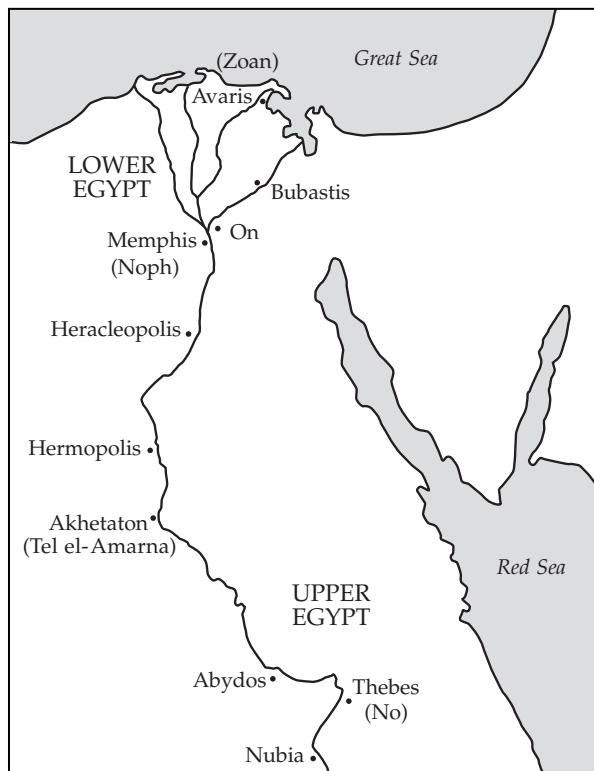
“However, the truly repentant soul will usually find things which can be done to restore to some extent. The true spirit of repentance demands this. Ezekiel taught: [Ezekiel 33:15]. . . .

“A pleading sinner must also forgive all people of all offenses committed against himself. The Lord is under no obligation to forgive us unless our hearts are fully purged of all hate, bitterness and accusations against all others.” (*Be Ye Clean*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 4 May 1954, p. 11.)

(27-15) Ezekiel 33:21–33. Ezekiel Heard of the Destruction of Jerusalem

“The news did not take Ezekiel by surprise. God had already given him back his speech, as promised [Ezekiel 24:27], by the time the messenger arrived. Some texts have ‘eleventh year’ for ‘twelfth’ in verse 21, in which case the news takes the more likely time of six months to reach them. Those left behind in Judah, far from repenting, were busy annexing other people’s property. And in Babylonia the exiles who seemed to lap up Ezekiel’s words came simply for entertainment. They neither believed them nor acted on them: a depressing state of affairs after all that had happened!” (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans’ Handbook*, p. 426.)

It was unfortunate that the Jews in Babylonia did not appreciate at that time “that a prophet hath been among them” (Ezekiel 33:33).



Sites in ancient Egypt

(27-16) Ezekiel 34:1–10. “Should Not the Shepherds Feed the Flocks?”

In a tone very similar to Jeremiah’s (see Jeremiah 23:1–8), Ezekiel condemned the pastors, or shepherds, of the Lord’s spiritual flock, the religious leaders of Ezekiel’s day.

In contrast to the Lord’s care of His flock, the shepherds of Israel fed themselves but not the flock. The negligent shepherds did not strengthen the sick, bind up the broken, bring back again those who were driven away, or seek for the lost sheep—all of which any real shepherd would do for his own sheep. Instead, they ruled the sheep with force and cruelty and let them wander to become a prey to beasts.

President Spencer W. Kimball, in a priesthood session of general conference, charged the present shepherds—priesthood leaders—of the kingdom to be concerned about the welfare of the flock:

“As we read and study the scriptures, we are made conscious of the fact that the Savior has always been concerned about the welfare of the members of his flock, both individually and collectively. It is about that principle of caring for and ministering to the needs of the Church membership in these troubled days that I desire to speak to you brethren tonight.

“Bishops and branch presidents, please be ever alert to the needs of the precious individuals and families who make up the membership of your wards and branches. You are the nurturing shepherds of our people. To the greatest extent possible, let your counselors and others who serve and work under your direction be the managers of programs. If you will pursue this emphasis, you will often be able to detect very early some of those members who have serious difficulties, while their challenges and problems are still small and manageable. Be conscious of the little tensions and problems you may see in families so that you can give the required attention, counsel, and love when it is most needed. An hour with a troubled boy or girl now may save him or her, and is infinitely better than the hundreds of hours spent in their later lives in the reclamation of a boy or girl if they become inactive.

“As we have said so many times, delegate those tasks which others can do so that you are free to do those things which you, and you alone, can do. Home teachers are to help watch over the flock. Even though they don’t counsel as bishops and branch presidents do, home teachers can render much appropriate and preventive help under the direction of the quorum leaders and bishoprics.

“Stake presidents, bishops, and branch presidents, please take a particular interest in improving the quality of teaching in the Church. The Savior has told us to feed his sheep (see John 21:15–17). I fear that all too often many of our members come to church, sit through a class or meeting, and they then return home having been largely uninformed. It is especially unfortunate when this happens at a time when they may be entering a period of stress, temptation, or crisis. We all need to be touched and nurtured by the Spirit, and effective teaching is one of the most important ways this can happen. We often do vigorous enlistment work to get members to come to church but then do not adequately watch over what they receive when they do come.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1980, p. 67; see also *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, pp. 45–46.)

(27-17) Ezekiel 34:23–31. Who Is David the Prince?

See Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1.

(27-18) Ezekiel 35. Edom to Be Destroyed

Why would the Lord deal so harshly with the people of Edom, the descendants of Esau and therefore also of Abraham and Isaac? The answer is clear after analyzing Ezekiel 35. The people of Edom hated the children of Israel and shed their blood (see v. 5), sought to take over their lands (see vv. 10, 12), spoke against the Lord (see v. 13), and rejoiced at Israel’s desolation (see v. 15).

Edom as a distinct nation was destroyed, giving further evidence that the Lord keeps His promises. Although the nation is no more, Edom, or Idumea (see v. 15), has become a symbol for the wicked world that exists today (see D&C 1:36; see also Jeremiah 49:7–22; Obadiah 1; Notes and Commentary on Jeremiah 49; Obadiah 1).

(27-19) Ezekiel 36. The House of Israel Will Be Gathered to Their Own Lands

The only verses in Ezekiel 36 that do not deal with the last days are those that explain why the Lord scattered Israel (see vv. 16–22).

None of the following events have fully transpired, though today is the day when these prophecies are being fulfilled:

- Those men who will multiply upon the land are from all the house of Israel, not just the kingdom of Judah (see v. 10).
- Israel is to walk upon the land which shall “no more henceforth bereave them of men” (v. 12; see also vv. 13–14).
- Those who return will be gathered from the heathen and from all countries (see v. 24).
- They are to be cleansed from their filthiness (see v. 25).
- They are to be converted to the Lord and receive His Spirit (see vv. 26–27).

Verses 28–38 explain that the recovery of Israel will be quite remarkable and will be done for the Lord’s reasons, not because Israel has earned it (see v. 32). The Israel of the future must be spiritually worthy and must submit themselves to the Lord’s will.

(27-20) Ezekiel 37:1–14. Is Ezekiel’s Vision of the Valley of Bones about the Resurrection or about the Renewal of the House of Israel?

Often prophetic utterances have dual meanings. Such is the case for the well-known allegory of the scattered dry bones. The beauty of prophecy is that the Lord can reveal to those who are spiritually alert more than one truth in one prophecy.

Sidney B. Sperry wrote the following commentary on the dual nature of this prophecy: “It will be seen from this passage that the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead . . . is invoked to symbolize the restoration of Israel’s exiles to their own land. The exiles are represented—so it seems to me—as having lost hope (their bones are dried up) of ever living again as a nation. But the Lord shows them that they can be restored through His mighty power even as the dead will be raised in the resurrection. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is assumed. Some writers contend that the idea of resurrection was not known

among the Hebrews at this early time. But the fact that Ezekiel speaks as he did would seem to me an indication that the doctrine had long been understood in Israel. Any true prophet would understand the doctrine of the resurrection, so Latter-day Saints believe, and Israel had had many prophets long before Ezekiel's time." (*The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 225–26.)

The symbolic meaning of this prophecy as it relates to the gathering of Israel is apparent: The bones represent Israel in its lost and scattered state; the graves indicate where Israel is as well as its condition of spiritual death. The spirit, or *ruach* in Hebrew (see Ezekiel 37:9), means the new spirit of righteousness the people will have when they have been resurrected, that is, restored from their fallen state. The source of this new life will be the Holy Ghost.

But Ezekiel's account of the Resurrection is literal, as well as symbolic of the future gathering of Israel. Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified: "There is nothing more real, more literal, more personal than the resurrection, as Ezekiel then beheld in vision. He saw the dead live again, live literally and personally, each one becoming in physical makeup as he had been in mortality. It was with each of them as it would be with their Lord, when he, having also come forth from his valley of dry bones, stood in the upper room with his disciples, ate before them, and permitted them to handle his physical body. To his people the Lord's voice came: 'I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.' (Ezek. 37:1–14.) He who shall do all this, as we are now acutely aware, is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the God of Israel." (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 270–71.)

(27-21) Ezekiel 37:15–20. What Is the Symbolism of the Two Sticks Being Joined Together?

This passage is another example of the dual nature of prophecy. Sperry explained: "What is the meaning of these 'sticks' and what is their significance? Most commentators simply believe that each piece of wood represents one of the two kingdoms, either Judah or Israel (Ephraim), which are to be bound together or united under the Lord's direction. This act symbolizes the reunion of Ephraim and Judah into one kingdom. . . . However, the Latter-day Saints insist that such an interpretation is by no means complete. . . . What they do believe is that each of the sticks represents a scripture, a significant piece of writing. The Bible represents the scripture of Judah. To an average person not of our faith this conclusion may seem reasonable, but he will ask immediately what scripture represents the stick of Ephraim. To which we reply, the Book of Mormon. The Nephite scripture is the record of the descendants upon this continent of Joseph who was sold into Egypt." (*Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 226–27.)

The Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon affirm that Ezekiel's prophecy deals with the Bible and the Book of Mormon being joined together. Doctrine and Covenants 27:5 teaches that the Book of Mormon is the stick of Ephraim. The Book of Mormon, in 1 Nephi 13:40–41; 2 Nephi 29:10–14; and Mormon 7:8–9 speaks of the records of the Jews and the records of the Nephites being gathered together into one.

The sign that Jesus Christ gave the Nephites that the restoration of the tribes of Israel was at hand was the

coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which made the combining of the records possible (see 3 Nephi 20:46; 21:1–7; 29:1). This truth is sustained by Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Because [the Book of Mormon] came forth, as the seeric insight of Ezekiel has so plainly set forth, latter-day Israel would be gathered, her people would become clean before the Lord, he would make with them again his everlasting gospel covenant, and his tabernacle and temple would be in their midst forevermore. (Ezek. 37:15–28.)" (*Promised Messiah*, p. 146.)

(27-22) Ezekiel 37:15–17. What Was the Meaning Anciently of the Word *Stick*?

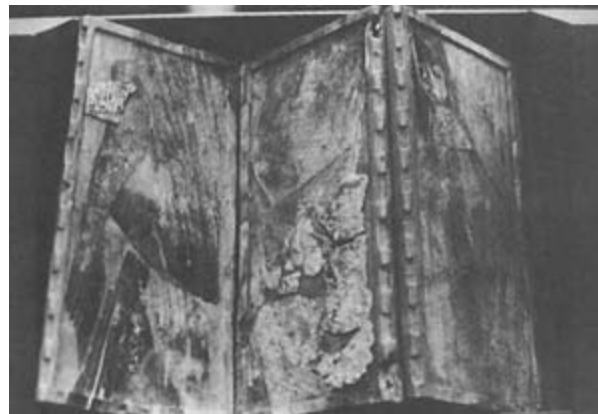
Bible scholars who are not Latter-day Saints have insisted that the traditional Christian interpretation of the word *stick* should be a "rod or scepter" rather than a record of some kind. They conclude that uniting the two tribal scepters vividly symbolizes the reunification of the divided tribes. But as Keith H. Meservy pointed out:

"Recent exciting discoveries now confirm the correctness of Joseph Smith's interpretation in a way impossible in 1830. But before discussing these new discoveries, let's take a quick look at some linguistic points. Both *stick*, in the English King James Version, and *rod*, in the Greek Septuagint Version, are very unusual translations of the Hebrew word *etz* . . . whose basic meaning is *wood* . . .

"The modern nation of Iraq includes almost all of Mesopotamia, the homeland of the ancient kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia. In 593 B.C., when Ezekiel was called to be a prophet, he was living in exile in Babylonia. . . . As he walked its streets, he would have seen the typical scribe pressing a wedge-shaped stylus into moist clay tablets to make the complex writings familiar to us as *cuneiform* (wedge-shaped). But scholars today know that other kinds of records were being made in Mesopotamia: papyrus, parchment, and wooden tablets. Though only the clay tablets have survived the millennia, writers referred to the other writing materials on their clay tablets. [One such writing style was called "wood tablets."]

"Modern archaeologists knew what papyrus and parchment were, but what were these wood tablets? How could cuneiform be written on wood? . . .

" . . . Some years ago . . . San Nicolo [an archaeologist] remembered that Romans and Greeks both made



Wooden tablets, called sticks

wooden wax tablets for record-keeping purposes out of boards whose surfaces had been cut below the edges in order to hold a thin coating of wax. Scribes wrote on the wax. The raised edges protected the inscribed surfaces when two tablets were put together.

“Could the Babylonians have done the same thing? . . . Five years later, . . . a discovery made in the territory that had been ancient Assyria confirmed his theory to the letter.

“The discovery, directed by archaeologist Max Mallowan, was made in a layer of sludge deep in a well in Nimrod, a city known as Calah in the Bible. . . . By the end of the day workmen had found . . . fragments of two complete sets of tablets, one of ivory and the other of walnut, each composed of sixteen boards. . . .

“All of the surfaces of the boards were cut down a tenth of an inch, leaving a half-inch-wide raised edge all around. The lowered surfaces provided a bed for wax filling, of which some thin biscuit-like fragments were found either still adhering to the boards or mixed in the sludge nearby. . . .

“The cover boards . . . had hinge marks on both sides, making it evident that all sixteen in each set had once been joined together like a Japanese folding screen. The whole work made such an extensive record that Mallowan could announce his discovery as the oldest known example of a book. . . .

“With these things in mind, we can see how we might translate Ezekiel 37:15–17 in this way:

“These were the words of the Lord to me: Man, take one leaf of a wooden tablet and write on it, ‘Judah and his associates of Israel.’ Then take another leaf and write on it, ‘Joseph, the leaf [wooden tablet] of Ephraim and all his associates of Israel.’”

“Now bring the two together to form one tablet; then they will be a folding tablet in your hand.”

“This translation is faithful to what we now know of Ezekiel’s language and culture.” (“Ezekiel’s ‘Sticks,’” *Ensign*, Sept. 1977, pp. 24–26.)

(27-23) Ezekiel 37:26–28. A Latter-day Temple in Jerusalem

Ezekiel prophesied in 37:26–28 about a holy sanctuary or temple that would be part of the great reunification of Israel. Soon after this vision, Ezekiel received a detailed vision of what the new temple in Jerusalem would be like (see Ezekiel 40–48). President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “Ezekiel predicted the building of a temple in Jerusalem which will be used for ordinance work after the gathering of Israel from their long dispersion and when they are cleansed from their transgressions” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:244).

(27-24) Ezekiel 38–39. The Battle of Gog and Magog

The following from Elder Bruce R. McConkie sums up the events of the battle of Armageddon:

“Our Lord is to come again in the midst of the battle of Armageddon, or in other words during the course of the great war between Israel and *Gog and Magog*. At the Second Coming all nations of the earth are to be engaged in battle, and the fighting is to be in progress in the area of Jerusalem and Armageddon. (Zech. 11; 12; 13; Rev. 16:14–21.) The prophecies do not name the modern nations which will be fighting for and against Israel, but the designation Gog and Magog is given

to the combination of nations which are seeking to overthrow and destroy the remnant of the Lord’s chosen seed.

“The 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel record considerable prophetic detail relative to this great war. It should be noted that it is to take place ‘in the latter years’; that it will be fought in the ‘mountains of Israel’ against those who have been gathered to the land of their ancient inheritance; that the land of Israel shall be relatively unprotected, a ‘land of unwallled villages’; that Gog and Magog shall come ‘out of the north parts’ in such numbers as ‘to cover the land’ as a cloud; that the Lord will then come, and all men shall shake at his presence; that there will be such an earthquake as has never before been known, which will throw down the mountains; that there will be pestilence, blood, fire, and brimstone descend upon the armies; that the forces of Gog and Magog will be destroyed upon the mountains of Israel; that the Supper of the Great God shall then take place as the beasts and fowls eat the flesh and drink the blood of the fallen ones (Rev. 19:17–18; D. & C. 29:18–21); and that the house of Israel will be seven months burying the dead and seven years burning the discarded weapons of war.

“In the light of all this and much more that is prophetically foretold about the final great battles in the holy land, is it any wonder that those who are scripturally informed and spiritually enlightened watch world events with great interest as troubles continue to foment in Palestine, Egypt, and the Near East?” (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 324–25.)

That the battle before the Millennium, which is known as the battle of Armageddon, makes reference to Gog and Magog may at first be confusing since the last great battle at the end of the Millennium is called the battle of Gog and Magog by John (see Revelation 20:7–9). But the names “Gog” and “Magog” are used for both battles because they symbolize an alliance of great, evil power. President Joseph Fielding Smith clarified this point as follows: “Before the coming of Christ, the great war, sometimes called Armageddon, will take place as spoken of by Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39. Another war of Gog and Magog will be after the millennium.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:45.)

Obviously the battle seen by Ezekiel will be one of the greatest events of the world’s history, and so it is not surprising that the prophets speak of it again and again. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, and John the Revelator all speak of it in some detail, and it is mentioned in several places in latter-day scripture. (See Enrichment I.)

(27-25) Ezekiel 38:1–2. Gog and Magog

The terms *Gog* and *Magog* are often joined together, as, for example, in the phrase the “battle of Gog and Magog” (see Revelation 20:8). Thus, many people assume the terms refer to two people by those names. Ezekiel 38:1–2 shows clearly, however, that *Gog* is a name of a person and *Magog* the land from which he comes. Technically, “Gog of Magog” is the correct way to say it. Over the centuries, however, the names have come to mean the combination of nations that will fight against Israel in the last days. (See Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 38–39.)

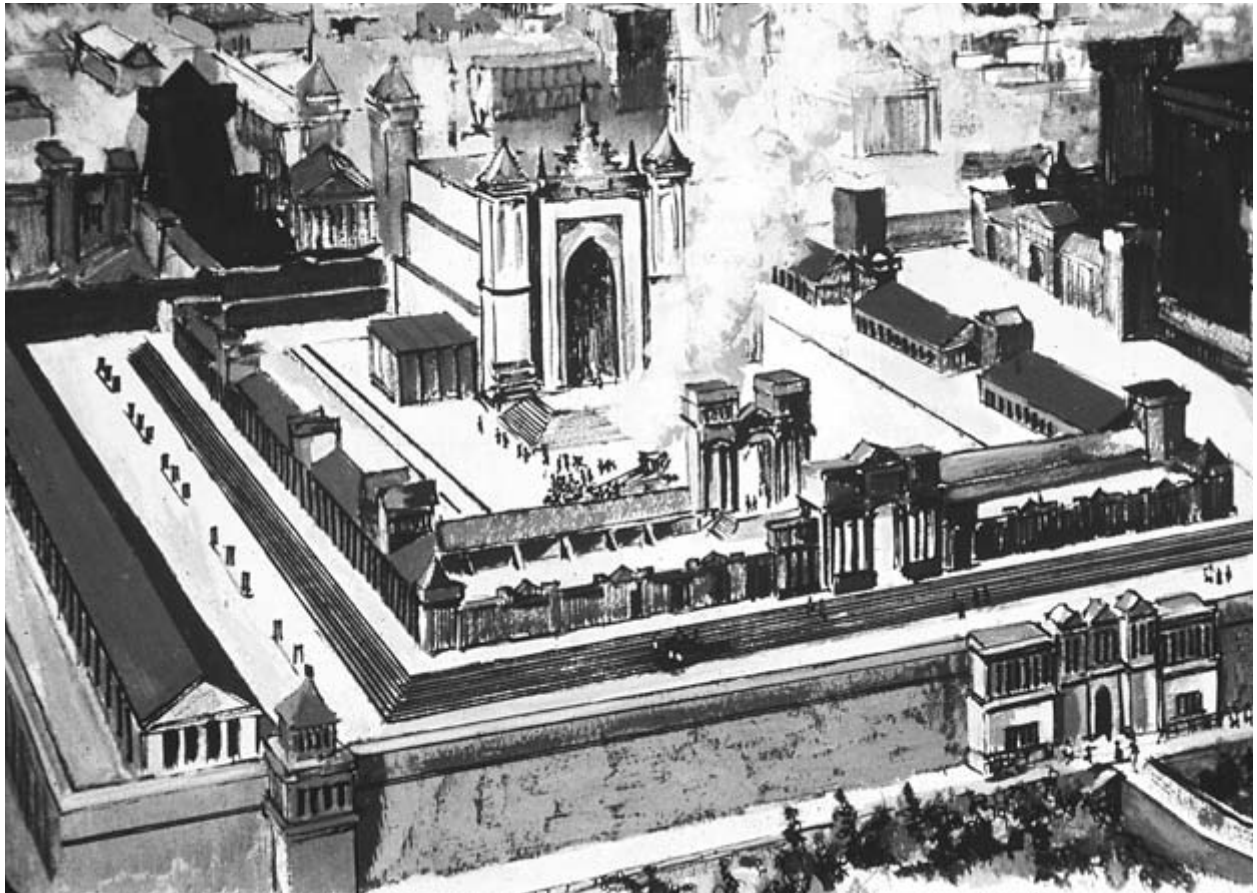
(27-26) Ezekiel 38:2-6. Ancient Names and Modern Equivalents

Ezekiel specifically told his readers where Gog, the great military and political leader or leaders of the last days, would come from and with whom he would be allied in the war against Israel. He used names that were current in Old Testament times, though many of these names are not familiar to modern readers. Magog, Meshech, and Tubal were in northern Asia

Minor (see v. 2). Persia was in eastern Asia Minor, and Ethiopia and Libya (Cush and Phut) were in Africa (see v. 5). Gomer and Togarmah have been associated with peoples in Asia Minor and Europe (see v. 6; see Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*; Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:2:159-60.) That these nations would come from north and south, east and west, represents the teaching that all nations will fight against Israel (compare Zechariah 14:2).



"They shall become one in thine hand" (Ezekiel 37:17).



(27-27) Ezekiel 38:22. “I Will Rain upon Him . . . Great Hailstones”

As did Ezekiel, John the Revelator also saw great hailstones raining down on the vast army at Armageddon. He gave their weight at one talent (see Revelation 16:21), which is approximately 75.6 pounds, or 34.3 kilograms (see Bible Dictionary, s.v. “weights and measures”). Ezekiel 38:22 is the verse referred to in Doctrine and Covenants 29:21.

(27-28) Ezekiel 39:11. Where Is the Valley of Hamongog?

Ezekiel 39:11 depicts a future event and is not making reference to a known location of that day. *Hamon* in Hebrew means “multitude” (see William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “multitude”). The name *Hamongog* therefore means the “multitude of Gog,” indicating that the valley will be so called because of the vast numbers buried there. Since the final battle centers around Jerusalem (see Enrichment I), it is assumed that the valley of Hamongog is somewhere nearby.

(27-29) Ezekiel 40–44. The Vision of a Future Temple

In one of the most remarkable visions of the Old Testament, Ezekiel had the privilege of being carried away by the Spirit to the holy city of Jerusalem to behold on the temple mount the magnificent temple to be built there in the latter days. In Ezekiel 40:3, Ezekiel was introduced to a “man” who subsequently showed

him the temple and its measurements. This “man” was probably not the Lord but an authorized messenger.

Elder James E. Talmage described the main features of this temple:

“In the twenty-fifth year of the Babylonian captivity, while yet the people of Israel were in exile in a strange land, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Ezekiel; the power of God rested upon him; and he saw in vision a glorious Temple, the plan of which he minutely described. As to whether the prophet himself considered the design so shown as one to be subsequently realized, or as but a grand yet unattainable ideal, is not declared. Certain it is that the Temple of the vision has not yet been builded.

“In most of its essential features Ezekiel’s ideal followed closely the plan of Solomon’s Temple; so close, indeed, is the resemblance, that many of the details specified by Ezekiel have been accepted as those of the splendid edifice destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. A predominant characteristic of the Temple described by Ezekiel was the spaciousness of its premises and the symmetry of both the Holy House and its associated buildings. The area was to be a square of five hundred cubits, walled about and provided with a gateway and arches on each of three sides; on the west side the wall was to be unbroken by arch or portal. At each of the gateways were little chambers regarded as lodges, and provided with porches. In the outer court were other chambers. The entire area was to be elevated, and a flight of steps led to each gateway. In the inner court

was seen the great altar, standing before the House, and occupying the center of a square of one hundred cubits. Ample provision was made for every variety of sacrifice and offering, and for the accommodation of the priests, the singers, and all engaged in the holy ritual. The main structure comprised a Porch, a Holy Place, and an inner sanctuary or Most Holy Place, the last named elevated above the rest and reached by steps. The plan provided for even greater exclusiveness than had characterized the sacred area of the Temple of Solomon; the double courts contributed to this end. The service of the Temple was prescribed in detail; the ordinances of the altar, the duties of the priests, the ministry of the Levites, the regulations governing oblations and feasts were all set forth.

“The immediate purpose of this revelation through the vision of the prophet appears to have been that of awakening the people of Israel to a realization of their fallen state and a conception of their departed glory.” (*The House of the Lord*, pp. 37–38.)

(27-30) Ezekiel 40:45–46. Who Are the Sons of Zadok?

The heavenly messenger explained to Ezekiel that the Levites who would keep charge of the holy house would be the sons of Zadok. Zadok was a righteous high priest in the days of King Solomon. Zadok replaced Abiathar (see 1 Kings 2:26–27, 35) because of his loyalty to David and Solomon. Zadok was the first high priest to officiate in Solomon’s temple. Apparently the Lord desired the descendants of the righteous Zadok to officiate in the latter-day temple in Jerusalem (see Ezekiel 44:15; 48:11).

(27-31) Ezekiel 43:1–5; 44:4. The Glory of God Fills the Temple

The glory of God is manifest in the brightness and power of His divine presence. It is expected that the glory of the Lord would fill His holy house in Jerusalem. Unquestionably, His glory has filled all of the temples that have been built in His name and by His authority. (See Numbers 9:15–18; 2 Chronicles 5:13–14; Ezra 6:14–16; D&C 110:1–5; 124:27–28, 38–41.)

(27-32) Ezekiel 43:18–27. What Sacrifices Will Be Offered in the Temple?

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

“When these temples [the temple seen by Ezekiel and others to be built in the New Jerusalem] are built, it is very likely that provision will be made for some ceremonies and ordinances which may be performed by the Aaronic Priesthood and a place provided where the sons of Levi may offer their offering in righteousness. This will have to be the case because all things are to be restored. There were ordinances performed in ancient Israel in the tabernacle when in the wilderness, and after it was established at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, and later in the temple built by Solomon. The Lord has informed us that this was the case and has said that in those edifices ordinances for the people were performed. . . .

“We are living in the dispensation of the fulness of times into which all things are to be gathered, and all things are to be restored since the beginning. Even this earth is to be restored to the condition which prevailed

before Adam’s transgression. Now in the nature of things, the law of sacrifice will have to be restored, or all things which were decreed by the Lord would not be restored. It will be necessary, therefore, for the sons of Levi, who offered the blood sacrifices anciently in Israel, to offer such a sacrifice again to round out and complete this ordinance in this dispensation. Sacrifice by the shedding of blood was instituted in the days of Adam and of necessity will have to be restored.

“The sacrifice of animals will be done to complete the restoration when the temple spoken of is built; at the beginning of the millennium, or in the restoration, blood sacrifices will be performed long enough to complete the fulness of the restoration in this dispensation. Afterwards sacrifice will be of some other character.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:93–94.)

(27-33) Ezekiel 45:1–8; 47:13–48:29. How Will the Land Be Divided among the Tribes of Israel?

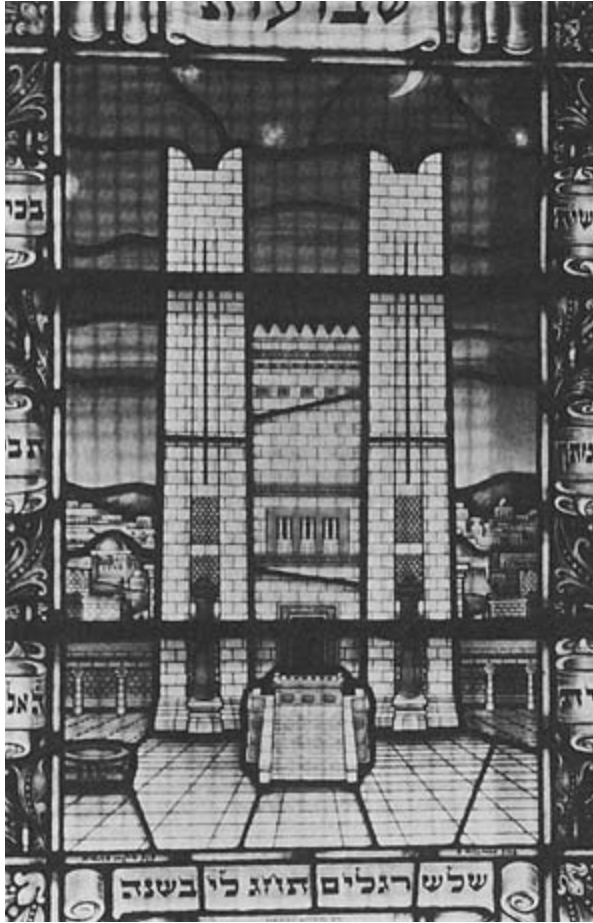
According to Ezekiel’s vision of the future, the Holy Land will be divided in strips running between the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Dead Sea and the Jordan River on the east. Each of the twelve tribes will be given a strip of land with a strip out of the middle for the prince, the city, and the Levites, that is, the priests. Joseph will receive a double portion (Ezekiel 47:13) since Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph’s sons, both became tribes in Israel. The city will have twelve gates, one for each tribe (including Levi and one for Joseph). On the north will be the tribes of Reuben, Judah, and Levi; on the east will be Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan; on the south will be Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun; on the west will be Gad, Asher, and Naphtali. Jerusalem will then be called *the Lord is there* (Jehovah-shammah; see Ezekiel 48:35). There will be a gathering there of the scattered tribes of Israel, and the temple that Ezekiel saw in vision will be central in location and function in that gathering.

Regarding the inheritances of Joseph’s descendants in the Middle East, Sperry commented: “Of interest to the Latter-day Saints is the fact that provision is made for the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. It is quite evident from Ezekiel’s vision that not all of Joseph’s descendants are to have their inheritance on the American continent, as some of our people have supposed. We may be justified in believing, however, that most of Joseph’s seed will be provided for on this land (see Ether 13:5–12), but Ezekiel very obviously implies that some of Joseph’s descendants will dwell in Palestine.” (*Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 236–37.)

(27-34) Ezekiel 47:1–12. Waters Issue from the Temple

The Prophet Joseph Smith proclaimed: “Judah must return, Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and the temple, and water come out from under the temple, and the waters of the Dead Sea be healed. It will take some time to rebuild the walls of the city and the temple, &c; and all this must be done before the Son of Man will make His appearance.” (*Teachings*, p. 286.)

The waters issuing forth from under the temple and the healing of the Dead Sea may occur when the Lord Himself sets foot upon the Mount of Olives, causing this mountain to divide in two and create a large valley (see Zechariah 14:4; D&C 133:20–24; Enrichment I).



Solomon's temple as rendered in stained glass at Hechal Shlomo, Jerusalem

(27-35) Ezekiel 47:22–23. Who Are These Strangers?

Undoubtedly there will be converts who are not part of blood Israel who will receive an inheritance because of their devotion to the gospel. They will then be adopted into the house of Israel. These strangers may be some of the gentile peoples who will accept the gospel in the last days.

(27-36) Ezekiel 48:31–34. The Gates of the City

See Revelation 22:13–17 for the requirements one must fill to enter in the gates of the holy city.

(27-37) Ezekiel 48:35. Jerusalem Will Be Called Holy

The Joseph Smith Translation reads: “And the name of the city from that day shall be called, *Holy*; for the Lord shall be there” (see JST, Ezekiel 48:35; emphasis added). The temple will be built as a symbol to Israel that the Lord is with His people.

POINTS TO PONDER

(27-38) Making the Prophecies Live Today

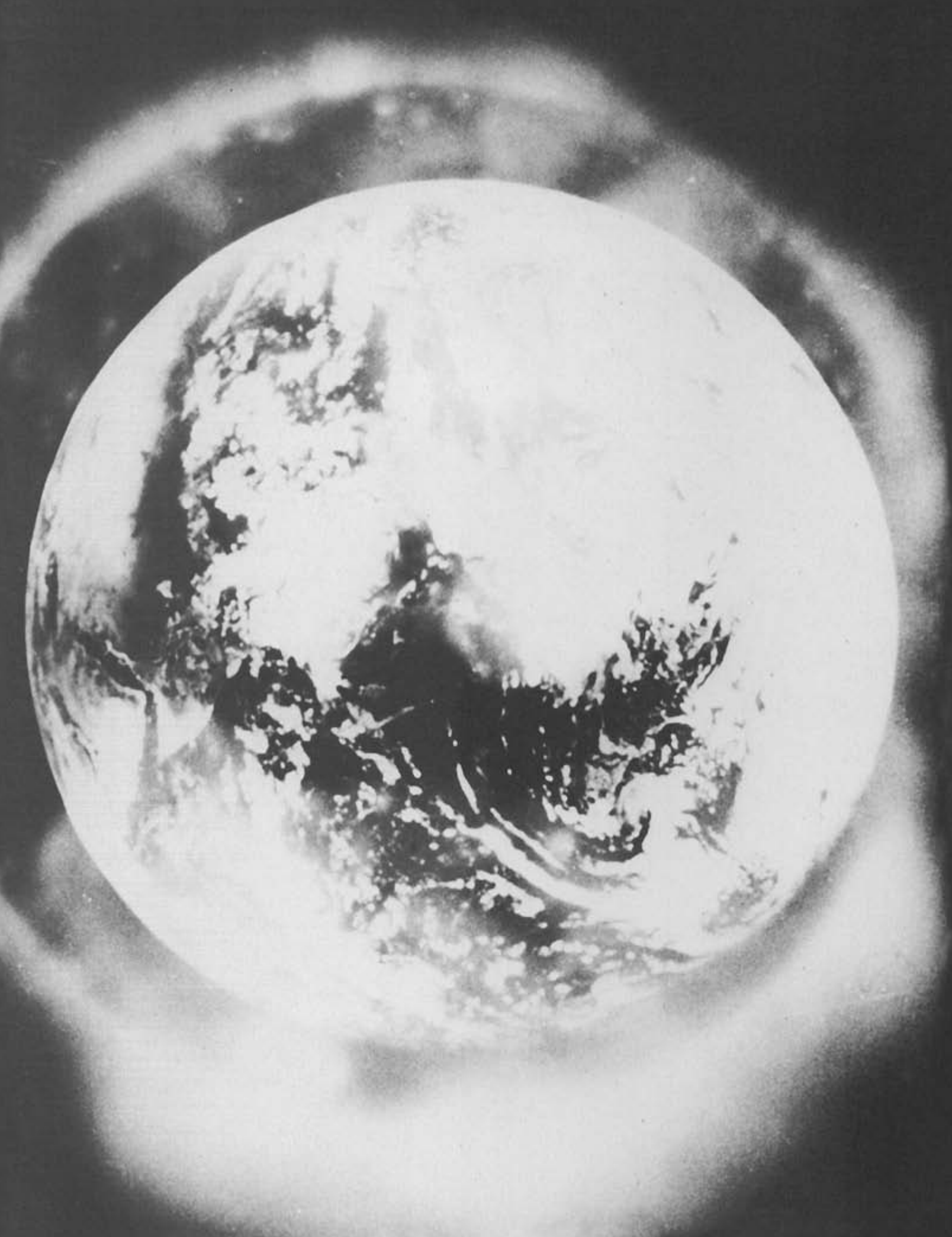
These chapters have shown the great prophetic insight with which the Lord blessed Ezekiel. Certainly the Lord trusted Ezekiel. He knew that this prophet among the exiles in Babylonia would see that these precious truths would be safely recorded and delivered to the nations of the earth.

Do you rejoice when you read the prophecies of Ezekiel? Does your soul burn within you to realize that the Lord is at the helm in the affairs of His children and that He will bring again His people Israel to their lands of promise and cleanse iniquity from their midst? Do you thrill with the knowledge that He will protect Israel from her enemies and punish the wicked and that a great and magnificent temple will be built upon Mount Moriah in the holy city Jerusalem for the tribe of Judah? If you had been in the presence of the Jews in Babylon, would you “know that a prophet hath been among them”? (Ezekiel 33:33).

Certainly we cannot take for granted that the prophecies of Ezekiel will come to pass. We must do as Nephi did when he heard Lehi’s recital of the vision of the tree of life and personally seek a confirmation of the truthfulness of Ezekiel’s vision from the Lord (see 1 Nephi 10:17). Ezekiel himself was taught by the same principle (see Ezekiel 44:5).

As you seek to know the truthfulness of what the prophets have revealed, remember that obtaining that knowledge is a gradual process. The Lord said: “I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are they who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom” (2 Nephi 28:30).

Take some time to reflect upon, ponder, and pray about the significance of Ezekiel’s great message. “Treasure these things up in your hearts, and let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds” (D&C 43:34).



The Battle of Armageddon: A Prophetic View

(I-1) Introduction

Armageddon! The name has inspired books, movies, and an almost endless amount of commentary. The very name conjures up pictures of vast armies, horrible suffering, and widespread devastation. It has created a host of speculations and much embellishment that is not scriptural. How much is known of this great event in the world's history? How much of what is heard can be believed? Have the prophets really spoken that much about it? What about modern prophets? Have they too spoken of it? Where does it get its name?

It is not surprising, considering its great importance in the winding-up scenes of the earth's telestial existence, to find that the prophets, ancient and modern, have spoken at great lengths and in much detail about this final war that will usher in the Millennium. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, John, Joseph Smith, and others have all talked about the battle and the events associated with it. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, after quoting from several of these prophets, said: "Now I have read these passages of Scripture from these various prophets. Here you will find Isaiah saying the Lord will pout out war upon all the world; Jeremiah saying the same thing and speaking of these terrible things; Daniel saying so; Ezekiel saying so. We find Joel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, all proclaiming that in this last day, the day when the sun shall be darkened and the moon turned to blood and the stars fall from heaven, that the nations of the earth would gather against Jerusalem. All of them speak of it; and when that time comes, the Lord is going to come out of His hiding place." (*The Signs of the Times*, p. 170.)

Let us now examine what the prophetic record reveals, leaving out all unsubstantiated speculation and discussion. The information in the scriptures was given by the prophets. The prophets speak for themselves; this summary is provided only to guide your study of the prophetic sources, not to become the subject of your study itself.

(I-2) Significance of the Name *Armageddon*

In the southern part of Galilee in present-day Israel, about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, is a broad and fertile plain. Today it is one of the richest agricultural areas of the state of Israel and is often called Israel's breadbasket. It runs from the Bay of Haifa on the northern coast in a southeast direction to the River Jordan. Fifteen miles wide at its greatest breadth, the valley of Esdraelon (its Greek name is still used today) is flanked on the north by the Nazareth ridge and on the south by Mount Carmel, Mount Gilboa, and the hills of Samaria.

One of the most important highways of antiquity passed through the valley. The *Via Maris*, or "Way of the Sea," ran up the coast from Egypt, turned inland

just south of present-day Haifa and Mount Carmel, followed an important pass through the hills, and then dropped into the Plain of Esdraelon. Because of the strategic importance of the pass, a fortified city lay at the entrance into the valley. The city was Megiddo, which name means in Hebrew "the place of troops" (see Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. "Megiddo"). Because it lay on the flank of a hill, it was also known as *Har-Megiddo* or the "Mount of Megiddo." In the English versions of the New Testament the name is rendered *Armageddon* (see Revelation 16:16).

From the earliest days, the valley of Armageddon, or the Plain of Esdraelon, has been the site of great battles. It has felt the tramp of Egyptian foot soldiers, heard the shouts of Assyrian battalions, witnessed the passing of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian troops, watched as Jewish guerrillas fought Roman legionnaires, heard the cries of Crusaders and Moslems locked in battle, and has felt the crunch of Israeli troops maneuvering against Arab forces. Megiddo: "the place of troops." One would be hard pressed to find a more appropriate name for this tiny area of the world's geography.

And one would be hard put to find a more appropriate name for the last great battle of the world before the Savior comes. It was John who named it when he said: "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Revelation 16:16). From that statement the name has come to be applied to the entire great war, although the phrase "battle of Armageddon" is not found in the scriptures. Some erroneously conclude that the final battle of the war will be fought there, but, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out, the final struggles will center around Jerusalem, though they may extend to Megiddo.



Ruins at Megiddo

"Some 60 air miles north of Jerusalem lies the ancient city of *Megiddo* (now called Tell el-Mutesellim). In its north-central Palestinian location, Megiddo overlooks the great Plain of Esdraelon, an area of some 20 by 14 miles in which many great battles took place anciently. Megiddo is the older Hebrew form of *Armageddon* or *Har-Magedon* meaning the Mount or Hill of Megiddo, or the Hill of Battles; it is 'the valley of *Megiddon*' mentioned in Zechariah. (Zech. 12:11.)

"At the very moment of the Second Coming of our Lord, 'all nations' shall be gathered 'against Jerusalem to battle' (Zech. 11; 12; 13; 14), and the *battle of Armageddon* (obviously covering the entire area from Jerusalem to Megiddo, and perhaps more) will be in progress. As John expressed it, 'the kings of the earth and of the whole world' will be gathered 'to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, . . . into a place called in the Hebrew tongue *Armageddon*.' Then Christ will 'come as a thief,' meaning unexpectedly, and the dramatic upheavals promised to accompany his return will take place. (Rev. 16:14–21.) It is incident to this battle of *Armageddon* that the Supper of the Great God shall take place (Rev. 19:11–18), and it is the same battle described by Ezekiel as the war with Gog and Magog. (Ezek. 38; 39; *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, p. 45.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 74.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith indicated that this great war would be one of the last events before Christ comes in His glory:

"One thing we are given by these prophets definitely to understand is that the great last conflict before Christ shall come will end at the siege of Jerusalem. . . .

"So we are given to understand that when the armies gather in Palestine will be the time when the Lord shall come in judgment and to make the eventful decision which will confound the enemies of his people and establish them in their ancient land forever." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:46–47.)

Obviously, this is an event of great importance to the world, and the Lord has given a wealth of detail so that those who will listen can be prepared and comforted as the greatest war in the history of the world begins to unfold.

(I-3) Armageddon: The Setting

According to the prophets, some important events must take place before the battle actually begins:

1. The house of Israel will be gathered from among the heathen (the Gentiles) and returned to their own land (see Ezekiel 36:24; 37:21).
2. The land of Israel will be rebuilt and reinhabited by the covenant people (see Ezekiel 36:10–12, 33–36).
3. The land will become highly productive and fruitful, even like the Garden of Eden (see Ezekiel 36:8, 29–30, 34–35).
4. There will be one nation in the land of Israel again (see Ezekiel 37:22).
5. Jerusalem will be reestablished as the capital city of the Israelites (see Zechariah 1:16–17; 2:12; 12:6; 3 Nephi 20:46).
6. Judah will become powerful in politics and warfare (see Isaiah 19:16–17; Zechariah 10:3, 5–6).
7. A great combination of organizations serving Satan will arise in the last days. This combination has several names: the "beast . . . out of the sea"

(Revelation 13:1), representing the kingdoms of the earth (see JST, Revelation 13:1; 17:8–14; Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 3:520); the "great and abominable church," "the church of the devil," "the great whore," and "the mother of . . . abominations" (Revelation 17:1, 5).

Elder George Q. Morris of the Quorum of the Twelve stated that some of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century were part of this coalition:

"The Savior recognized the domination of Satan over the world generally, and called him the prince of the world, but in a special way—in the way that Brother [Ezra Taft] Benson has referred to—he has entered into the politics of the world among the nations of the world, and already subjugated about one billion people of the world, and by a dire, sanguinary, and deadly philosophy has brought death to millions and has brought slavery to almost a billion people." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1960, p. 100.)

(I-4) Armageddon: The Participants

Ezekiel and Jeremiah indicated areas that will be involved and named Israel as the target of the war:

1. Ezekiel named Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Meshech and Tubal, as the leader of the forces that would come against Israel (see Ezekiel 38:1–3). Magog, Meshech, and Tubal were ancient peoples in the northern part of Asia Minor (see Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 38:2–6). Gog is a symbolic name for the leader or leaders of this great evil power that will arise in the last days.

2. Ezekiel named Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, and Togarmah as being in alliance with Gog (see Ezekiel 38:2–6; see also Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 38:2–6 and the Bible Dictionary).

These designations refer to general areas of the ancient world, so a list of modern nations fighting in *Armageddon* cannot be compiled from these sources. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: "The prophecies do not name the modern nations which will be fighting for and against Israel, but the designation Gog and Magog is given to the combination of nations which are seeking to overthrow and destroy the remnant of the Lord's chosen seed." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 298.)

3. The prophets agreed that all nations should be joined in this alliance in one way or another (see Jeremiah 25:26; Joel 3:1; Zechariah 14:2; Revelation 16:14).

4. The strategic objective of this great and evil alliance is clearly the nation of Israel (see Ezekiel 38:8, 15–16; Joel 2:1; 3:1–2; Zechariah 14:2).

(I-5) Armageddon: The Army of Gog

Several of the prophets vividly described in figurative language the power and massiveness of this army.

Ezekiel described it as "clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords" (Ezekiel 38:4) and as coming like "a storm" and "a cloud to cover the land" (v. 9), having "many people" with him, "all of them riding upon horses [a symbol of power in war], a great company, and a mighty army" (v. 15).

Daniel described the "king of the north" as coming with a "great army" which others have no "strength to withstand" (Daniel 11:13, 15) and as coming "like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and

with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over" (v. 40). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith specifically identified Daniel 11–12 as referring to the last days (see *Signs of the Times*, p. 156).

Joel stated that the army would be the greatest army in the history of the world up to that point (Joel 2:2). He described it as being like a "fire" that devours the land, leaving what had looked like the "garden of Eden" before their coming as "a desolate wilderness" (Joel 2:3; see also Joel 2:2, 4–5). Joel also said that the army would be highly disciplined in warfare and virtually invincible: "When they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded" (Joel 2:8; see also Joel 2:7, 9).

John the Revelator used the imagery of a cloud of locusts (vast numbers that bring great devastation) and described the army as having the "teeth of lions," "breastplates of iron," and "wings" that sounded like the "sound of chariots of many horses running to battle" (Revelation 9:8–9). The army was numbered "two hundred thousand thousand" (Revelation 9:16), having "breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone" and with "fire and smoke and brimstone" issuing "out of their mouths" (Revelation 9:17). Elder Bruce R. McConkie, referring to the imagery of John and Joel, suggested that "it is not improbable that these ancient prophets were seeing such things as men wearing or protected by strong armor; as troops of cavalry and companies of tanks and flame throwers; as airplanes and airborne missiles which explode, fire shells and drop bombs; and even other weapons yet to be devised in an age when warfare is the desire and love of wicked men" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:503).

It will be partly through the aid of false religionists working miracles that so many people join in this unholy alliance (see Revelation 13:11–15; 19:20). Elder Orson Pratt taught that "so great will be the darkness resting upon Christendom, and so great the bonds of priestcraft with which they will be bound, that they will not understand, and they will be given up to the hardness of their hearts. Then will be fulfilled that saying, That the day shall come when the Lord shall have power over his Saints, and the Devil shall have power over his own dominion. He will give them up to the power of the Devil, and he will have power over them, and he will carry them about as chaff before a whirlwind. He will gather up millions upon millions of people into the valleys around about Jerusalem in order to destroy the Jews after they have gathered. How will the Devil do this? He will perform miracles to do it. The Bible says the kings of the earth and the great ones will be deceived by these false miracles. It says there shall be three unclean spirits that shall go forth working miracles, and they are spirits of devils. Where do they go? To the kings of the earth; and what will they do? Gather them up to battle unto the great day of God Almighty. Where? Into the valley of Armageddon." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 7:189.)

(I-6) Gog Will Be Thwarted by the Power of Two Witnesses

One question that arises as one studies the prophetic picture is, How could a nation as tiny as modern Israel stand against the combined armies of the world? The answer lies in an understanding of the role of two important participants in these great events.

John the Revelator gave the most detailed picture of these two participants. They are called the "two witnesses," the "two olive trees" and the "two candlesticks" (Revelation 11:3–4). Latter-day revelation teaches that they are "two prophets . . . raised up to the Jewish nation" who will "prophecy to [them] after they are gathered and have built . . . Jerusalem" (D&C 77:15).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

"These two shall be followers of that humble man, Joseph Smith, through whom the Lord of Heaven restored the fulness of his everlasting gospel in this final dispensation of grace. No doubt they will be members of the Council of the Twelve or of the First Presidency of the Church. Their prophetic ministry to rebellious Jewry shall be the same in length as was our Lord's personal ministry among their rebellious forebears.

"The two olive trees, and the two candlesticks [are] symbols of the two witnesses; meaning, perhaps, that as olive trees, they shall provide oil for the lamps of those who go forth to meet the Bridegroom; . . . and that as lamp stands they shall reflect to men that light which comes from Him who is the Light of the World." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:509–10.)

These prophets will have power to pronounce great judgments upon the earth (see Revelation 11:5–6).

"They shall have power like Elijah who called down fire from heaven to consume his enemies, and who sealed the heavens that it rained not in all Israel for the space of three and a half years (1 Kings 17 and 18; 2 Kings 1), and like Moses by whose word blood and plagues lay heavily upon the Egyptians. (Ex. 7, 8, 9, and 10.)" (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:510.)

Their miraculous power seems to be the force preventing Gog and his army from succeeding in annihilating Israel. Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote: "John, in the eleventh chapter of Revelation, gives us many more particulars concerning this same event. He informs us that after the city and temple are rebuilt by the Jews, the Gentiles will tread it under foot forty and two months, during which time there will be two prophets continually prophesying and working mighty miracles. And it seems that the Gentile army shall be hindered from utterly destroying and overthrowing the city, while these two prophets continue." (*A Voice of Warning*, p. 33.)

Isaiah called these prophets "two sons" and said they were the only hope of deliverance for Israel because they would be "full of the fury of the Lord" (JST, Isaiah 51:19–20; see also JST, Isaiah 51:17–18).

(I-7) Armageddon: The Final Extremity

John showed that eventually the two prophets will be captured and killed by the opposing army, and their bodies will be left in the streets of Jerusalem for "three days and an half" as the forces of evil engage in a great celebration over their death (Revelation 11:9; see also Revelation 11:7–8, 10).

"That level of spiritual debauchery is shown forth by the fact that the wicked not only slay the prophets of God, but boast of their deeds and glory in them. Such people, as the Jaredites and Nephites before them, are ripened in iniquity and are ready for that destruction

and burning which shall cleanse the vineyard of corruption when Jesus descends with his chariots of fire." (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:510.)

During the "three days and an half" that the prophets lie dead in the streets, the army will ravage the city of Jerusalem and the remaining population of Israel (Revelation 11:9). Elder Pratt explained: "After a struggle of three years and a half, they [Gog's army] will at length succeed in destroying these two prophets and then overrunning much of the city; they will send gifts to each other because of the death of the two prophets, and in the meantime will not allow their dead bodies to be put in graves, but will suffer them to lie in the streets of Jerusalem three days and a half, during which time the armies of the Gentiles, consisting of many kindreds, tongues, and nations, passing through the city, plundering the Jews, will see their dead bodies lying in the street." (*Voice of Warning*, p. 33.)

Zechariah says that only one-third of the nation of Israel will survive this final extremity when the "city [Jerusalem] shall be taken, and the houses rifled [looted], and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity" (Zechariah 14:2; see also Zechariah 13:8-9; 14:1).

(I-8) Armageddon: The Deliverance

In what will be one of the blackest moments of Israel's history, just as it appears that they are about to be annihilated, the Lord's fury will be unleashed upon the kingdoms of the world (see Ezekiel 38:18), and the Lord will "go forth, and fight against those nations" (Zechariah 14:3).

1. The two prophets, lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem, will be resurrected in the sight of the people (see Revelation 11:11-12): "After three days and a half, on a sudden, the spirit of life from God will enter them; they will arise and stand upon their feet, and great fear will fall upon them that see them. And then they shall hear a voice from heaven saying, 'Come up hither,' and they will ascend up to heaven in a cloud, with their enemies beholding them." (Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, p. 33.)

2. An earthquake will strike the earth, affecting the whole world—the greatest earthquake the world has ever known (see Revelation 11:13; 16:18; Ezekiel 38:19-20; Haggai 2:6-7).

Elder McConkie taught:

"Three natural changes in the earth—all apparently growing out of one transcendent happening—are here named [Revelation 16:17-21] as attending our Lord's Second Coming. They are:

"1. Earth's land masses shall unite; islands and continents shall become one land.

"2. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain shall be made low; the rugged terrain of today shall level out into a millennial garden.

"3. Such an earthquake as has never been known since man's foot was planted on this planet shall attend these changes in the earth's surface and appearance.

"And, fourthly, as recorded elsewhere, the great deep—presumably the Atlantic ocean—shall return to its place in the north, 'and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.' (D. & C. 133:21-24.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:543.)

This quake will evidently create a huge spring in Jerusalem which will form a new river, flowing westward to the Mediterranean Sea and eastward to the Dead Sea (see Zechariah 14:8-9; Joel 3:18; Ezekiel 47:1-5). Because of this river, the Dead Sea will have its waters healed, that is, it will become a lake with verdant foliage surrounding its shores and fish teeming in its waters (see Ezekiel 47:6-12; Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 286).

The area around Jerusalem, which is now very hilly and steep, will be smoothed out and become like "a plain" (Zechariah 14:10).

3. The Mount of Olives will be split in two, providing an avenue of escape for the house of Israel (see Zechariah 14:4-5).

"All [the prophets] speak of [this day]; and when that time comes, the Lord is going to come out of His hiding place. You can see what a terrible condition it is going to be; and the Jews besieged, not only in Jerusalem but, of course, throughout Palestine are in the siege; and when they are about to go under, then the Lord comes. There will be the great earthquake. The earthquake will not be only in Palestine. There will not be merely the separation of the Mount of Olives, to form a valley that the Jews may escape, but the whole earth is going to be shaken. There will be some dreadful things take place, and some great changes are going to take place, and that you will find written in the book of Ezekiel (38:17-23)." (Smith, *Signs of the Times*, p. 170.)

4. As the Jews flee through this avenue of escape they will see their Messiah who has come to deliver them. In gratitude and joy they will throw themselves at the feet of the Deliverer and discover the wounds in His hands and feet. Suddenly they will realize that their Messiah is the Messiah who came to them before, and the Jewish nation will be converted to their God. (See Zechariah 14:5; 12:9-10; 13:6; D&C 45:47-53.)

5. The Lord's fury upon the army of Gog will consist of other judgments in addition to the great earthquake:

The armies of Gog will turn upon each other, perhaps in the panic and confusion of the great earthquake (see Ezekiel 38:21; Zechariah 14:13).

A great rain of fire and hail will shower down upon the army (see Ezekiel 38:22; D&C 29:21; Revelation 16:21). John said the hailstones will weigh a talent, which is about 75.6 pounds or 34.3 kilograms (see Bible Dictionary, s.v. "weights and measures"). Ezekiel stated that fire will also be sent against the land of Magog (see Ezekiel 39:6). The account by Ezekiel could very easily be a description of atomic warfare. Isaiah described the fire's effect on the land itself (see Isaiah 34:9-10).

A plague will strike the army, causing terrible disease and calamity (see Zechariah 14:12; compare D&C 29:18-20).

The result will be that only one-sixth of the invading army will survive the Lord's judgments (see Ezekiel 39:2), and their power to make war will be destroyed. In Jerusalem itself, 7000 will be slain, and one-tenth of the city destroyed (see Revelation 11:13).

So great will be the devastation that for seven years Israel will be able to live off the spoils of war left behind (see Ezekiel 39:8-10). It will take seven months to bury the dead, and thereafter burial teams will search out

the remaining bodies in an attempt to cleanse the land (see Ezekiel 39:11–16). Isaiah said that the Lord “hath delivered them to the slaughter . . . and the mountains shall be melted with their blood” (Isaiah 34:2–3). Jeremiah stated that the Lord “will give them that are wicked to the sword, . . . and the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other” (Jeremiah 25:31, 33).

The judgments of the Lord upon the armies of Gog is known in the scriptures as the great day of the Lord’s “sacrifice” (see Isaiah 34:5–6; Ezekiel 39:17–22), the Lord’s “controversy with the nations” (Jeremiah 25:31), the “supper of the great God” (Revelation 19:17; see also Revelation 19:18–21), and “the great winepress of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:19; see also Revelation 19:15; D&C 133:48–51).

6. Elder Charles W. Penrose summarized the foregoing list of events: “The bankrupt nations, envying the wealth of the sons of Judah, will seek a pretext to make war upon them, and will invade the ‘holy land’ to ‘take a prey and a spoil.’ . . .

“His [Christ’s] next appearance [after coming to his temple] will be among the distressed and nearly vanquished sons of Judah. At the crisis of their fate, when the hostile troops of several nations are ravaging the city and all the horrors of war are overwhelming the people of Jerusalem, he will set his feet upon the Mount of Olives, which will cleave and part asunder at his touch. Attended by a host from heaven, he will overthrow and destroy the combined armies of the Gentiles, and appear to the worshipping Jews as the mighty Deliverer and Conqueror so long expected by their race; and while love, gratitude, awe, and admiration swell their bosoms, the Deliverer will show them the tokens of his crucifixion and disclose himself as Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had reviled and whom their fathers put to death. Then will unbelief depart from their souls, and ‘the blindness in part which has happened unto Israel’ be removed.” (“The Second Advent,” *Millennial Star*, 10 Sept. 1859, pp. 582–83.)

(I-9) Armageddon: The End or the Beginning?

Armageddon signals the end of the world, which is defined as “the destruction of the wicked” (JS—M 1:4). But it prepares the way for the ushering in of the millennial reign of Christ and the era of peace that will endure for a thousand years. Mankind will enter a remarkable period of righteousness, health, education, prosperity, and security. (See Isaiah 65:17–25; Zechariah 14:9, 16–20; D&C 84:98–102; 101:23–24; 133:52–56.)

The millennial era could not begin without the widespread destruction of the wicked. Therefore, while the battle of Armageddon is in and of itself a thing



The Mount of Olives will split in two.

horrible to contemplate, it is necessary because of the wickedness of the world, and ultimately it will play an important part in the Lord’s plan for redemption of the world. President Joseph Fielding Smith observed:

“I know these are unpleasant things. It is not a pleasant thing even for me to stand here and tell you that this is written in the Scriptures. If the Lord has a controversy with the nations, He will put them to the sword. Their bodies shall lie unburied like dung upon the earth. That is not nice, is it, but should we not know it? Is it not our duty to read these things and understand them? Don’t you think the Lord has given us these things that we might know and we might prepare ourselves through humility, through repentance, through faith, that we might escape from these dreadful conditions that are portrayed by these ancient prophets? That is why I am reading them. I feel just as keenly as you do about the condition, and I pray for it to come to an end, but I want it to come to an end right. . . .

“So I pray every day of my life that the Lord will hasten His work; and while all this has to take place, I hope He will hasten it, that it may soon come to an end, that peace may come; and so I repeat, as I said in one of the talks some time ago, I am praying for the end of the world because I want a better world. I want the coming of Christ. I want the reign of peace. I want the time to come when every man can live in peace and in the spirit of faith, humility and prayer.” (*Signs of the Times*, pp. 154–55, 175.)



Daniel: Prophet of God, Companion of Kings

(28-1) Introduction

Like many of his brethren the prophets, Daniel was prepared and raised up as a minister to kings and emperors. At the time that Nebuchadnezzar first carried the Jews captive into Babylon (about 605 B.C.), Daniel was chosen as one of the choicest Jewish youths to be taken to Babylon and trained for service in the king's court. Because of his righteousness and sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit, he was greatly favored of God. The Lord blessed him with the gift of interpreting dreams and visions. This endowment soon made him an object of greater attention from the emperor, and he was raised to positions that enabled him to spend his life in service to the kings of the land. He became the Lord's minister to those rulers. He was made chief of the wise men, chancellor of the equivalent of a national university, ruler of all the Hebrew captives, and, as governor of the province of Babylon, one of the chief rulers in both the Babylonian and Persian Empires. Though at times his life was endangered because of the jealousy of evil men, yet he lived so perfectly that the Lord continually protected and preserved him.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Daniel.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON DANIEL

(28-2) Daniel 1:1–2. What Was the Historical Setting of Daniel's Captivity?

Most scholars agree that Nebuchadnezzar, as a Babylonian prince, was in command of his father's troops in 605 B.C. when they soundly defeated the Egyptian forces at Carchemish (see Jeremiah 46:2). This defeat marked the beginning of the end of the Egyptian Empire as a world power and put the known world on notice that it would now have to reckon with Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar pursued the Egyptians southward and dealt them a worse defeat near Hamath in Syria (see Harry Thomas Frank, *Discovering the Biblical World*, p. 127), thus securing Syria and Judea for the expanded Babylonian Empire. As seen in Daniel 1:1, this drive resulted in the siege of Jerusalem in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim and in Judah's being made a vassal to Babylon for the next three years (see 2 Kings 24:1). At that time many of the finest vessels of the temple were taken to Babylon as tribute (see

2 Chronicles 36:7). Selected members of Judah's upper class, which included Daniel (see 2 Kings 20:14–18; Daniel 6:13), were carried captive to Babylon. Sometime during this campaign, Nebuchadnezzar learned of the death of his father, and within the year he returned to Babylon to be made king (see Jeremiah 25:1). Later he besieged Jerusalem twice more, carrying off additional captives both times, and eventually destroying Jerusalem about 587 B.C. All the evidence suggests that Daniel and his three companions were taken into captivity during the first exile to Babylon (see Daniel 1:6). Daniel lived in Jerusalem at the same time Lehi did, though there is no evidence to suggest that they knew each other.

(28-3) Daniel 1:2. Where Was the Land of Shinar?

Shinar was the plain of the lower delta country between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers where they approach the Persian Gulf. It was the ancient land of Chaldea, or Babylonia. (See William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Shinar.")

(28-4) Daniel 1:3. To Whom Does the Word *Eunuchs* Refer?

The word *eunuch* is "the English form of the Greek word which means *bed-keeper*. In the strict and proper sense they were the persons who had charge of the bed-chambers in palaces and larger houses. But as the jealous and dissolute temperament of the East required this charge to be in the hands of persons who had been deprived of their virility, the word *eunuch* came naturally to denote persons in that condition. But as some of these rose to be confidential advisers of their royal masters or mistresses, the word was occasionally employed to denote persons in such a position, without indicating anything of their proper manhood." (Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "eunuch.")

"This word *eunuchs* signifies officers about or in the palace, whether literally eunuchs or not" (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 4:563).

(28-5) Daniel 1:8. What Was Offensive about the King's Meat?

The term *meat* referred to the food that graced the king's table (compare Genesis 1:29). The reasons for Daniel's refusal to eat the food may have included the following: (1) some of the foods used by the Babylonians were likely among the items forbidden for consumption in the Mosaic law (see Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14); (2) Babylonians, like other heathens, ate beasts that had not been properly drained of blood (see Leviticus 3:17) and thereby violated the Mosaic law; and (3) the heathens consecrated the food of their feasts by offering up part of the food and drink as sacrifices to their gods. Consuming such food would be participating in the

worship of false gods. Moreover, food was viewed as contaminated and unclean according to Jewish law when it was prepared by anyone considered unclean, such as the heathens (see Leviticus 7:19–21). Daniel was strictly loyal to the Lord and refused to be involved in any practice associated with anything unclean or idolatrous.

(28-6) Daniel 1:12–16. What Is Pulse?

Pulse is such seeds and grains as peas, wheat, barley, and rye. Though eating pulse surely would have contributed to the good health of the Jewish youths, they were also blessed by God for adhering to His laws and thus became more healthy than those who ate the king's meat.

(28-7) Daniel 1:20. What Is Meant by the Terms Astrologers and Magicians?

The Hebrew word for astrologers and magicians is *Ahshaphim*, which means an enchanter who uses incantations and who practices hidden arts (see Davidson, *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, pp. li–lii). These people were frequently associated with evil spirits (see Acts 8:9–24). Daniel and his brethren were founded in truth and revelation from God and were thus of much greater wisdom and understanding than the king's magicians and astrologers.

(28-8) Daniel 1:21. What Was Daniel's Term of Captivity in Babylon?

Daniel was among those of the first captivity, and he remained in Babylon with many of the other Jews even after most of them had returned to their homeland to rebuild their temple and nation. He was in Babylon serving various kings through the seventy years of the Jewish captivity (see Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10). Though there is no indication of his age at the time of his captivity, Daniel 1:21 shows that he lived to at least the age of eighty.

(28-9) Daniel 2:5. Did Nebuchadnezzar Really Forget His Remarkable Dream?

Ellis T. Rasmussen gave the following helpful commentary on the king's dream: "In verse 5 the phrase 'is gone from me' should probably read 'is *certain* with me,' as the Persian word *azda* ('sure') is used. Note in verse 9 that the king makes the point that he knows



Nebuchadnezzar's dream was interpreted by Daniel.

what he dreamt; therefore if the interpreters can tell him the dream, he will know that *they* know what they are talking about and he will know whether he can have confidence in their interpretation or not!" (*An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings*, 2:92; see also Daniel 2:5a.)

(28-10) Daniel 2:17–19. Daniel and His Companions Preserved Their Lives by Obtaining Revelation from God

The response of Daniel and his friends at a time when their lives were in danger because of the king's sentence on all the wise men illustrates the application of a principle taught by President Harold B. Lee: "By faith in God you can be attuned to the Infinite and by power and wisdom obtained from your Heavenly Father harness the powers of the universe to serve you in your hour of need in the solution of problems too great for your human strength or intelligence" (in *Church News*, 15 Aug. 1970, p. 2).

(28-11) Daniel 2:26–30. "There Is a God in Heaven That Revealeth Secrets"

Though the king would have given Daniel credit for giving the interpretation of his dream, Daniel made it clear that it was not he, nor any of the wise men or soothsayers, who was able to determine the nature of the dream and its interpretation. Daniel testified that "there is a God in heaven" (Daniel 2:28), and it was by the power of that God that the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was made known. Daniel did not take credit to himself for what the Lord had done for his benefit. To do so would certainly have offended God (see D&C 59:21).

(28-12) Daniel 2:28. Did Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Pertain Only to the "Latter Days"?

The inspired interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that Daniel gave made it clear that the fulfillment of the king's dream would begin in the immediate future. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold" (v. 38). The dream revealed events that would take place over a long span of time. The culmination, however, was to take place in the last days. The Hebrew word that was used, *achariyth*, means "last or end" (James Strong, "A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible," in *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, p. 11). This definition, combined with the explanation given by Daniel and the added light of modern-day revelation (see D&C 65:2; 138:44), makes this clear.

(28-13) Daniel 2:31–45. What Were the Kingdoms Represented in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream?

President Ruder Clawson elaborated on Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream: "The . . . world of today is witness of the fact that the very things which the great image stood for have occurred so far as time has gone. History certifies to the fact that King Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. The Medes and Persians, an inferior kingdom to Babylon, were the arms and breast of silver. The Macedonian kingdom, under Alexander the Great, was the belly and thighs of brass; and the Roman kingdom under

the Caesars was the legs of iron. For mark you, later on the kingdom, or empire of Rome, was divided. The head of the government in one division was at Rome and the head of the government in the other division was at Constantinople. So these two great divisions represented the legs of iron. Finally, the Roman empire was broken up into smaller kingdoms, represented by the feet and toes of iron and clay." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1930, p. 32).

Elder Orson Pratt, in explaining why the toes were shown as being partly iron and partly clay, said that "the feet and toes were governments more modern to grow out of the iron kingdom [Roman Empire], after it should lose its strength. These are represented by the ten toes or ten kingdoms which should be partly strong and partly broken. They should not have the strength of the legs of iron, but they should be mixed with miry clay, indicating both strength and weakness." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 18:337.)

President Spencer W. Kimball further clarified the prophecy with the following explanation:

"Rome would be replaced by a group of nations of Europe represented by the toes of the image.

"With the history of the world delineated in brief, now came the real revelation. Daniel said:

"And in the days of these kings [that is, the group of European nations] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed . . .

"This is a revelation concerning the history of the world, when one world power would supersede another until there would be numerous smaller kingdoms to share the control of the earth.

"And it was in the days of these kings that power would not be given to men, but the God of heaven would set up a kingdom—the kingdom of God upon the earth, which should never be destroyed nor left to other people.

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was restored in 1830 after numerous revelations from the divine source; and this is the kingdom, set up by the God of heaven, that would never be destroyed nor superseded, and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that would become a great mountain and would fill the whole earth." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1976, p. 10.)

(28-14) Daniel 2:44–45. How Is It That the Kingdom Set Up by God Will Consume the Other Kingdoms?

Section 65 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells of the fulfillment of the rest of Daniel's prophecy. The Prophet Joseph Smith prayed that the ecclesiastical kingdom of God, which was established on the earth in his day, might roll forth that the future kingdom of heaven might come.

"During the millennium the *kingdom of God* will continue on earth, but in that day it will be both an *ecclesiastical* and a *political* kingdom. That is, the Church (which is the kingdom) will have the rule and government of the world given to it." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 416.)

That millennial kingdom can also be properly referred to as the kingdom of heaven, as Joseph Smith did in his inspired prayer recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 65. The establishment of that kingdom is what the Lord taught the Saints to pray for in the Lord's Prayer when He said, "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10; see also

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:230). The coming forth of the kingdom on the earth is what Daniel saw when the stone rolled forth and smote the image, eventually filling the whole earth.

President Brigham Young taught: "The Lord God Almighty has set up a kingdom that will sway the sceptre of power and authority over all the kingdoms of the world, and will never be destroyed, it is the kingdom that Daniel saw and wrote of. It may be considered treason to say that the kingdom which that Prophet foretold is actually set up; *that* we cannot help, but we know it is so, and call upon the nations to believe our testimony. The kingdom will continue to increase, to grow, to spread and prosper more and more. Every time its enemies undertake to overthrow it, it will become more extensive and powerful; instead of its decreasing, it will continue to increase, it will spread the more, become more wonderful and conspicuous to the nations, until it fills the whole earth." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 1:202–3.)

(28-15) Daniel 2:49. Daniel Prospered Because of His Righteousness

President Spencer W. Kimball summarized the qualities that Daniel possessed and the blessings his obedience to God brought him: "The gospel was Daniel's life. . . . In the king's court, he could be little criticized, but even for a ruler he would not drink the king's wine nor gorge himself with meat and rich foods. His moderation and his purity of faith brought him health and wisdom and knowledge and skill and understanding, and his faith linked him closely to his Father in heaven, and revelations came to him as often as required. His revealing of the dreams of the king and the interpretations thereof brought him honor and acclaim and gifts and high position such as many men would sell their souls to get." (In Conference Report, Mexico and Central America Area Conference 1972, p. 31.)

(28-16) Daniel 3:1–18. Three Hebrews Who Were True to God in Spite of Threats and Pressure

Daniel did not stand alone as an exemplary young man. His three companions demonstrated the same unswerving loyalty and devotion to God. Of them Elder Spencer W. Kimball said: "We remind ourselves of the integrity of the three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who like Daniel defied men and rulers, to be true to themselves and to keep faith with their faith. They were required by decree of the emperor to kneel down and worship a monumental image of gold which the king had set up. In the face of losing caste, of losing position, of angering the king, they faced the fiery furnace rather than to fail and deny their God. The cunningly devised scheme worked as the vicious planners expected. The dedication must have been exciting with the people from far and near attending. Had there ever been such an image? such a spectacle? Ninety feet of gold in the form of a man—what could be more scintillating, more sparkling? There must have been almost countless people milling in the streets and in the area where the gigantic image stood when the herald announced the procedure and the decree that all must kneel at the sound of the music and all must worship the image. Neither the cunning of the deceivers, the conspiring, cunning tricksters, nor the fear of the

king and what he could do to them, dissuaded the three courageous young men from their true path of rightness. When the prearranged sounds of the cornet, flute, harp and other instruments reverberated through the area and the masses of men and women everywhere filled their homes and the streets with kneeling worshippers of the huge golden image, three men refused to insult their true God. They prayed to God, and when confronted by the raging and furious emperor king, they courageously answered in the face of what could be certain death: [Daniel 3:17–18.]” (*Integrity*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [25 Feb. 1964], p. 18.)

(28-17) Daniel 3:19–23. The Casting of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the Furnace

To heat the furnace “seven times more than it was wont to be” (Daniel 3:19) is presumed to be an idiomatic way of saying that the furnace was to be heated much hotter than usual—to be heated as hot as it could be heated (see Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:578). “If the three were brought up to the furnace, it must have had a mouth above, through which the victims could be cast into it. When heated to an ordinary degree, this could be done without danger to the men who performed this service; but in the present case the heat of the fire was so great, that the servants themselves perished by it.” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 9:3:130.)

The king apparently viewed the events in the furnace through an opening at the bottom (see D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 692).



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were placed in a fiery furnace.

(28-18) Daniel 4:8–9. “The Spirit of the Holy Gods”

That Nebuchadnezzar recognized Daniel’s ability to receive revelation from God is clear from the events associated with Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s previous dream (see Daniel 2:46–47). The heathens believed that “the revelation of supernatural secrets belonged to the gods, and that the man who had this power must possess the spirit of the gods” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:3:147). Daniel’s spiritual powers, however, did not necessarily convert Nebuchadnezzar from his polytheistic beliefs or his belief in the supreme Babylonian god Bel. By acknowledging Daniel’s spiritual abilities, Nebuchadnezzar was not acknowledging Jehovah as the only or even the supreme god.

(28-19) Daniel 4:19. Why Was Daniel “Astonied”?

The word *astonied* is an archaic word that means “bewildered” or “filled with consternation or dismay.” Daniel was troubled because he knew that the message of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was not good. He knew he must announce to Nebuchadnezzar the judgments of God to come upon him. Nebuchadnezzar noticed Daniel’s concern and realized that Daniel had the interpretation. “He asks him, with friendly address, to tell him it without reserve. Daniel then communicates it in words of affectionate interest for the welfare of the king. The words, *let the dream be to thine enemies, etc.*, do not mean: *it is a dream, a prophecy, such as the enemies of the king might ungraciously wish* (Klief.), but: *may the dream with its interpretation be to thine enemies, may it be fulfilled to them or refer to them.*” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:3:154.)

(28-20) Daniel 4:27. “A Lengthening of Thy Tranquility”

Daniel counseled the king to reform his life, to repent of his sins, and to show greater mercy to the poor. The implication of Daniel’s statement is that if Nebuchadnezzar would do as he was counseled, he might receive divine favor and avert the threatened punishment, thus maintaining his prosperity of life. Mercy to the poor was mentioned as a prerequisite to obtaining forgiveness of sin. It is one of the most sincere evidences of repentance and submission to the Lord’s will. (Compare James 1:27.)

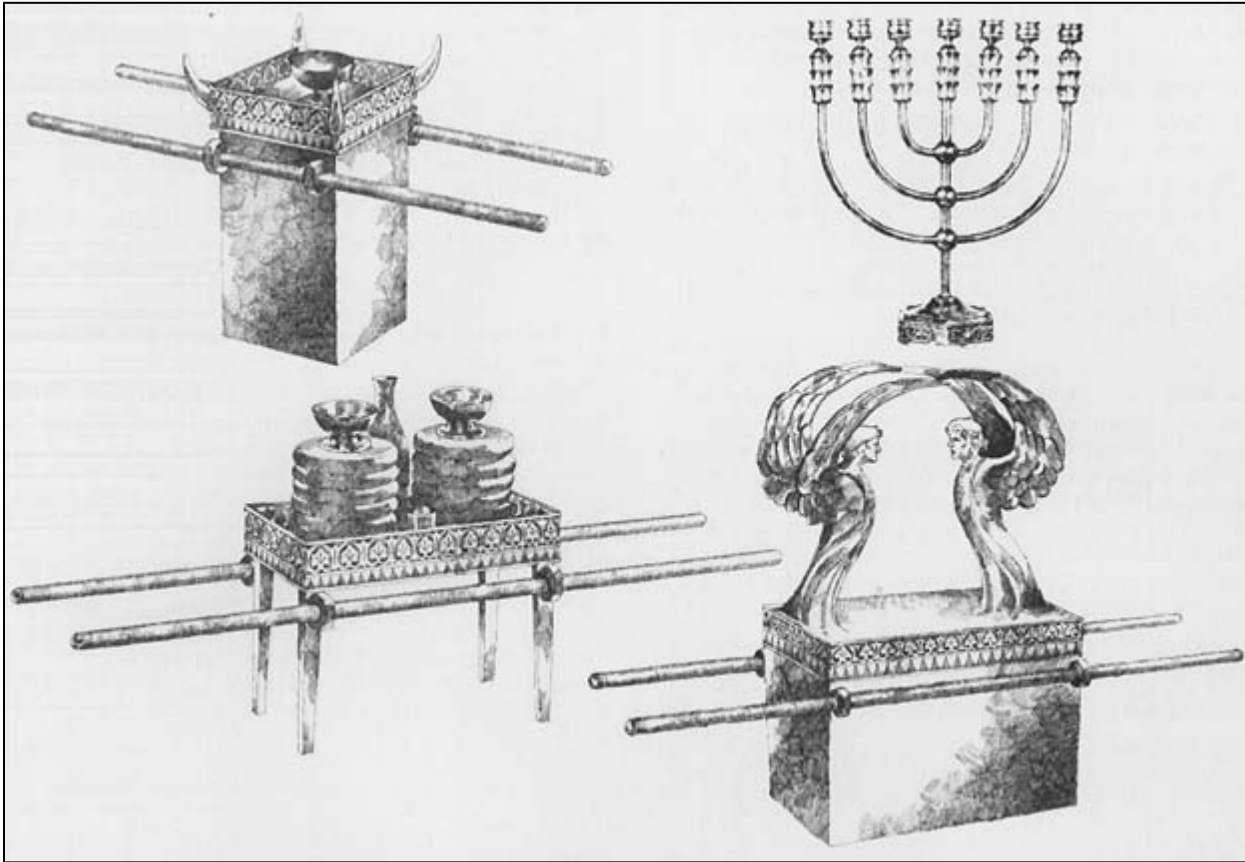
(28-21) Daniel 4:34–37. Nebuchadnezzar’s Praise of God

That Nebuchadnezzar praised and glorified God after his reason was restored to him indicates that he recognized his experience as a just punishment for his pride. It does not necessarily follow, however, that this experience caused his sincere repentance or conversion to the God of Daniel. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that Daniel had even that much influence on a man steeped in idolatry and heathen superstitions.

(28-22) Daniel 5:1. Belshazzar the King

Many scholars have questioned the validity of the statement that Belshazzar was a king in Babylon because “Belshazzar never reigned as sole king, and is never designated as king (*sharru*) in the cuneiform inscriptions. Furthermore, it is maintained that there is no evidence to show that Belshazzar ever ruled upon the throne as

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Vessels of the temple: altar of incense, golden candlestick, table of shewbread, and ark of the covenant

a subordinate to Nabonidus his father. In reply to these charges we may note, first of all, that the Aramaic word *malka* ('king') need not have the connotation of monarch or sole king (see R. D. Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, 1917, pp. 83–95). Furthermore, one of the cuneiform documents expressly states that Nabonidus entrusted the kingship to Belshazzar. . . . In all probability there was a coregency between Nabonidus and Belshazzar in which Belshazzar occupied a subordinate position. Since, however, he was the man upon the throne with whom Israel had to do, he is designated king in the book of Daniel. No valid objection can be raised against this usage." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 694.)

(28-23) Daniel 5:3. Drinking from the Vessels of the Temple

When the Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem, they "carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 24:13). As Keil and Delitzsch noted, during the feast the Babylonians "drank out of the holy vessels of the temple of the God of Israel to glorify . . . their heathen gods in songs of praise. In doing this they did not only place 'Jehovah on a perfect level with their gods' (Havernick), but raised them above the Lord of heaven, as Daniel (ver. 23) charged the king. The carrying away of the temple vessels to Babylon and placing them in the temple of Bel was a sign of the defeat of the God to whom these vessels were consecrated; . . . the use of

these vessels in the drinking of wine at a festival, amid the singing of songs in praise of the gods, was accordingly a celebrating of these gods as victorious over the God of Israel." (*Commentary*, 9:3:180.)

(28-24) Daniel 5:6. What Is Meant by the Phrase the "Joints of His Loins Were Loosed"?

The great fear that came upon the king is described in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible as: "His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together" (Daniel 5:6).

(28-25) Daniel 5:7. The Third Ruler in the Kingdom

The Hebrew word that is translated "third ruler" means "one of three" (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 694). The promise was that the interpreter of the writing would be made third in authority in the kingdom next to Nabonidus and Belshazzar. The scarlet (sometimes purple) clothing and the chain of gold mentioned in Daniel 5:7 were symbols of rank worn by high officials.

(28-26) Daniel 5:17. "Let Thy Gifts Be to Thyself"

Those who function under the influence of the Spirit of God have increased capabilities, not because of their own qualifications, but because of the power of God which they are privileged to use. They are servants in the Lord's hands who are to bless others and carry out

the Lord's will. Daniel knew this and neither deserved nor sought for earthly rewards for his role as an instrument in the hands of God.

(28-27) Daniel 5:25–29. The Interpretation of the Handwriting on the Wall

The handwriting on the wall indicated not only that the Babylonian kingdom would be overthrown but also the means by which it would be overthrown: "MENE, 'numbered', *i.e.* God has numbered . . . the days of the kingdom; TEKEL, a 'shekel', used both as a coin and as a weight, indicated that Belshazzar was weighed (in the balances) and found deficient; PERES, 'division', your kingdom is divided (*peres*) and given to the Medes and Persians (*paras*). The word *paras* would seem to point out that the Persians were the dominant power to whom Babylon would fall. When Daniel read the writing he read *and PARSIN* (v. 25), but in giving the interpretation he employed the form PERES (v. 28). . . . We have thus a play upon words in which the basic idea of division is linked with the name of the conqueror." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 694.)

(28-28) Daniel 5:29. Why Was Daniel Rewarded by the King When He Prophesied of the King's Destruction?

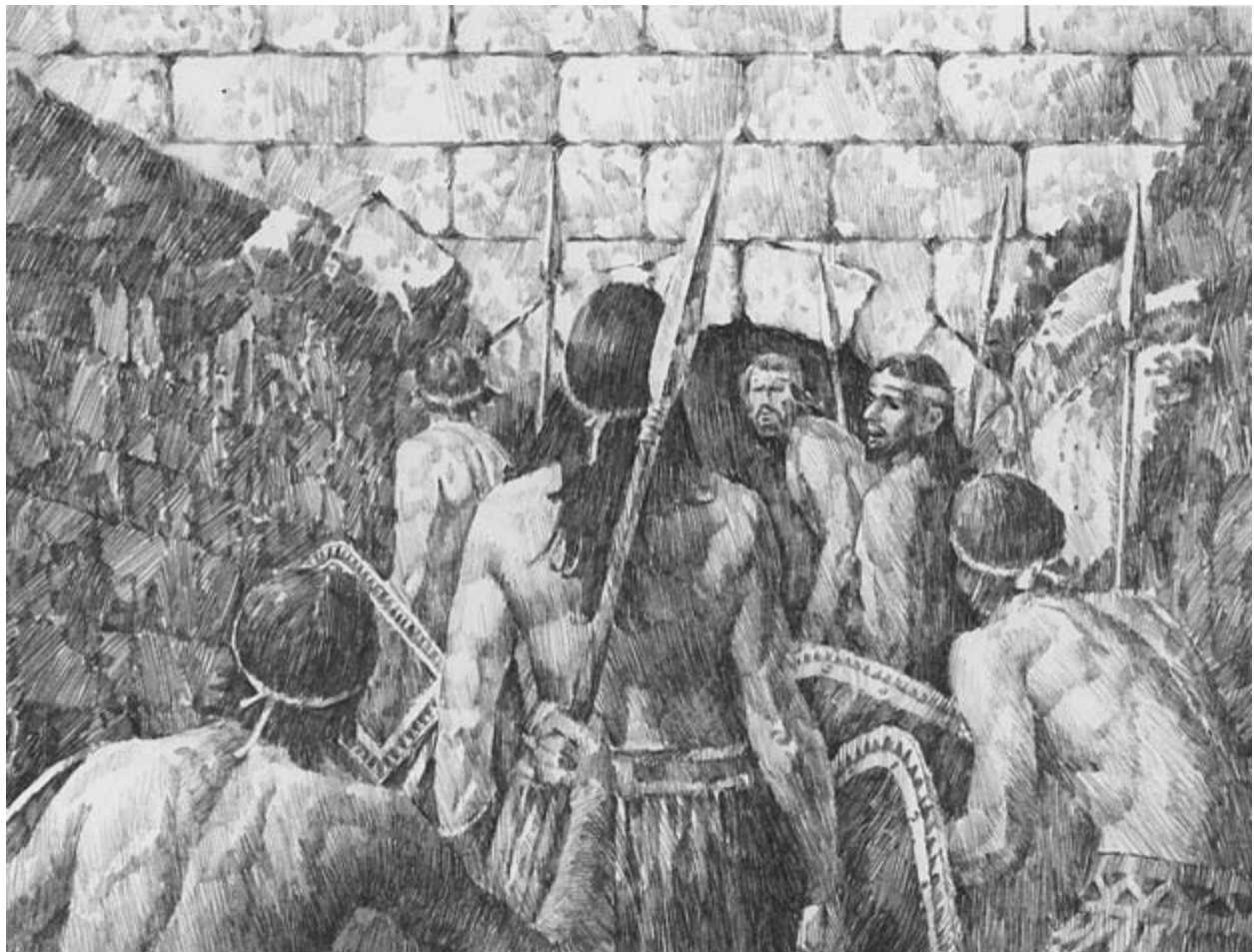
Although Belshazzar did not believe that Daniel's God was the only true God, it is likely that he, like

other heathens, believed in the gods and in revelations from God. He must have been deeply impressed with Daniel's ability to interpret the writing on the wall because he rewarded him handsomely. Keil and Delitzsch suggested another possible reason: "Belshazzar perhaps scarcely believed the threatened judgment from God to be so near as it actually was . . . and perhaps . . . he hoped to be able, by conferring honour upon Daniel, to appease the wrath of God" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:3:191).

(28-29) Daniel 5:30. Was Babylon Really Overthrown in One Night?

Babylon was surrounded by a massive wall over one hundred feet thick and three hundred feet high (see Enrichment G). To breach such a wall, even with constant sieging, would take months, and yet there is no hint in Daniel's record that the city was under siege at this time. Could a city of Babylon's size and fortifications be taken in one night?

Historical sources other than the Bible indicate that that is exactly what happened, supporting Daniel's record exactly. The ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, recorded that "Cyrus had previously caused the *Pallacopas*, a canal which ran west of the city, and carried off the superfluous water of the Euphrates into the lake of Nitocris, to be cleared out, in order to turn the river into it; which, by this means, was rendered so shallow



Cyrus diverted the water and marched his soldiers under the wall of Babylon.

that his soldiers were able to penetrate along its bed into the city." (In Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. "Babylon," p. 207.)

Thus the Persians marched *under* the massive walls. Harry Thomas Frank discussed the reasons why the city, even then, surrendered so easily: "Cyrus' orders preceded him to the city. No revenge was to be taken. The city was to have its normal life restored as quickly as possible. The gods which Nabonidus had taken from the equally well-treated provincial cities were to be restored at once. There was, above all, to be no terrorizing of the population. Indeed, Cyrus intended to change some of the policies of Nabonidus which had made him objectionable to his subjects. One can imagine the reception Cyrus received when he made his appearance in the capital a few weeks after its capture. He was not a conqueror. He was a liberator! And far from installing a foreign rule over the people, Cyrus personally took the role of Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, in the New Year Festival, thereby claiming for himself and his heirs the right to rule the Babylonian Empire by divine designation." (*Discovering the Biblical World*, p. 140.)



Canaan under Persian rule

(28-30) Daniel 6:1-3. Did the Medes and Persians Recognize the Promotion Given to Daniel by Belshazzar in the Last Hours of His Reign?

Keil and Delitzsch commented on this issue: "The successor [to Belshazzar] would be inclined toward its recognition [Daniel's promotion] by the reflection, that

by Daniel's interpretation of the mysterious writing from God the putting of Belshazzar to death appeared to have a higher sanction, presenting itself as if it were something determined in the councils of the gods, whereby the successor might claim before the people that his usurpation of the throne was rendered legitimate. Such a reflection might move him to confirm Daniel's elevation to the office to which Belshazzar had raised him." (*Commentary*, 9:3:190-91.)

Though the above may be true, Daniel's great capacity should not be discounted. A wise ruler would recognize and use a man of Daniel's stature.

(28-31) Daniel 6:10. Daniel's Response to a Heathen Decree

Those who are righteous do not fear other people. Their only desire is to serve and honor God. With the same faith that his brethren Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had shown in refusing to bow down to the idol, Daniel refused to follow the decree that condemned petitions to any god but the king. "This unalterable law of the Medes and Persians would have been terrifying to any man, but the faithful Daniel did not flinch. Was there any question what he should do? He could save his life by abandoning his prayers to the Living God. What was he to do? A man of integrity could not fail. Daniel was the soul of integrity." (Kimball, *Integrity*, p. 17.)

(28-32) Daniel 6:10. Why Did Daniel Pray Three Times a Day toward Jerusalem?

Solomon, in his dedicatory prayer of the temple in Jerusalem, referred to the people's praying "toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name" (1 Kings 8:44). The Prophet Joseph Smith once counseled the Twelve Apostles to "make yourselves acquainted with those men who like Daniel pray three times a day toward the House of the Lord" (*History of the Church*, 3:391). And President Wilford Woodruff, in the dedicatory prayer on the Salt Lake Temple, said: "Heavenly Father, when thy people shall not have the opportunity of entering this holy house to offer their supplications unto thee, and they are oppressed and in trouble, surrounded by difficulties or assailed by temptation, and shall turn their faces towards this thy holy house and ask thee for deliverance, for help, for thy power to be extended in their behalf, we beseech thee to look down from thy holy habitation in mercy and tender compassion upon them, and listen to their cries." (In James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, p. 142; emphasis added.)

This is not to suggest that the direction in which one faces when one prays has mystical significance, but, rather, that it is an attitude of spiritual "facing." To face the temple, which is the temporal representation of the House of God, suggests that one turns one's heart to the Lord and the covenants made in the temples to be more like Him. President Woodruff clarified this point in what he said next: "Or when the children of thy people, in years to come, shall be separated, through any cause, from this place, and *their hearts shall turn in remembrance of thy promises to this holy Temple*, and they shall cry unto thee from the depths of their affliction and sorrow to extend relief and deliverance to them,

we humbly entreat thee to turn thine ear in mercy to them; hearken to their cries, and grant unto them the blessings for which they ask." (In Talmage, *House of the Lord*, p. 142; emphasis added.)

(28-33) Daniel 6:24. Daniel's Accusers Cast into the Lions' Den

The term *or ever*, as used in Daniel 6:24, means "before." Some have attacked the cruelty of condemning the women and children, too. To an absolute monarch, however, it probably seemed the logical thing to do, for out of these families might come insurrection in the future. The lesson must be severe enough to warn any others who might be jealous of the king's favorite and most valuable servant. An absolute monarch would likely feel that any other course would slowly cause him to lose power.

(28-34) Daniel 6:28. Daniel Prospered

"He had served *five* kings: *Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus*. Few courtiers have had so long a reign, served so many masters without flattering any, been more successful in their management of public affairs, been so useful to the states where they were in office, or have been more owned of God, or have left such an example to posterity." (Clarke, *Commentary*, 4:590.)

(28-35) Daniel 7:1–28. What Was Represented by the Beasts Daniel Saw?

Like chapter 2, chapter 7 gives a pictorial representation of history: There are four successive empires, and then the kingdom of God is established. Chapter 7, however, seems to relate more to the establishment of the ecclesiastical aspects of the kingdom, whereas chapter 2 deals more with the political aspects of the kingdom of God.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the following about Daniel's vision of the beasts:

"You there see that the beasts are spoken of to represent the kingdoms of the world, the inhabitants whereof were beastly and abominable characters; they were murderers, corrupt, carnivorous, and brutal in their dispositions. The lion, the bear, the leopard, and the ten-horned beast represented the kingdoms of the world, says Daniel. . . .

" . . . The prophets do not declare that they saw a beast or beasts, but that they saw the *image* or *figure* of a beast. Daniel did not see an actual bear or a lion, but the images or figures of those beasts. The translation should have been rendered 'image' instead of 'beast,' in every instance where beasts are mentioned by the prophets. . . . When the prophets speak of seeing beasts in their visions, they mean that they saw the images, they being types to represent certain things. At the same time they received the interpretation as to what those images or types were designed to represent." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 289, 291.)

(28-36) Daniel 7:2–8. Must One Understand All the Prophetic Imagery Given in the Scriptures?

See the statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith quoted in Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 1:15–21.

(28-37) Daniel 7:4–8. What Is the Connection between the Four Beasts and Historical Events?

As mentioned in Daniel 7:17, the four beasts represented "four kings [or kingdoms] which shall arise out of the earth." The first, which was like a lion with eagles' wings, represented the Babylonian kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar. The lion and eagle are both supreme among beasts of their class. The head of gold in the dream of chapter 2 can be similarly compared. "What the gold is among metals and the head among the members of the body, that the lion is among beasts and the eagle among birds" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:3:223). The plucking of feathers (see Daniel 7:4) seems to have represented a deprivation of power to fly or the power to dominate and conquer. The change that gave it a man's heart is evidently a reference to the humanizing effect of Nebuchadnezzar's madness (see Daniel 4:34–37).

The second beast (see Daniel 7:2) represented the Median-Persian Empire, as did the breast and arms of silver in the image of chapter 2. The bear was considered next to the lion as the strongest among animals by the people of the ancient Middle East. The raising up on one side could represent the raising of the forefeet of the bear (standing on its hind feet) as when it goes after prey. "The Medo-Persian bear, as such, has . . . two sides: the one, the Median side, is at rest after the efforts made for the erection of the world-kingdom; but the other, the Persian side, raises itself up, and then becomes not only higher than the first, but also is prepared for new rapine." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:3:225.) The ribs held between the bear's teeth and its devouring "much flesh" (Daniel 7:5) signify the ferocity with which its dominion would be exerted.

The third kingdom corresponded to the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great. Wings signify power to move and extend influence. Heads signify governing power or the seat of government. The Grecian kingdom was extended greatly under Alexander and had power over much of the earth.

The fourth beast was not likened to an animal. It was, however, very strong and dreadful and broke into pieces the remains of the former kingdoms. It represented the Roman Empire and the forces of evil that were manifest through that empire. The ten horns are the kingdoms into which the Roman Empire was afterwards divided. They are similar to the ten toes of the great image described in Daniel 2. (See also Daniel 7:23–24.)

Though each of these beasts may be said to represent the worldly kingdoms mentioned, the representation probably was not just of their political dominion, but also of the evils upheld and perpetrated upon the world by their rule. The vision should not be thought of as wholly political, either, particularly in view of the "little horn" (v. 8). This symbol cannot be positively identified with any specific individual or kingdom of the world, but seems to be similar to the "beast [rising] out of the sea" that John saw (Revelation 13:1), which also made "war with the saints" (Revelation 13:7) as did this form (see Daniel 7:21–22, 25). The little horn represented a notable anti-Christ power that was to be raised up after the time of the Roman Empire, and it was to be different from the other ten kingdoms mentioned after the Roman kingdom. Daniel said that this horn would have power to make war with and hinder the Saints until the time of Christ's Second Coming (see Daniel 7:20–27).

Concerning this great evil power and the beast from which it arose, Sidney B. Sperry said:

"May I suggest that the last beast which Daniel saw, which was so terrible and which had a mouth speaking great things, (7:7, 8) is none other than the 'great and abominable church' of our modern scriptures. Let me make my point clear. Keep in mind that Daniel saw that 'the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire.' (7:11) In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning the destructive forces to be unleashed prior to the Second Advent, the Lord explains: [D&C 88:94].

"This evil power is doubtless the same one spoken of in the twenty-ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants and testified to by Ezekiel the prophet: [D&C 29:21; compare Ezekiel 38:14–23].

"The Book of Mormon also speaks at length concerning this evil force in the world that shall meet destruction. Notice a few of the words of Nephi: [1 Nephi 22:13–18].

"May I emphasize that even if the 'great and abominable church' is correctly identified as the power which is represented by Daniel's great beast, we do not at present fully comprehend the ramifications of it or the range of dominion it will have prior to its destruction." (*The Voice of Israel's Prophets*, pp. 260–61.)

(28-38) Daniel 7:9–14. Daniel Saw Adam, or the "Ancient of Days," and Also Christ Taking His Rightful Place As King over the Earth

Daniel's vision continued until he saw "thrones . . . cast down" (Daniel 7:9), that is, until the worldly governments lost their dominion (see vv. 12, 14, 18, 27). He then saw the establishment of the kingdom of heaven with Christ at its head. This kingdom would rule "all people, nations, and languages" forever (v. 14). Latter-day revelation teaches that eventually all worldly kingdoms will come to an end in preparation for the millennial Zion (see D&C 87:6). This seems to be what Daniel saw.

In an address to the Twelve Apostles, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained the name "Ancient of Days": "Daniel in his seventh chapter speaks of the Ancient of Days; he means the oldest man, our Father Adam, Michael, he will call his children together and hold a council with them to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man. He (Adam) is the father of the human family, and presides over the spirits of all men, and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this grand council. This may take place before some of us leave this stage of action. The Son of Man stands before him, and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him as holding the keys of the universe, but retains his standing as head of the human family." (*Teachings*, p. 157.)

(28-39) Daniel 7:13–14. What Will Happen at the Great Gathering at Adam-ondi-Ahman?

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained the teachings of Daniel about the great priesthood gathering to be held at Adam-ondi-Ahman: "Daniel speaks of the coming of Christ, and that day is near at hand. There will be a great gathering in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman; there will be a great council held. The Ancient



Adam-ondi-Ahman in Missouri

of Days, who is Adam, will sit. The judgment—not the final judgment—will be held, where the righteous who have held keys will make their reports and deliver up their keys and ministry. Christ will come, and Adam will make his report. At this council Christ will be received and acknowledged as the rightful ruler of the earth. Satan will be replaced. Following this event every government in the world . . . will have to become part of the government of God. Then righteous rule will be established. The earth will be cleansed; the wicked will be destroyed; and the reign of peace will be ushered in." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:13–14; see also D&C 78:15–16; 107:53–57; 116; Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 122, 158.)

(28-40) Daniel 7:14. The Saints Are Preparing the Kingdom in Which Christ Will Reign

In relating a personal experience, Elder LeGrand Richards taught of the importance of the work the Saints are doing in this dispensation and of its relationship to the eventual rule of Christ upon the earth:

"When I was president of the Southern States Mission, one of our missionaries preached on that dream of Nebuchadnezzar in one of our meetings where we had some investigators, and I stood at the door to greet them as they went out. A man came up and introduced himself as a minister, and he said, 'You don't mean to tell me that you think that the Mormon Church is that kingdom, do you?'

"And I said, 'Yes, sir, why not?'

"He said, 'It couldn't be.'

"I said, 'Why couldn't it?'

"He said, 'You can't have a kingdom without a king, and you don't have a king, so you don't have a kingdom.'

"'Oh,' I said, 'my friend, you didn't read far enough. You just read the seventh chapter of Daniel, where Daniel saw one like the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, "and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." (Dan. 7:14.)

"'Now,' I said, 'my friend, tell me how can the kingdom be given to him when he comes in the clouds of heaven if there is no kingdom prepared for him? That is what we Latter-day Saints are doing.'" (In Conference Report, Oct. 1975, pp. 76–77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 51.)

(28-41) Daniel 7:18, 22, 27. The Saints Will Possess the Kingdom

Daniel taught that the Saints will possess the kingdom after the Lord returns to take His rightful place at the head of that kingdom. It is necessary, however, for the Saints to prepare themselves to take possession of the kingdom.

Elder Daniel H. Wells indicated what the Saints must do to receive the kingdom: "I have often been asked the question, 'When will the kingdom be given into the hands of the Saints of the most high God;' and I have always answered it in this way: just so soon as the Lord finds that He has a people upon the earth who will uphold and sustain that kingdom, who shall be found capable of maintaining its interests and of extending its influence upon the earth. When he finds that he has such a people, a people who will stand firm and faithful to him, a people that will not turn it over into the lap of the devil, then, and not until then, will he give 'the kingdom' into the hands of the Saints of the most high, in its power and influence when it shall fill the whole earth. . . . It depends, in a great measure, upon the people themselves, as to how soon the kingdom spoken of by Daniel shall be given into the hands of the Saints of God. When we shall prove ourselves faithful in every emergency that may arise, and capable to contend and grapple with every difficulty that threatens our peace and welfare, and to overcome every obstacle that may tend to impede the progress of the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth, then our heavenly Father will have confidence in us, and then he will be able to trust us." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 23:305.)

(28-42) Daniel 8. What Was the Significance of Daniel's Vision of the Ram and the He-Goat?

Though much of what Daniel saw in this vision is now history, it is not part of the Old Testament. Most of what he recorded in this chapter was fulfilled between 500 B.C. and the time of Christ, a period with few Old Testament writings describing it. This history is summarized in Enrichment K.

The vision in Daniel 8 focuses on the second and third empires spoken of in Daniel 7. The two-horned ram symbolized the Median-Persian Empire, and the horns (Daniel 8:3) represented the kings of Media and Persia (see verse 20). The one horn which came up last and was higher than the other represented the Persians, who finally dominated the alliance and assumed power over the Medians. The goat that came and "smote the ram, . . . brake his two horns . . . [and] cast him down to the ground" (v. 7) signified Alexander the Great and his Greek Empire. (The word *choler* used in verse 7 means "anger" or "wrath.") Alexander himself fit the description of the "great horn" (verse 21). At age thirty-two, Alexander died in the height of his power. "When he was strong, the great horn was broken" (v. 8). After he died, his four chief generals carved up the empire, and they seem to be the four notable horns that came up instead of the one (see vv. 8, 22). The "little horn" (v. 9) that came from one of them has generally been interpreted to represent Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), who ruled Syria 175–164 B.C. He persecuted

the Jews bitterly, declaring observance of the Mosaic law to be a capital offense. (See Enrichment K.) George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl wrote: "That this 'little horn' represents Antiochus Epiphanes is a view entertained by most ancient writers, but this does not exclude the probability that the 'great and abominable power' previously referred to, and which is the 'church of the devil' is pointed to by the Prophet as necessary to the complete fulfillment of his prediction. What Antiochus was to the Jews during the time of the Maccabees, the 'church of the devil' has been to the 'Church of Christ' in all ages." (*Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, p. 13.)

Though Antiochus IV may fit the conditions described in the prophecy, he seems to have been a type of those who function through the power of Satan and seek to "cast down" the "stars of heaven" (the children of God—see Job 38:7; Isaiah 14:13; Revelation 12:4) and seek to "magnify" themselves against the "Prince of princes" (Daniel 8:25), who is Christ. Antiochus IV took away the daily sacrifice of the temple and cast down the place of the Lord's sanctuary (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 12, chap. 5, par. 4). Similar events occurred during the Roman era after the coming of Christ. Elder Parley P. Pratt: "Now, in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgression of the Jewish nation was come to the full, the Roman power destroyed the Jewish nation, took Jerusalem, caused the daily sacrifice to cease, and not only that but afterwards destroyed the mighty and holy people, that is, the apostles and primitive Christians, who were slain by the authorities of Rome" (*A Voice of Warning*, p. 16; see also the discussion of other aspects of the ram-goat prophecy found there).

That this prophecy refers to more than just the time up through the Maccabean period is also indicated by two phrases in Daniel 8:19. The phrase "in the last end of the indignation" means "in the latter period of indignation, or in the last days" (Daniel 8:19a). The phrase in verse 26, "it shall be for many days," means "pertains to many days hereafter" (Daniel 8:26a).

(28-43) Daniel 8:16. Who Is Gabriel and Why Would He Be Sent to Give Daniel Understanding of His Vision?

The messenger sent to Daniel was the ancient prophet Noah. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained the relationship that Noah has to the human family and thus gave great insight into why he was directly associated with events on the earth after his mortal ministry: "The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed, as in Gen. i:26, 27, 28. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael the Archangel, spoken of in the Scriptures. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in his day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held keys first on earth, and then in heaven." (*History of the Church*, 3:385–86.)



Noah, as Gabriel, appeared to Mary.

(28-44) Daniel 9:1–19. Daniel’s Supplications on Behalf of His People

Sperry gave the following insight to Daniel’s prayer: “It appears that sometime during the first year of Darius the Mede, Daniel was meditating over the Scriptures, more particularly those writings of Jeremiah having to do with the period of the Babylonian Captivity. He was especially concerned with the time of completion of the seventy years of exile predicted by Jeremiah, (Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10) and the restoration of his people to their own land. A careful study of 2 Chronicles 36:21–23; Ezra 1:1 ff., the passages in Jeremiah, and Daniel 9:1, 2 would seem to lead inevitably to the conclusion that Daniel felt that the seventy years of his people’s captivity was over and that they should be restored. The prophet probably reasoned as follows: Babylon, the power that had brought about the captivity is now fallen, and Persia is in the first year of its rule. (539 B.C.) It is now seventy years or nearly so since I and my family, not to mention many other Jews, were taken into captivity. (609/608 B.C.) What did Jeremiah mean by seventy years of desolation and the punishment of the king of Babylon? (Jer. 25:11, 12) In view of the fact that my people have not yet been restored, I shall inquire of the Lord and confess my people’s sins.

“The prophet then earnestly besought the Lord ‘by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.’ (9:3) He confessed the sins of his people and the justice of God in punishing them, but called upon Him to set His face toward Jerusalem and remember His people.” (*Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, pp. 265–66.)

As Daniel prayed, Gabriel appeared to him, talked with him, and gave him understanding of the Lord’s designs concerning His people.

(28-45) Daniel 9:24–27. Gabriel’s Explanation of the Seventy Weeks

The Hebrew word that is commonly translated *weeks* would more properly be translated *sevens*. It means a period divided into sevens. The phrase “seventy weeks” thus refers to seventy periods of sevens. These periods of seven could be days, weeks, months, years,

or even periods of unspecified duration. Because of this variation, it is difficult to tie Gabriel’s explanation to specific historical time periods, but many attempts have been made to do that, resulting in several differing interpretations of the passage. Sperry called these verses “one of the most difficult passages in all of the Old Testament” (*Voice of Israel’s Prophets*, p. 266).

Though the time periods mentioned are difficult to identify, the context and several phrases in the passage indicate that the passage has to do with a period in which the salvation of Daniel’s people is to be accomplished. Daniel 9:24 is undoubtedly a reference to the coming of Christ and His Atonement, by which forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God through repentance would be made possible. By completing the mission His Father sent Him to accomplish, Christ fulfilled the law and the words of the prophets concerning His coming, and thus did He “seal up [make sure] the vision and prophecy” (v. 24). Verse 25 refers to the time between the return of the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah. Verse 26 makes reference to the Messiah being “cut off, but not for himself,” which seems to be an allusion to His Crucifixion. The rest of the chapter describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and parallels very closely the message of Matthew 24:15 and Joseph Smith’s inspired revision of that verse (see JS—M 1:12). The reference to confirming the covenant for one week (see Daniel 9:27), however, has not been satisfactorily explained and may make problematic the explanation given above.

(28-46) Daniel 10:5–8. The Appearance of the Lord to Daniel

Daniel tried to describe the glory and majesty of the Lord. His description is very much like that given by other prophets in similar circumstances. Compare this passage with Ezekiel 1:26–28; Revelation 1:13–15; D&C 110:2–3.

Being in the presence of the Lord drained Daniel of his strength. Other prophets have also had similar experiences (compare Moses 1:9–10; JS—H 1:20).

(28-47) Daniel 10:13. Adam and Noah Appeared to Daniel

Previous reference has been made to a visitation of Gabriel (Noah) to Daniel (see Notes and Commentary on Daniel 8:16). This chapter refers to Michael, who is Adam (see Smith, *Teachings*, p. 157).

(28-48) Daniel 10:13. Who Is the Prince of the Kingdom of Persia?

That Adam came to assist the messenger in contending with the prince of the kingdom of Persia suggests that the prince was not a mortal leader in Persia but was the leader of the evil forces that supported the unrighteous dominion of the kingdoms of the world. If that reasoning is correct, then Satan or one of his hosts is the prince spoken of. Other scriptural passages record instances of Adam’s intervening to support and sustain righteous individuals in contention with Satan (see Jude 1:9; D&C 128:20).

(28-49) Daniel 10:14. What Did the Messenger Come to Make Daniel Understand?

The messenger said that he had come to make Daniel understand what would befall his people “in the latter days.” He also said that the vision was “for many days” (Daniel 10:14). The content of the next two chapters indicates that what was given to Daniel was not an account of the latter days only but was also an account of things from Daniel’s time extending far into the future, including the latter days.

(28-50) Daniel 11:1–45. Daniel’s Vision of Successive Kings, Wars, and Conflicts

It is clear from the sketchy way in which the prophecy deals with the events of the time period covered in this chapter that Daniel’s intention was not to emphasize the history but only to give it as a background in order to indicate its effects upon the Lord’s people. As Keil and Delitzsch wrote: “The prophecy does not furnish a prediction of the historical wars of the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies, but an ideal description of the war of the kings of the north and the south in its general outlines, whereby, it is true, diverse special elements of the prophetic announcement have historically been fulfilled, but the historical reality does not correspond with the contents of the prophecy in anything like an exhaustive manner” (*Commentary*, 9:3:450).

The lack of direct correspondence between the chapter and history seems to indicate that Daniel did not intend to present a detailed chronology of future events but rather to give an overview of some of the main events that would influence the Lord’s people. The following statement suggests that some of the events prophesied of in this chapter may have been given as indicators of the nature of the conflict between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. That is, they were types of future events: “By the war

of these two kingdoms [the Ptolemaic and Seleucid] for the sovereignty, not merely were the covenant land and the covenant people brought in general into a sorrowful condition, but they also were the special object of a war which typically characterizes and portrays the relation of the world-kingdom to the kingdom of God. This war arose under the Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes to such a height, that it formed a prelude of the war of the time of the end. The undertaking of this king to root out the worship of the living God and destroy the Jewish religion, shows in type the great war which the world-power in the last phases of its development shall undertake against the kingdom of God.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 9:3:426–27.)

Several things Daniel mentioned seem to be dualistic, having application to more than one period of time. The “abomination that maketh desolate” in Daniel 11:31 is one example of this dualism. Though this verse could quite properly be interpreted to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (which has been the conclusion of many scholars), the “abomination of desolation” was also mentioned by the Lord in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70 (see JS—M 1:12). It has also been applied to destructions which are still in the future (see JS—M 1:32).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote about the abomination of desolation mentioned by Daniel:

“These conditions of desolation, born of abomination and wickedness, were to occur *twice* in fulfillment of Daniel’s words. The first was to be when the Roman legions under Titus, in 70 A.D. laid siege to Jerusalem, destroying and scattering the people, leaving not one stone upon another in the desecrated temple, and spreading such terror and devastation as has seldom if ever been equalled on earth. . . .

“Then, speaking of the last days, . . . our Lord said: ‘And again shall the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, be fulfilled.’ ([JS—M] 1:31–32.) That is: Jerusalem again will be under siege. . . . It will be during this siege that Christ will come, the wicked will be destroyed, and the millennial era commenced.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 12.)

It is possible that in the prophetic dualism Daniel showed near-future and far-future events with the same image. Much in Daniel 11 suggests the future battle of Armageddon (see Enrichment I), but there are also details that seem related to the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. They could also relate to the fall of Judah to Rome.

Some have used Daniel 12:1, which says that this would be a time of trouble such as had never before been seen, to mean the battle of Armageddon. The language of this verse is reminiscent of Joel 2:2 and Revelation 16:18, which are prophecies of Armageddon. The Savior, however, specifically applied Daniel 12:1 to the fall of Judah in A.D. 70 (see JS—M 1:18). Further, the Doctrine and Covenants describes Michael as leading the armies of God *after* the Millennium (see D&C 88:110–16). Others have noted that the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus was the most deliberate and savage of their history to that point. Which is correct? Were these terrible times fulfilled in 167 B.C. or A.D. 70, or are they yet future, either before the



Persia fell to Alexander the Great.

Millennium in Armageddon or afterwards? Given the dualistic nature of prophecy in the Old Testament, it is very possible that all four answers are correct.

(28-51) Daniel 12:4. Increase of Knowledge in the Last Days

Concerning the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy about an increase of knowledge, President Spencer W. Kimball observed: "Nineteenth century theologians thought they saw the fulfillment of these predictions in the coming of the steam engine, the sewing machine, the motor car. What they saw was but the dim beginnings of the most spectacular increase of knowledge since men first dwelt upon the earth. Could they emerge from their graves today and behold a giant rocket in flight, a man-made satellite in orbit, and moving pictures of the moon or Mars appearing on a TV set, a famous choir in South Dakota singing to much of the earth through the satellite off in space, they would recognize in all these and numerous other space-age marvels a fulfillment far beyond their expectations but nonetheless valid for all of that." (Talk given at the dedication of the Language Training Mission [Provo, Utah, 27 Sept. 1976], p. 5.)

(28-52) Daniel 12:7-13. "How Long Shall It Be to the End of These Wonders?"

The interpretation of the time periods mentioned in these verses has not been revealed by the Lord as yet. Numerous calculations and formulas have been put forward, each in their turn to be proven wrong.

William Miller, a founder of the Adventist movement, predicted Christ's coming in 1844, which prediction Joseph Smith declared to be false (see Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 340-41). Miller's calculations came from an interpretation of this passage in Daniel. Time and again people have thought they had the key and enticed others to believe, only to reap disappointment. Even today there are those who predict earthquakes and great calamities occurring on specific dates, based on this passage in Daniel, and sadly, they still entice others to believe and follow.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that if the Lord did not give the key for interpreting a symbol or image He employed, He would not hold His children responsible for it (see Notes and Commentary on Ezekiel 1:15-21). For reasons not at present known, the Lord has not revealed the key for interpreting this passage, and, until He does so, speculation and calculation are pointless.

POINTS TO PONDER

(28-53) A Lesson of Faith

What does the life of Daniel suggest about the ability of a Saint to serve in public office and still not compromise gospel standards? Could he have survived without divine intervention? When does God intervene? What are the conditions of intervention? Can He intervene without the unusual circumstances such as were associated with His intervention for Daniel?

What lessons about adhering to one's standards can be learned from the experience of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego recorded in Daniel 3? Note especially verses 28-29. How might adhering to your standards affect those persons who do not feel as you do? Read verses 25-28 and consider Daniel's experience related in chapter 6. Then ask yourself these questions.

A great blessing from the Lord came to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego because of their loyalty to God. They had supported the Lord and He then supported them in their time of need. Elder Spencer W. Kimball spoke of their integrity:

"Bound securely in their inflammable clothes, they were consigned to the fiery death which no mere man could survive, but on the morning the king Nebuchadnezzar himself in astonishment and awe found four personages in the furnace as he said:

[Daniel 3:25.] At the command of the king, they came forth unburned, unhurt, not even a hair of their heads singed and no smell of fire on their clothes. INTEGRITY! The promises of eternal life from God supersede all promises of men to greatness, comfort, immunities. These men of courage and integrity were saying:

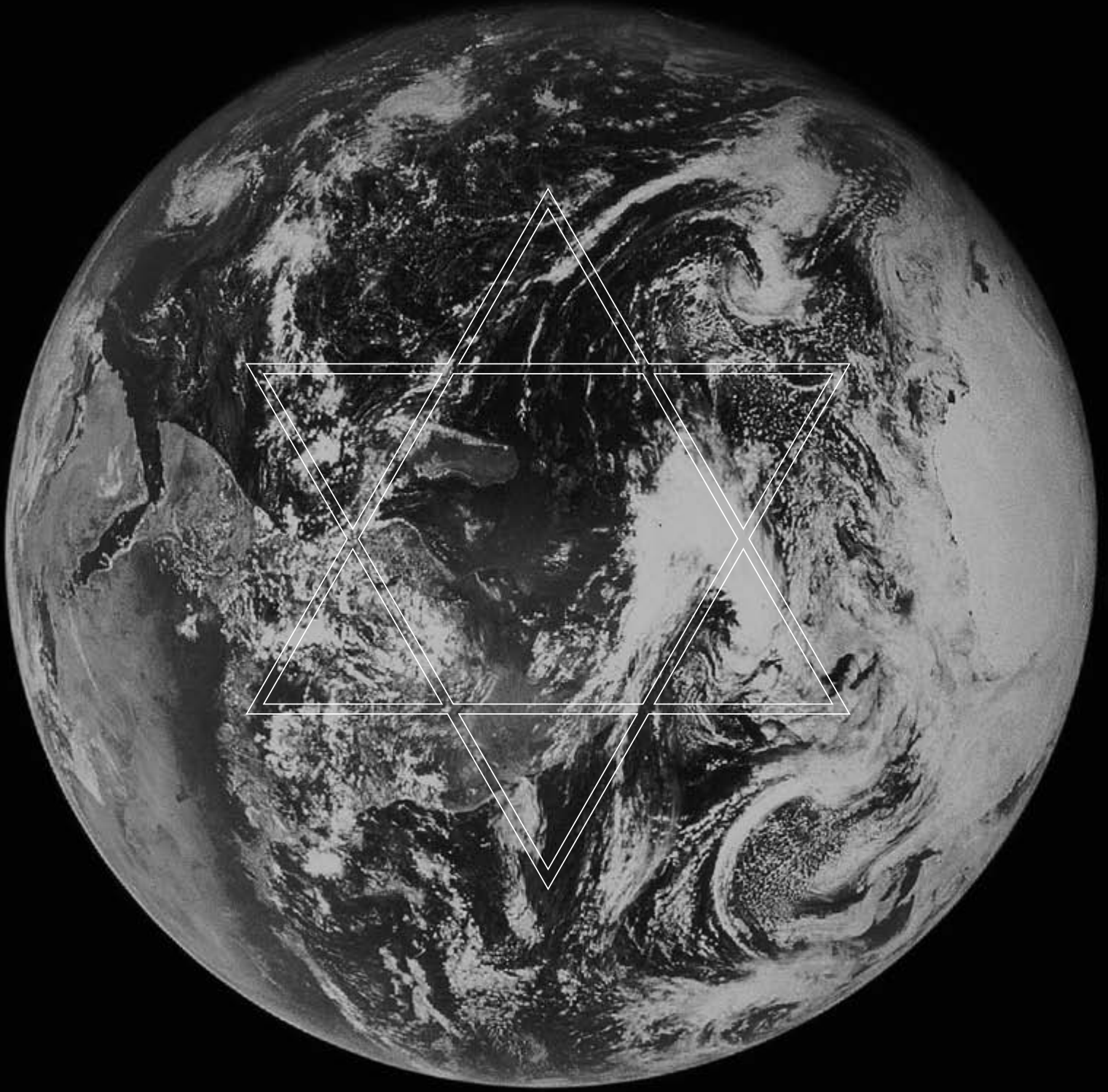
"We do not have to live, but we must be true to ourselves and God,' and it reminds us of the more modern man of integrity, Abraham Lincoln, who said: 'I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true; I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have.'

"As these brave men were threatened they did not know that Shakespeare, long centuries later, was to say:

"There is no terror in your threats: for I am armed so strong in honesty that they pass by me as the idle wind, which I respect not.' [Julius Caesar, act 4, scene 3.]

"Integrity in man should bring inner peace, sureness of purpose, and security in action. Lack of integrity brings disunity, fear, sorrow, unsureness." (*Integrity*, p. 19.)

What is the message of Belshazzar's experience in Daniel 5? Compare this chapter with 2 Nephi 28:7-8 and JS—M 1:41-55. Could you ever be in a position similar to that Belshazzar was in?



The Persian Empire, the Return of the Jews, and the Diaspora

(J-1) New Masters for the House of Israel

When the Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken captive by Assyria in 721 B.C., Assyria ruled most of the known world. Yet, within a few short decades, the Assyrian Empire had crumbled before the onslaught of the Babylonians. Under Nebuchadnezzar Babylonia became a world empire, inheriting for the most part territories and peoples conquered by Assyria. If these peoples resisted their new masters, Nebuchadnezzar responded swiftly and savagely. So fell Judah in 586 B.C. Though the Lord used the conquering empires as scourges in His hand to punish rebellious and backsliding Israel and Judah, once they had fulfilled their purpose they too came to a swift end.

Nebuchadnezzar's vigorous rule in Babylon was finished in 562 B.C. He was the last great Chaldean ruler, and at his death the empire's decline was rapid. The Babylonians' own wickedness brought swift decline. Nebuchadnezzar was followed by Amil-Marduk (called Evil-merodach in 2 Kings 25:27), who ruled for less than two years. Neriglissar, a brother-in-law to Evil-merodach, ruled for only four years. Labashi-Murduk, son of Neriglissar, was deposed after nine months. Nabonidus, a leader of the priestly party, ruled for sixteen years, from 555 to 539 B.C., but he spent most of his time at the Oasis of Teima in Arabia. Affairs of state in Babylon were left in the hands of Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus. Under Belshazzar, even the people of Babylon became disgusted with their corrupt nation.

As long as the mighty stag in the forest is erect and strong, its enemies are held at bay. But at the slightest sign of weakness, the wolves move in for the kill. So it is with empires, and Babylon was reeling. The predators were waiting. East and north of the Persian Gulf, two nations were coming to power: the Medes and the Persians. Uniting under the direction of Cyrus, the Median-Persian alliance turned toward Babylon. Cyrus was to have a profound effect on the history of the house of Israel and the world. One historian noted the significance of this man:

"Cyrus the Great emerged in history in 559 B.C. as ruler of the little province of Anshan, a district in northwestern Elam just south of Media and east of the Zagros Mountains. Anshan was then under the overlordship of Media. When Cyrus revolted against his overlord Astyages, the Median army went over to him in a body, surrendering Astyages as prisoner. Cyrus apparently was the voluntary choice of the Medes as their king. The empire's capital, Ecbatana, with all its treasure, came into possession of Cyrus practically without a blow. Thus within ten years Cyrus made

himself master of the Median empire comprising modern Persia, northern Assyria, Armenia, and Asia Minor as far west as the river Halys. [See Maps.]

"After two years spent in organizing the empire Cyrus moved westward, bent on conquest. After conquering northern Mesopotamia he attacked and defeated the fabulously rich Croesus, king of Lydia, whose kingdom extended from the river Halys [in Turkey] to the Aegean Sea [in Greece]. . . .

"Returning in 539 B.C., Cyrus advanced against Babylon, which opened its gates to him without a battle. [According to Daniel, Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall telling him of the fall of Babylon the very night before Cyrus entered the city and brought an end to the Babylonian empire (see Daniel 5).] Indeed, [Cyrus] seems to have been welcomed by the populace as a friend and benefactor. Thus Cyrus became master of all western Asia.

"The fall of Babylon marked the end of Semitic world power. With the triumph of Cyrus, a new race, the Indo-European, came into world dominion and the political destiny of the world was thenceforth in the hands of that race. This, therefore, marks a new and very important watershed in Biblical history.

"Cyrus was a born ruler of men. He inaugurated a new policy in the treatment of conquered peoples. Instead of tyrannizing over them and holding them in subjection by brute force, he treated his subjects with consideration and won them as his friends. He was particularly considerate of the religions of conquered peoples. The effect of this policy was to weld his subjects to him in a loyalty which made his reign an era of peace." (Elmer W. K. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*, pp. 348-49.)

This revolution in policy was to have a profound effect on the history of the world and particularly on Jewish history, for when Cyrus marched into Babylon, the Jews were still in exile there.

(J-2) Cyrus Was Raised Up by the Lord to Free the Jews

Babylon fell to Cyrus in 539 B.C. Shortly thereafter, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-11, Cyrus decreed throughout his empire that any captive Jews in Babylonia who desired to could return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Cyrus even allowed the vessels of gold and silver stolen by Nebuchadnezzar's troops to be returned.

What motivated Cyrus to make such a liberal proclamation? While Cyrus may have been influenced by the religion of his gods (see Ezra 1:7), including the emerging Zoroastrianism, to have respect for the God of Judah, it appears that Cyrus was motivated by the

Spirit of the Lord to send the Jews back to their homeland. Josephus wrote:

“In the first year of the reign of Cyrus, which was the seventieth from the day that our people were removed out of their own land into Babylon, God commiserated [mourned] the captivity and calamity of these poor people, according as he had foretold to them by Jeremiah the prophet, before the destruction of the city, that after they had served Nebuchadnezzar and his posterity, and after they had undergone that servitude seventy years, he would restore them again to the land of their fathers, and they should build their temple, and enjoy their ancient prosperity. And these things God did afford them; for he stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia: ‘Thus saith Cyrus the king: Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea.’

“This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: ‘My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.’ This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighbourhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 11, chap. 1, pars. 1–2.)

The prophecy of Isaiah alluded to by Josephus and implied in Ezra 1:2 is found in Isaiah 44:28–45:1.

Adam Clarke suggested: “It is very probable that when Cyrus took Babylon he found *Daniel* there, who had been long famed as one of the wisest ministers of state in all the East; and it is most likely that it was this person who pointed out to him the prophecy of Isaiah, and gave him those farther intimations relative to the Divine will which were revealed to himself” (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:730).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson spoke of the contributions of Cyrus:

“King Cyrus lived more than five hundred years before Christ and figured in prophecies of the Old Testament mentioned in 2 Chronicles and the book of Ezra, and by the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel. The Bible states how ‘the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia.’ (2 Chron. 36:22.) Cyrus restored certain political and social rights to the captive Hebrews, gave them permission to return to Jerusalem, and directed that Jehovah’s temple should be rebuilt.



Elder Ezra Taft Benson

“Parley P. Pratt, in describing the Prophet Joseph Smith, said that he had ‘the boldness, courage, temperance, perseverance and generosity of a Cyrus.’ (*Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* [Deseret Book Company, 1938], p. 46.)

“President Wilford Woodruff said:

“Now I have thought many times that some of those ancient kings that were raised up, had in some respects more regard for the carrying out of some of these principles and laws, than even the Latter-day Saints have in our day. I will take as an ensample Cyrus. . . . To trace the life of Cyrus from his birth to his death, whether he knew it or not, it looked as though he lived by inspiration in all his movements. He began with that temperance and virtue which would sustain any Christian country or any Christian king. . . . Many of these principles followed him, and I have thought many of them were worthy, in many respects, the attention of men who have the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 22, p. 207.)

“God, the Father of us all, uses the men of the earth, especially good men, to accomplish his purposes. It has been true in the past, it is true today, it will be true in the future.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, pp. 48–49.)

(J-3) The First Return of the Jews

How did the Jews react to Cyrus’s edict? One writer noted that “not many Jewish exiles proved eager to rush back to Palestine. A half century in Babylonia had led the majority to sink their roots deeply in the land of their

enforced adoption. Most of them had become bound to the new land by ties of marriage and friendship and by strong business connections. Moreover there had grown up in Babylonia a generation which knew not Palestine and for such Jews Judea, no longer an attractive place to live in, had no appeal. The pull of a powerful sentimental attachment was needed to induce any of them to return to Palestine and few felt this. Accordingly, the greatest difficulty was encountered in arousing enough enthusiasm to make up a party for the first returning group." (Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*, p. 350.)

The first group of returning exiles arrived in Judea sometime after 536 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel or (Zorobabel), a member of the royal Davidic line (see 1 Chronicles 3:19), and Joshua (or Jeshua), a priest of the lineage of Zadok. (Zadok was the high priest at the dedication of Solomon's temple.) The first return somewhat resembled a religious crusade. It consisted of forty to fifty thousand people. Small groups of exiles continued to come for the next century from Babylonia, but the majority of Jews did not return, and for centuries there was a greater number of Jews in Babylon than in the Holy Land.

A person known in the book of Ezra as Sheshbazzar (see Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14, 16) was designated as the governor of this Holy Land colony. Scholars dispute whether Sheshbazzar was the same person as Zerubbabel. If Sheshbazzar was another person, as indicated in 1 Esdras 6:18 of the Apocrypha, then he mysteriously vanished, since Zerubbabel soon took center stage in Jerusalem.

When the Jews returned to Israel, they found the land inhabited by Samaritans, a people whose name came from the city of Samaria, which had been the capital of the Northern Kingdom. When the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria in 721 B.C., only a few of the poorest class of Israelites were left in the land. The Assyrians brought other peoples to inhabit the land, and they intermarried with the remaining Israelites. They adopted some forms of the worship of Jehovah, but they mixed them with pagan ideas. The Jews in the Southern Kingdom viewed these Samaritans as being not only impure Israelites but pagans as well.

The Jews returning from Babylonia were eager to reinstitute the official worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem. Their first act was to repair the altar of burnt offering and to renew the regular morning and evening sacrifices. They then observed the feast of Tabernacles and other feasts in routine succession. (See Ezra 3:1-6.)

Under the direction of Zerubbabel, the Jews repaired the altar and began to rebuild the temple. The Samaritans asked to join in the project, saying that they had been offering sacrifice to Jehovah since the days of the Assyrian conquest (see Ezra 4:1-2). The Jews flatly refused their help, and the Samaritans in anger openly opposed the project (see Ezra 4:3-5). Because of this interference from the Samaritans and because of indifference that arose among the Jews (see Haggai 1:2-6), the temple building was put off until the second year of the reign of Darius I, about 520 B.C.

(J-4) The Second Temple

The resumption of the temple construction was inspired by two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah (see

Ezra 5:1), whose brief writings are preserved in the Old Testament. The local governor and the leaders of Samaria attempted to obstruct the project. The Jews appealed to Darius, eventually proving that they were doing only what Cyrus had granted them permission to do. So they were allowed to continue their project (see Ezra 5-6). The temple was finished in 515 B.C. This temple is known either as the second temple (Solomon's was the first) or the temple of Zerubbabel. The second temple did not compare in splendor to the temple of Solomon, for the people were very poor at the time they built it.

There is no mention of Zerubbabel after the temple was completed. After his time, the leadership of the community was held by the priests. This theocratic government was permitted by the Persians and for a time by Alexander the Great.

(J-5) The Return of the Jews under Ezra and Nehemiah

Not much is known of the state of Jewish affairs between the completion of the temple in 515 B.C. and the appearance in Jerusalem of Ezra and Nehemiah and the colonies that came with them. Nehemiah's appearance at Jerusalem can be firmly dated at 445 B.C. The date of Ezra's mission is disputed. Some scholars date Ezra's journey before that of Nehemiah, some after. The scriptures seem to indicate that Ezra's group came to Jerusalem before Nehemiah. Another source states that Ezra came in 458 B.C. (see J. D. Douglas, ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Persia," p. 1199).

In any event, there is a span of about three generations between the first return and the return of Ezra and Nehemiah. During this period, Persian culture reached its greatest height, as evidenced by the impressive ruins standing at Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire. The luxury of the Persian court is described in the book of Esther.

Little is known about Jewish life during this period. Politically the Jews were ruled by Persian officers, but from their own point of view, and in general practice, they maintained a theocracy ruled by God's anointed high priest. In view of the reforms initiated later by Ezra and Nehemiah, a strict adherence to the laws of Moses was evidently not observed. The priests intermarried with their non-Israelite neighbors, and the city of Jerusalem was allowed to further deteriorate.

Under Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.), Jewish officers had official representation at the Persian court. Ezra seems to have held some kind of important court office, and he was accredited as a special envoy to reorganize the temple services at Jerusalem. The eager Jews were led on by the encouragement they had received from the Persian court to exceed the terms of Ezra's commission, and they rebuilt the city wall.

Nehemiah was a royal cupbearer in the Persian court (see Nehemiah 2:1). Since assassination was an ever-present danger for kings anciently, and poison was often employed, the cupbearer held a highly trusted position in the court. His calling was to ensure that the king's food and drink were safe. (See Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, s.v. "Cupbearer.") Nehemiah succeeded in using his favored position to have himself named governor of Judah.

Nehemiah's energy, ability, unselfish patriotism, and personal integrity brought a new, exuberant Judah into existence once again. The restoration of Jerusalem, which had lain in ruins for a century and a half, was begun. Ezra, a righteous, dedicated priest, joined Nehemiah in the work, and together they succeeded in restoring a Jewish community in Jerusalem once again. Psalm 48 is a song celebrating the restoration of Jerusalem. It shows how Jewish confidence was then revived. Judah developed a semiautonomous government and gradually enlarged their district's borders to become approximately half the size of the kingdom of Judah when it fell in 581 B.C. Judah remained in peace throughout the duration of the Persian Empire.

When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 331 B.C., the Jews simply transferred their allegiance from one monarch to another. Jewish tradition relates how Alexander was met by the high priest in Jerusalem and was read the prophecies of Daniel that one of the Greeks would destroy the Persians (see Daniel 7:6; 8:3, 20–22; 11:3). Alexander, supposing this meant himself, rejoiced and accepted the Jewish nation without going to war against them.

(J-6) The Diaspora

Diaspora is a Greek word meaning "dispersion." According to the Jews, there is a difference between a forced exile and a voluntary dispersion. The forced exile is usually referred to by the Hebrew word *galut*, meaning "exile." *Diaspora* is generally used by the Jews to refer to their voluntary dispersion. According to present-day Jews, *Diaspora* is a correct designation for all Jews still living outside of *Eretz Israel* (land of Israel).

The term *Diaspora* refers to the scattering of the house of Israel into countries other than the Holy Land. Latter-day Saints know that the entire house of Israel was scattered, but, as used by most scholars, the word *Diaspora* is applied principally to the dispersion of the Jews throughout all the earth.

The Lord through His prophets long ago foretold the scattering or dispersion of Judah and all of Israel throughout the world. (See Deuteronomy 28:64; Jeremiah 29:18; Ezekiel 12:15; Amos 9:9; Zechariah 10:9.)

The first major dispersion of Israel began with the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which resulted in the captivity of that nation in 722 B.C. (See Enrichment D.)

Although the first significant *Jewish Diaspora* resulted from the Babylonian exile, small colonies of Jews made their way to Egypt before this exile. One of these exiles is the subject of some of Jeremiah's dire prophecies (see Jeremiah 43–44). The Jews spoken of by Jeremiah settled near the delta of the Nile. They repudiated Jehovah completely, impudently asserting that it was worship of Him that had caused all their misery and disaster. Other groups of Jews who came to Egypt shortly before and during the Babylonian sieges of Jerusalem were hospitably received, and they prospered. They established Jewish quarters in several of the larger cities there. Many of them attempted to transplant to this new home the pattern of their religious life. Such was the case at Elephantine, where archeological discoveries reveal that a Jewish colony constructed a temple similar to the one in Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar deported to Babylon large groups of Jewish exiles between 605 B.C. and 587 B.C. Despite Cyrus's edict, most of the exiles chose to stay in Babylon because of favorable economic and agricultural conditions. Gradually, in the centuries from 400 B.C. to A.D. 200 and even later, the Jews dispersed themselves to all parts of the known world and set up enduring colonies.

An eminent historian discussed the existence of dispersed Jews in other parts of the Roman Empire at the time of the Christian era:

"Josephus describes Syria as the country with the highest percentage of Jewish inhabitants, which is very probably on account of its proximity to *Eretz Israel*. There were particularly important Jewish centers in the capital Antioch, in Damascus, and in Apamea. According to Philo, numerous Jews lived in Syria and in Asia Minor, where the settlement of Jews was greatly promoted by the policy of the Seleucid kings, whose rule extended over large areas of Asia Minor. Thus it is known that Antiochus III (223–187 B.C.E.) settled 2,000 Babylonian Jewish families in Phrygia and Lydia. From the period of the Roman rule at the end of the republic and the beginning of the Julio-Claudian principate there is clear evidence of the existence of Jews in most of the important cities of Asia Minor, in Adramyttium, Pergamum, Sardis, Ephesus, Tralles, Miletus, Iasus, Halicarnassus, Laodicea, Tarsus, and very many others, as well as in the regions of Bithynia, Pontus, and Cappadocia. . . . There were many Jews, too, in the various islands of the eastern Mediterranean. . . . Many Jews also lived in Crete, Delos, Paros, Melos, Euboea, and in other islands.

". . . There were Jews in all the important urban centers of Greece and Macedonia. . . . According to the Acts of the Apostles, there were Jewish communities in Thessalonica, in the Macedonian cities of Philippi and Beroea, and in the famed Greek cities of Athens and Corinth. Inscriptions also attest to Jewish settlements in various places in the Peloponnesus (the district of Laconia, the city of Patrae, Tegea), in Athens, and in Thessaly. From Greece the Jewish settlements spread northward to the Balkan peninsula (Stobi) and reached Pannonia [present-day Europe]." (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Diaspora," 6:10–11.)

The dispersed people of Judah are frequently referred to in the New Testament. The Jews in the temple spoke of them when questioning Jesus at the feast of Tabernacles (see John 7:35). At the feast of Pentecost, fifteen locations other than Judea were represented by Jewish pilgrims (see Acts 2:9–11). Luke, in the book of Acts, spoke of Jewish synagogues in the Roman Empire that were of great service in the spreading of Christianity (see Acts 6:9; 13:43–45; 14:1–2, 19; 16:3; 17:1, 4, 10–13; 18:2, 12, 19; 19:13–17, 33; 28:17–29).

(J-7) The Jewish Religion in the Diaspora

"In general, the Jews of the Dispersion were sincerely loyal to the religion of their ancestors. They recognized Jerusalem as the Holy City, paid their annual taxes to the temple and whenever possible made pilgrimages to Zion to celebrate the holy days. Nevertheless, in many synagogues outside Judea services were being conducted in Greek, mixed marriages were becoming a familiar practice again and the rite of circumcision was increasingly ignored.

Among the many Hellenistic ideas that gained ground with the dispersed Jews was the popular belief that different peoples simply worshipped the same God by different names. This doctrine was anathema to the priests and scholars of Jerusalem, for it blurred the differences between Jew and Gentile." (*Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, p. 253.)

Devout Jews visited Jerusalem for the great feasts when possible (see Acts 2:5–11; 8:27). Paul, raised as a Jew of the Diaspora in Tarsus, was faithful to the law and to the nation (see Philippians 3:5–6). Apollos, a Christian convert, was a Jew of the Diaspora from Alexandria and was "mighty in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24).

What effect did the Jewish religion of the Diaspora have upon their gentile neighbors? One author describes how the Jews made proselytes:

"The Jews are often unjustly charged with a rigid exclusivism. In fact, particularly among the Dispersion, they recognized their mission to the Gentiles, and there was a sincere attempt to win converts. To accept the Jewish religion was no light matter for a Gentile. He must accept circumcision and baptism, and agree to keep the whole law of Moses, including such ritual prescriptions as the sabbath and the laws about unclean food. He must in fact renounce his own nationality. There were a considerable number who took this drastic step, and it is to them that the term 'proselyte' applies.

"Many more were attracted by the monotheistic faith and the strict morality of Judaism in contrast with the decadent polytheism of Rome. They were prepared to identify themselves with the faith and ideals of the Jews, but stopped short of the proselyte's full commitment. These fellow-travellers, many of

them rich and influential officials, are known in the New Testament as 'those who fear God' or 'the devout' (Acts 13:26, 43, 50; 17:4)." (David Alexander and Pat Alexander, eds., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 497.) The proselytes were a rich source of converts to early Christianity, for in the Church they found the moral law without the burdens of the Mosaic code.

(J-8) Life in the Diaspora

During the first centuries of the dispersion, "the occupations of the Jews in the countries of the Hellenistic-Roman Diaspora were varied, and certainly they were not confined to only a few specified occupations, as was the case in the Middle Ages, and no restrictions were placed on them. In Judea, the Jews had been farmers from the earliest days, and while the cultivation of the soil remained an important occupation of the Jews in the countries of the Diaspora, they also engaged in other pursuits. Numerous papyri in particular furnish considerable evidence of the part played by the Jews in the agriculture of Egypt. Among the Jewish agriculturists in Ptolemaic Egypt were 'royal farmers,' tenant farmers, military settlers, and agricultural workers. There were also Jewish peasants and shepherds. Other documents show that there was a Jewish family of potters in 'a Syrian village' in the Fayyum district, and also a Jewish weaver in Upper Egypt in the second century B.C.E. Jewish officials were prominent in government service, occupying positions in the police force, in the administration of the government banks, and particularly in the collection of taxes.

"A similar diversity characterized the economic life of the Jews in Roman Egypt. In Roman Alexandria there were wealthy Jews, bankers with interterritorial connections, important merchants, and shipowners who filled a notable role in the Egyptian, and in the entire Mediterranean, economy. However, alongside these, Jewish artisans and poor Jews were no less prominent. The Jewish artisans in Roman Alexandria engaged in various trades, and even occupied places in the large synagogue according to their occupations. Among the Alexandrian Jews, some owned land in various places whereas others had difficulty in making a livelihood, as can be seen from the papyri of Abusir el Meleq. This picture is confirmed by documents relating to the provincial towns. Thus in Roman Egypt some Jews owned land, some engaged in cultivating the soil and in rearing sheep, some in transport on land or along the Nile where they loaded cargo for various parts of Egypt, while others were artisans. . . . More or less the same state of affairs existed in the other countries of the Mediterranean world. . . .

"[Under Roman law the Jews were granted the right] to organize themselves in their own institutions and to establish an autonomous system of internal administration and justice, to refrain from taking part in what they regarded as idolatry, and to be exempt from duties involving a transgression of Jewish religious precepts. The permission to refrain from idolatry also included the right to abstain from taking part in emperor worship, the chief expression of the loyalty of the peoples of the empire, abstention from which was generally regarded as treason." (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Diaspora," 6:11–13.)



The veil of a synagogue in Jerusalem

In the year 2000, of the estimated 13 million Jews in the world, about 5,800,000 million resided in the United States, 4,800,000 in Israel; 600,000 in France; and 400,000 in Russia, with other sizeable groups in Europe, the Americas, and around the world.

(J-9) The Gathering of Dispersed Israel

The Lord never intended for Israel and Judah to remain scattered. Isaiah prophesied that “the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people . . . and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isaiah 11:11–12). Psalm 147:2 reads: “The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts [*diasporai* in the Greek version of the Old Testament] of Israel.” Nephi added this significant idea to the teachings of the restoration of the Jews: “After [the Jews] have been scattered . . . even down from generation to generation, . . . they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement” (2 Nephi 25:16). Isaiah described how in large measure the Jews would be restored: “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their [the Gentiles’] queens thy nursing mothers” (Isaiah 49:23).

Elder Wilford Woodruff, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, issued an epistle to the world on 22 February 1879 and, in part, addressed himself to the dispersed of Judah: “For the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, and the Lord has decreed that the Jews should be gathered from all the Gentile nations where they have been driven, into their own land, in fulfillment of the words of Moses their lawgiver. And this is the

will of your great Eloheim, O house of Judah, and whenever you shall be called upon to perform this work, the God of Israel will help you. You have a great future and destiny before you and you cannot avoid fulfilling it; you are the royal chosen seed, and the God of your father’s house has kept you distinct as a nation for eighteen hundred years, under all the oppression of the whole Gentile world. You may not wait until you believe on Jesus of Nazareth, but when you meet with Shiloh your king, you will know him; your destiny is marked out, you cannot avoid it. It is true that after you return and gather your nation home, and rebuild your City and Temple, that the Gentiles may gather together their armies to go against you to battle, to take you a prey and to take you as a spoil, which they will do, for the words of your prophets must be fulfilled; but when this affliction comes, the living God, that led Moses through the wilderness, will deliver you, and your Shiloh will come and stand in your midst and will fight your battles; and you will know him, and the afflictions of the Jews will be at an end, while the destruction of the Gentiles will be so great that it will take the whole house of Israel who are gathered about Jerusalem, seven months to bury the dead of their enemies, and the weapons of war will last them seven years for fuel, so that they need not go to any forest for wood. These are tremendous sayings—who can bear them? Nevertheless they are true, and will be fulfilled, according to the sayings of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and other prophets. Though the heavens and the earth pass away, not one jot or tittle will fall unfulfilled.” (In Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, pp. 509–10.)



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טבלת פאר ירושלים

The Exiles Return

(29-1) Introduction

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

“If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” (Psalm 137:1, 4–6.)

While in captivity the faithful Jews wept by the rivers of Babylon. Because of sorrow, they could not bear to sing the songs of Zion, for their hearts yearned to be back in their land of promise and in their holy city.

But how could they go back? They were captive to the powerful nation of Babylon. Yet the Lord rules in the heavens and watches over His chosen people. He would provide a way for the faithful of Judah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the city.

The Lord had foreordained a person to make possible the return of the Jews. This person was not of the house of Israel, but the Lord nonetheless had chosen him before he was born to bless the house of Israel. His name was Cyrus, known in history as Cyrus the Great.

How would you feel if you were reading the scriptures and suddenly read your own name, and not only that, but you also noticed that a prophet had prophesied that you were going to do a remarkable thing for someone? What would be your reaction? Read Isaiah 44:28–45:1. How do you think Cyrus felt? How did he react?

Try to see the motivation and feelings of Cyrus toward this prophecy and the freeing of the Jews. (See also Elder Ezra Taft Benson’s comments about the greatness of Cyrus in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, pp. 48–49; or *Ensign*, July 1972, pp. 59–60.)

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Ezra.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EZRA

(29-2) Where Do the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah Fit in the Old Testament?

The books of the Bible do not fall into chronological order. Their position is determined usually by whether they are historical or prophetic books. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally part of a compilation that included 1 and 2 Chronicles. Ezra 1:1–3 and 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 and are almost identical.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are actually the last two historical books of the Old Testament.

Zechariah and Haggai were prophets during this same period. Malachi is the only prophet known to have served in Israel between the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and the beginning of the New Testament.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of Israel’s history from the first return to Jerusalem until the end of Nehemiah’s second term as governor of Judah (538 B.C. to shortly before 400 B.C.; see Enrichment J).

Esther’s sojourn in Persia belongs to the time between the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem and Ezra’s return (beginning in Ezra 7:1).

(29-3) Ezra 1:1. What Was Jeremiah’s Prophecy?

In Jeremiah 25:11–12 and 29:10 the prophet Jeremiah spoke of seventy years of Babylonian captivity. (See Enrichment J for biographical data on Cyrus the Great, the first king of the Persian Empire, and how the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28; 45 likely influenced his actions toward the Jews.)

(29-4) Ezra 1:3–4. Did All of the Jews Return?

Ezra 2:64–65 indicates that approximately fifty thousand people made the first trip back to Jerusalem. Ezra 1:4 tells of the responsibilities of the Jews who remained in Babylonia. By far, most of the expatriated Jews chose not to return to Jerusalem at this time, a decision that indicates how well they had been absorbed into the Babylonian way of life.

(29-5) Ezra 1:6. Vessels of Silver and Gold

The Lord saw to it that the exiles did not return empty handed; neither did the children of Israel at the time of the Exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 12:35–36). Precious items were collected to be used to adorn the temple as the Lord had specified. That Cyrus would allow such wealth to be gathered for the temple is an indication of how seriously he viewed the prophecy of Isaiah concerning him.

(29-6) Ezra 1:8. Who Was Sheshbazzar?

Sheshbazzar is identified in Ezra 1:8 as the prince of Judah. Ezra 5:14 indicates that Cyrus made Sheshbazzar the governor, but his name is not mentioned in the list of the returning Jews. Haggai 2:2 identifies Zerubbabel as the governor of Judah (see Ezra 3:8). Many scholars have therefore identified Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel as the same person. The book of 1 Esdras 6:18 in the Apocrypha and other authorities say they are two people. The evidence seems to favor the idea of two separate persons. Both were of the royal line of Judah, and both were probably appointed by Cyrus. Zerubbabel has become the more famous in history because he outlived the older Sheshbazzar.

(29-7) Ezra 2:2. Who Was Zerubbabel?

Zerubbabel was a descendant of Jehoiachin, the king who was carried away captive into Babylon (see Enrichments A and G), which descent means he was of the royal Davidic line. Zerubbabel was also an ancestor of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 1:12; *Zorobabel* is the Greek form). Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah (see Haggai 2:2). The second temple in Jerusalem is often called the temple of Zerubbabel. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied favorably about the role and trustworthiness of Zerubbabel (see Haggai 2:4, 21–23; Zechariah 4:6–9).

(29-8) Ezra 2:2. Who Was Jeshua?

The name *Jeshua* appears in the book of Ezra but is also spelled *Joshua* in Haggai. This man, Jeshua, was the high priest (see Haggai 1:1). Zerubbabel and Jeshua, being motivated by the prophetic inspiration of Haggai and Zechariah, together directed the rebuilding of the temple (see Ezra 6:14; Haggai 1:12–14; Zechariah 4:9).

(29-9) Ezra 2:43. Who Were the Nethinims?

Nethinims, meaning “given” or “appointed” in Hebrew, was the name given the servants in the temple who attended the Levites in their sacred services (see Nehemiah 7:60).

(29-10) Ezra 2:62. They Reckoned Their Genealogy

“This passage (Ezra 2:62–63) has reference to those who returned from the captivity who had intermarried among peoples who were not entitled to the blessings of the priesthood” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to*

Gospel Questions, 4:165). By marrying out of the covenant, some Israelites lost the right to have their descendants officiate in the priesthood. This experience of old was referred to directly in the Doctrine and Covenants as a warning to modern priesthood bearers who take it upon themselves to set aside the decreed order of God (see D&C 85:11–12; 121:16–22).

(29-11) Ezra 2:63. Who Was the Tirshatha?

The Tirshatha was the title of the governor of Judea under the Persians. This title was perhaps derived from the Persian root meaning “stern” or “severe.” (See also Nehemiah 7:65; 8:9; 10:1.)

(29-12) Ezra 3:1–6. The Altar Was Rebuilt First

Jeshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor, cooperated to direct the rebuilding of the temple. The reconstruction began with the very heart of Israel’s religious facilities, the altar of the temple, which was placed on the very site where the temple formerly had stood. The altar was necessary so that worship and sacrifice could begin again according to the pattern laid down by Moses (see Leviticus 1–7). The altar was made ready for the sacrifices of the week of Succoth (feast of Tabernacles) and for other high holy days.

(29-13) Ezra 3:10–11. They Praised the Lord after the Ordinance of King David

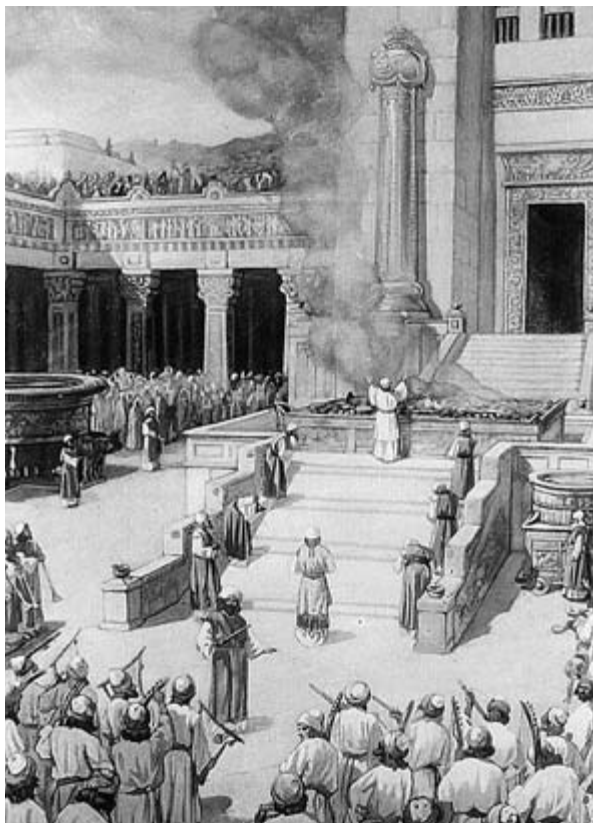
The shouting and singing in praise of the Lord that accompanied the laying of the foundation of the temple was performed according to the custom established by David (see 1 Chronicles 25). Two choirs, or a choir and soloist, sang alternately. It is likely that the shout was similar to the Hosanna Shout used in connection with modern solemn assemblies. (See Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 433–34.)

(29-14) Ezra 3:12–13. Why Did the Older Priests Weep?

Josephus explained that the remembrance of the former temple caused the old priests to weep. The temple of Solomon had been beautiful and sumptuously adorned. Now, because of the extreme poverty of the returning exiles, the second temple was greatly inferior to the first. “Hereupon they were disconsolate, and not able to contain their grief, and proceeded so far as to lament and shed tears on those accounts” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 11, chap. 4, par. 2).

(29-15) Ezra 4:1–10. Who Were the Samaritans Who Hindered the Work on the Temple?

“At the final captivity of Israel by Shalmaneser, . . . the cities of Samaria were . . . depopulated of their inhabitants in B.C. 721, and . . . they remained in this desolated state until, in the words of 2 Kings 17:24, ‘the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava (Ivah, 2 Kings 18:34), and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.’ Thus the new Samaritans were Assyrians by birth or subjugation.” (William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Samaritans.”)



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The altar of the temple of Solomon

The Assyrian foreigners were idolaters and had no desire to serve Jehovah or worship rightfully in the temple. Later when these foreign Samaritans intermarried with some of the Israelites, both a mixed race of Samaritans and a variant form of the worship of Jehovah developed. Such were the circumstances in the New Testament times. This variant religion was heavily intermingled with pagan and other unauthorized religious practices, which the Jews saw as highly offensive. When Zerubbabel refused their help, the Samaritans were understandably angry and sought revenge by writing to the king of Persia and accusing the Jews of rebellion.

Elder James E. Talmage explained: "The claim was made that of old the people of Judah had been a trouble to other nations, and that with the restoration of their Temple they would again become seditious" (*The House of the Lord*, p. 41; see also Ezra 4:19).

Eventually the Jews proved that they had received permission to rebuild the temple and the problem was resolved, but this incident reveals the foundations of the tremendous bitterness between the Samaritans and the Jews so evident in Christ's time.

(29-16) Ezra 4:7. What Was the Syrian Tongue?

Aramaic is the language referred to as "the Syrian tongue" in Ezra 4:7. It was the international diplomatic language of the Persian Empire.

(29-17) Ezra 4:10. What Was "This Side of the River"?

The words "this side" in Ezra 4:10 mean west of the Euphrates River (see also Ezra 5:3; 6:13). *Asnappar* is the Aramaic version of *Ashurbanipal*, the name of the province that included Judea and Syria.

(29-18) Ezra 4:13. They Will Not Pay Toll, Tribute, or Custom

The text in Ezra 4:13 would read more clearly if "will they not" were rendered "they will not."

(29-19) Ezra 4:24. Why Was the Temple Building Halted for So Long?

The work on the temple ceased for fifteen to seventeen years because of the interference of the Samaritans (see Enrichment J).

(29-20) Ezra 5:1-5. The Hand of the Lord Intervened in the Building of the Temple

After many years, prophets of God appeared in Jerusalem to provide the inspired direction and incentive to continue the temple building. In the first year of the reign of King Darius, the prophet Daniel petitioned the Lord about Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years (see Daniel 9:1-2). Zerubbabel had returned to Jerusalem about sixteen years previously and had been frustrated in his temple building project. Daniel 9:17-19 shows Daniel's prayerful concern for the sanctuary (temple) and the city Jerusalem. The Lord answered Daniel and raised up two prophets in Jerusalem: Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai 1:1-5, 12-14; Zechariah 4:9; and Ezra 6:14 show how these two prophets inspired Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the people to complete the holy temple in spite of persecution, hard times, and governmental red tape, much as prophets

in this dispensation have inspired the Saints to sacrifice much to build temples.

(29-21) Ezra 5:17; 6:12. Why Would Darius Honor the Decree of Cyrus?

Darius recognized the role of God in human affairs. During his reign, Darius adopted the religion of Zoroastrianism for the Persian Empire. Darius probably thought that the god he worshiped also wanted the temple of Judah rebuilt. And, the decrees of one king were often honored by his successors.

(29-22) Ezra 6:13-15. How Did the Temple of Zerubbabel Compare to the Temple of Solomon?

The second temple in Jerusalem was completed in 516 B.C., exactly seventy years after the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Thus, Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled (see Jeremiah 29:10-14).

"It is known in history as the Temple of Zerubbabel. In general plan it was patterned after the Temple of Solomon, though in many of its dimensions it exceeded its prototype. The court was divided into a section for priests only and another for the public; according to Josephus the division was effected by a wooden railing. An altar of unhewn stone was erected in place of the great brazen altar of old. The Holy Place was graced by but one candlestick instead of ten; and by a single table for the shew-bread instead of the ten tables overlaid with gold which stood in the first Temple. We read also of a golden altar of incense, and of some minor appurtenances. The Most Holy Place was empty, for the Ark of the Covenant had not been known after the people had gone into captivity.

"In many respects the Temple of Zerubbabel appeared poor in comparison with its splendid predecessor and in certain particulars, indeed, it ranked lower than the ancient Tabernacle of the Congregation—the sanctuary of the nomadic tribes. Critical scholars specify the following features characteristic of the Temple of Solomon and lacking in the Temple of Zerubbabel: (1) the Ark of the Covenant; (2) the sacred fire; (3) the Shekinah, or glory of the Lord, manifested of old as the Divine Presence; (4) the Urim and Thummim, by which Jehovah made plain His will to the priests of the Aaronic order; (5) the genius or spirit of prophecy, indicative of the closest communion between mortals and their God. Notwithstanding these differences the Temple of Zerubbabel was recognized of God and was undoubtedly the site or seat of Divine revelation to duly constituted prophets." (Talmage, *House of the Lord*, pp. 42-43.)

It was the temple of Zerubbabel that King Herod refurbished and made very beautiful. He added many courtyards and surrounding buildings that made it one of the wonders of the world at the time of Jesus. (See Notes and Commentary on Haggai 2:3-9.)

(29-23) Ezra 6:22. Who Was the King of Assyria?

The king of Assyria was the Persian monarch, the king of what was once Assyrian territory.

(29-24) Ezra 6:22; 7:1. A Gap in the History

"Nearly 60 years separate 7:1 from 6:22, during which time Esther is able to avert a complete massacre of the Jewish people and, indirectly, to save the lives of Ezra

and Nehemiah [See Notes and Commentary on Esther]. Artaxerxes is favourably disposed towards the Jews, and Ezra the scholar and teacher (direct descendant of the high priests) is given official sanction to teach the law and appoint magistrates in his homeland, to offer sacrifices and beautify the temple. (Ezra's own memoirs, written in Hebrew, begin at verse 27.)" (David Alexander and Pat Alexander, eds., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, pp. 307–8.)

(29-25) Ezra 7. What Was Ezra's Background and What Was His Assignment from the Persian Emperor?

Josephus spoke of the circumstances in Jerusalem at the time of Ezra and how he was assigned to correct the situation (Ezra is known as Esdras in the Josephus account). Ezra was a man of great faith, and one moved by the Spirit of the Lord. He petitioned King Xerxes for permission to return with more Jews. Xerxes agreed and wrote a letter to the governors of Judah. Josephus wrote:

"When Esdras had received this epistle, he was very joyful, and began to worship God, and confessed that he had been the cause of the king's great favour to him, and that for the same reason he gave all the thanks to God. . . . So he gathered those that were in the captivity together beyond Euphrates, and staid there three days, and ordained a fast for them, that they might make their prayers to God for their preservation, that they might suffer no misfortunes by the way, either from their enemies, or from any other ill accident; for Esdras had said beforehand, that he had told the king how God would preserve them. . . .

"Now these things were truly done under the conduct of Esdras; and he succeeded in them, because God esteemed him worthy of the success of his conduct, on account of his goodness and righteousness." (*Antiquities*, bk. 11, chap. 5, par. 3.)

(29-26) Ezra 7:6, 11–12. Ezra, the Scribe

In addition to being a priest, Ezra was "a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel" (Ezra 7:11). Ezra, the scribe of the law, was charged by the Persian king to teach the people in Jerusalem of the law and then set up a judgment system for the lawbreakers (see Ezra 7:25–26).

Elder James E. Talmage explained the system of scribes set up by Ezra and the consequences of that system in future generations: "As early as four score years after the return from the Babylonian exile, and we know not with accuracy how much earlier, there had come to be recognized, as men having authority, certain scholars afterward known as scribes, and honored as rabbis or teachers. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah these specialists in the law constituted a titled class, to whom deference and honor were paid. Ezra is designated 'the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel.' The scribes of those days did valuable service under Ezra, and later under Nehemiah, in compiling the sacred writings then extant; and in Jewish usage those appointed as guardians and expounders of the law came to be known as members of the Great Synagog, or Great Assembly, concerning which we have little information through canonical channels. According to Talmudic record, the organization consisted of one hundred and twenty eminent scholars. The scope of

their labors, according to the admonition traditionally perpetuated by themselves, is thus expressed: *Be careful in judgment; set up many scholars, and make a hedge about the law.* They followed this behest by much study and careful consideration of all traditional details in administration; by multiplying scribes and rabbis unto themselves; and, as some of them interpreted the requirement of setting up many scholars, by writing many books and tractates; moreover, they made a fence or hedge about the law by adding numerous rules, which prescribed with great exactness the officially established proprieties for every occasion." (*Jesus the Christ*, pp. 63–64.)

(29-27) Ezra 8. Those Who Accompanied Ezra and Their Reliance upon the Lord

"Ezra's party of over 1700 includes priests, people and, somewhat reluctantly, Levites. With them they take gifts valuing more than £1,000,000 [about \$2,225,000]. Ezra is faced with a long and dangerous journey at a time of great unrest. And having boasted his confidence in God, he can hardly now apply to the king for an escort! His prayer is heartfelt, and his faith rewarded by God's own safe-conduct." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook*, p. 308.)

(29-28) Ezra 8:15. Who Were the Sons of Levi?

Any male member of the tribe of Levi was a Levite, but a priest had to be a descendant of Aaron, who was also of the tribe of Levi. Priests were thus a subgroup of the Levites. The sons referred to in Ezra 8:15 are those of the Levites who were not priests, that is, those Levites who were not descendants of Aaron.

(29-29) Ezra 9–10. Ezra Directed Jews to Put Away Heathen Wives

Shortly after Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he commenced his priestly duties of putting affairs in order. The priests and Levites in Jerusalem had allowed the temple service to seriously deteriorate. Many of them had gone out to make a living because the temple was not supported sufficiently to allow them to serve full time. Some of them had even taken wives of the pagan nations, as had many other Jewish citizens. All of this horrified Ezra and many of the faithful who had told him of the problem (see Ezra 9:1–4). Intermarriage with people from some of the surrounding nations was expressly forbidden by the Lord because it led to idolatry (see Deuteronomy 7:1–5). Idolatry had led to the downfall of the Israelite nation, but even the horrors of defeat and exile had not taught the people their lesson.

Ezra 10:3, 7, 10–12 shows how Ezra successfully called the people to Jerusalem to confess their transgressions and to covenant to put away their heathen wives. It was an important step for the people of Judah in preparing themselves to be worthy of the temple and the sacred land to which the Lord had prophesied they would return.

It appears that the covenant renewal led by Ezra and described in Nehemiah 8–10 occurred at about this same time (see Notes and Commentary on Nehemiah 8–10). Compare Ezra's concern for the Jews' unrighteous intermarrying recorded in Ezra 9:1–15 with that of Nehemiah, the governor, recorded in Nehemiah 13:23–27.



Water ponds in the Negevo from the winter rains

(29-30) Ezra 10:9, 13. Heavy Rains

Ezra's instructions about the strange wives occurred at the time of heavy December rains in Jerusalem. It was cold and wet, and these conditions, along with the people's sorrow for their apostasy, caused them to tremble.

(29-31) Ezra 10:19. Missing Passages in Ezra about the Savior

"According to a passage in *Justin Martyr's* dialogue with *Trypho*, a Jew, Ezra offered a paschal lamb on this occasion, and addressed the people thus: 'And Ezra said to the people, This passover is our Saviour and our Refuge; and if ye will be persuaded of it, and let it enter into your hearts, that we are to humble ourselves to him in a sign, and afterwards shall believe in him, this place shall not be destroyed for ever, saith the Lord of Hosts: but if ye will not believe in him, nor hearken to his preaching, ye shall be a laughing-stock to the Gentiles.'—*Dial. cum Tryphone*, sec. 72.

"This passage, *Justin* says, the Jews, through their enmity to Christ, blotted out of the book of Ezra. He charges them with cancelling several other places through the same spirit of enmity and opposition." (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:752.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(29-32) Trusting in the Lord

One of the most often repeated lessons of the scriptures is that Jehovah is actively engaged in the affairs of all nations, not just in the affairs of the chosen people of Israel, as Ezra clearly showed. Israel's predicament described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah seemed impossible. They were a tiny nation in bondage, surrounded by nations stronger than they were. How could they be preserved? Only by the divine intervention of a Supreme Deity who watches over the present while He plans for ages to come. This time in Jewish history was the low ebb in the life of a nation destined yet to become a giant in the earth.

What is true for nations is true for individuals. Do you rest tranquilly in your own trust in the Lord? You

should appreciate the following remarks of President Brigham Young:

"The mysterious and invisible hand (so called) of Providence is manifested in all the works of God. Who of this congregation can realise for one moment, that the Lord would notice so trifling an affair as the hairs you have combed from your heads this morning? Yet it is so, not one hair has fallen to the ground without the notice of our Father in heaven. To convince the ancient Apostles of His care over them, Jesus selected the most trifling things, in their estimation, to illustrate to their minds that the least thing escaped not His notice. Said he—'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without the knowledge of your Father. But the very hairs of your head are numbered.'

"Can we realize how this Providence governs and controls the nations of the earth, and marks out the destinies of individual man? If we have not learned these lessons they are before us, and we have them yet to learn. If we have not yet learned that poverty, sickness, pain, want, disappointment, losses, crosses, or even death, should not move us one hair's breadth from the service of God, or separate us from the principles of eternal life, it is a lesson we have to learn. If we have not learned how to handle the things of this world in the light of salvation, we have it yet to learn. Though we have mountains of gold and silver, and stores of precious things heaped up, and could control the elements, and command the cattle on a thousand hills, if we have not learned that every iota of it should be devoted to the building up of the kingdom of God on earth, it is a lesson yet to learn." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 1:336.)

When Ezra approached the Persian monarch for permission to lead a colony to Judah, "the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him" (Ezra 7:6). "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10). Truly, Ezra was an inspired instrument in the hands of the Lord!

Ezra took with his colony millions of dollars (at today's values) worth of gold, silver, and other precious items. Seemingly, this treasure could reach Jerusalem only if it had a large military guard. The route he had to take was infested with bands of robbers.

But Ezra could not ask the king for an army guard to protect him. Adam Clarke commented on Ezra's dilemma: "He had represented God, the object of his worship, as supremely powerful, and as having the strongest affection for his true followers: he could not, therefore, consistently with his declarations, ask a band of soldiers from the king to protect them on the way, when they were going expressly to rebuild the temple of Jehovah, and restore his worship. He therefore found it necessary to seek the Lord by *fasting* and *prayer*, that they might have from *Him* those succours without which they might become a prey to their enemies; and then the religion which they professed would be considered by the heathen as false and vain. Thus we see that this good man had more anxiety for the glory of God than for his own personal safety." (*Commentary*, 2:746.)

Read again Ezra 8:21–23, 31. Now read Proverbs 3:5–6. What steps will you take the next time you face a seemingly insurmountable task?



Haggai: Prophet of the Second Temple

(30-1) Introduction

“Haggai, the earliest prophet of the post-exilic restoration of Judah, is known, apart from this book, only from references made to him in Ezra. These show him as a contemporary of Zechariah, serving in Judah and Jerusalem. As a result of their joint ministry the work of rebuilding the Temple was resumed and completed (Ezr. 5:1; 6:14). Nothing is stated about the private life of Haggai and it is generally assumed that he was one of the main group of exiles who returned from Babylonia following the decree of Cyrus in 538/7 B.C., which allowed the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple. If so he would have witnessed the initial work then undertaken and the subsequent lapse of effort in the face of opposition. . . .

“This was a time when the outlying provinces of the Persian Empire, each under their appointed governor (1:1), were deprived of direct help from the central government. The enlightened policy of encouraging local autonomy in secular and religious affairs initiated by Cyrus, by whose decree the first return of Jews had begun in 536 B.C., had ceased with his death some 6 years later. His son Cambyses (530–522) showed less sympathy to vassal states and this doubtless contributed to the failure of the Jewish people to press forward with the reconstruction of the Temple at Jerusalem where work had come to a standstill soon after the arrival of the first returnees under Sheshbazzar, the Judean governor nominated by the Persians. This interruption was prolonged by the opposition of the Samaritans and local landowners which led to a prohibition of further work. . . . Morale was low and men concentrated on the betterment of their own circumstances. To them it was an inappropriate time to spend effort and wealth on God’s house (1:2).” (D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 781.)

Into this setting the prophet Haggai stepped, calling on the people to recognize the source of their problems and repent. Like so many other prophets, he taught that temporal problems were the direct result of spiritual weaknesses. He told the people that their economic distress was directly caused by their failure to rebuild the temple. He reminded the people that only when God’s will takes priority would they prosper. Thus his call to repentance is a specific one: they were to show their change of heart by rebuilding the temple. To show the significance of their work, Haggai prophesied of the future day when the temple will take on international significance.

Though a short work, the book of Haggai is nevertheless significant for study because it shows the importance of temple worship and obedience to God.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Haggai.

2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON HAGGAI

(30-2) Haggai 1:7–11. The Consequences of Disobedience

The Jews in Jerusalem were charged by Haggai: “Consider your ways” (Haggai 1:7). They had refused to fulfill the assignment given them by the Lord to rebuild the temple. True, there had been difficult circumstances because of the interference of the Samaritans, but the Lord would not bless them with prosperity if they did not heed His commands (compare D&C 82:10).

There are parallels between Haggai’s time and Latter-day Saint history since the Latter-day Saints also built two temples, one in Kirtland and one in Nauvoo, in times of great poverty and persecution. Compare Haggai’s call to Israel with the revelations given to Joseph Smith about the Saints’ task of building the Nauvoo temple (see D&C 124:31–55). The Lord directly tied the poverty of the people of Haggai’s time and the sterility of the land to their failure to heed the commandment to rebuild the Lord’s house (see Haggai 1:9–11).

(30-3) Haggai 2:3–9. “The Glory of This Latter House Shall Be Greater Than of the Former”

When the foundation of the second temple was laid, some who had known the former temple wept with joy at the thought that they could have again the blessings that had been available in Solomon’s temple (see Ezra 3:12–13). It was evident during the construction that this temple, built in poverty, would not have the splendor of the former temple. The Lord assured the people, however, that it was not the relative splendor of the two buildings that concerned Him, but their obedience to His command to build a house to Him.

Haggai prophesied of a future temple that would surpass Solomon’s in glory and splendor and would be the place where the Lord would give His people peace (see Haggai 2:9). This prophecy will be fulfilled in the latter-day temple that will be built on the same site. Haggai’s prophecy that the “desire of all nations shall come” (v. 7) is a prophecy of Christ, who will bring a lasting peace to the world. Lasting peace, however, will be brought only after the Lord shakes “the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land . . . and . . . all nations” (vv. 6–7) when He comes in His glory to usher in the Millennium. Then His house will indeed be filled with glory, peace will be

established, and the desire of all nations will be completely fulfilled. (The phrase “desire of nations” is used in the hymn “Come, O Thou King of Kings,” *Hymns*, no. 59.)

(30-4) Haggai 2:10–19. Why Did Haggai Raise the Questions about “Holy Flesh” and Being “Unclean by a Dead Body?”

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch explained the meaning of Haggai 2:10–19: “The nation, in its attitude towards the Lord, resembles, on the one hand, a man who carries holy flesh in the lapet of his garment, and on the other hand, a man who has become unclean through touching a corpse. ‘Israel also possesses a sanctuary in the midst of its land,—namely, the place which Jehovah has chosen for His own abode, and favoured with many glorious promises. But just as no kind of food, neither bread nor vegetables, neither wine nor oil, is sanctified by the fact that a man touches it with his sanctified garment, so will all this not be rendered holy by the fact that it is planted in the soil of the land which surrounds and encloses the sanctuary of Jehovah. . . . For Israel is utterly unclean on account of its neglect of the house of Jehovah, like a man who has become unclean through touching a corpse. Everything that Israel takes hold of, or upon which it lays its hand, everything that it plants and cultivates, is from the very first affected with the curse of uncleanness; and consequently even the sacrifices which it offers there upon the altar of Jehovah are unclean.” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10:2:204–5.)

The uncleanness was the reason the land was so unproductive (see Haggai 2:15–17), but when the Jews had repented and begun the work on the temple (see v. 18), the curse was to be lifted and the Lord promised His blessing (see v. 19).

(30-5) Haggai 2:20–23. Why Was Zerubbabel Compared to a “Signet Ring”?

“The meaning of the figurative expression, to make Zerubbabel as a signet-ring, is evident from the importance of the signet-ring in the eyes of an oriental, who is accustomed to carry his signet-ring constantly about with him, and to take care of it as a very valuable



A signet

possession. . . . Hence we obtain this thought for our present passage, namely, that on the day on which Jehovah would overthrow the kingdoms of the nations, He would make Zerubbabel like a signet-ring, which is inseparable from its possessor; that is to say, He would give him a position in which he would be and remain inseparably connected with Him (Jehovah), would therefore not cast him off, but take care of him as His valuable possession.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:213–14.)

The prophecy is messianic, and Zerubbabel, in these scriptures, served as a type of Christ. Keil and Delitzsch explained: “In order clearly to understand the meaning of this promise, we must look at the position which Zerubbabel occupied in the community of Israel on its return from exile. For we may at the outset assume that the promise did not apply to his own particular person, but rather to the official post he held, from the fact that what is here predicted was not to take place till after the overthrow of the throne and might of all the kingdoms of the heathen, and therefore could not take place in Zerubbabel’s lifetime, inasmuch as, although the fall of this or the other kingdom might be looked for in the course of one generation, the overthrow of all kingdoms and the coming of all the heathen to fill the temple of the Lord with their possessions (ver. 7) certainly could not. Zerubbabel was (Persian) governor in Judah, and had no doubt been selected for this office because he was prince of Judah [Ezra 1:8], and as son of Shealtiel was a descendant of the family of David [see Haggai 1:1]. Consequently the sovereignty of David in its existing condition of humiliation, under the sovereignty of the imperial power, was represented and preserved in his appointment as prince and governor of Judah, so that the fulfilment of the divine promise of the eternal perpetuation of the seed of David and his kingdom was then associated with Zerubbabel, and rested upon the preservation of his family. Hence the promise points to the fact, that at the time when Jehovah would overthrow the heathen kingdoms, He would maintain and take good care of the sovereignty of David in the person of Zerubbabel. For Jehovah had chosen Zerubbabel as His servant. With these words the Messianic promise made to David was transferred to Zerubbabel and his family among David’s descendants, and would be fulfilled in his person in just the same way as the promise given to David, that God would make him the highest among the kings of the earth [Psalm 89:27]. The fulfilment culminates in Jesus Christ, the son of David and descendant of Zerubbabel [Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27], in whom Zerubbabel was made the signet-ring of Jehovah. Jesus Christ has raised up the kingdom of His father David again, and of His kingdom there will be no end [Luke 1:32–33]. Even though it may appear oppressed and deeply humiliated for the time by the power of the kingdoms of the heathen, it will never be crushed and destroyed, but will break in pieces all these kingdoms, and destroy them, and will itself endure for ever [Daniel 2:44; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Corinthians 15:24].” (*Commentary*, 10:2:14–15.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(30-6) “Consider Your Ways”

Elder L. Tom Perry reminded us of the timelessness of Haggai’s injunction to “consider your ways” (Haggai 1:5).

“Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

“Thus said the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.’ (Hag. 1:5–7.)

“I have read this great scripture and continue to be impressed with how clearly the Old Testament prophet describes the conditions of today. Almost daily we read of those who invest for little return. We eat food so refined that the nourishment is lacking. We witness the drink that can never satisfy the thirst for those who drink; the dressing for style, rather than warmth, comfort, and modesty; the high wages of the wage earner today which still do not satisfy or supply his needs.

“A noted historian several years ago summarized the reasons for the fall of Rome as follows:

“1. The breakdown of the family and the rapid increase of divorce.

“2. The spiraling rise of taxes and extravagant spending.

“3. The mounting craze for pleasure and the brutalization of sports.

“4. The decay of religion into myriads of confused forms, leaving the people without a uniform guide. [See Will Durant, *The Foundation of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), pp. 9–10; Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), pp. 87–94.]

“Our unconquered appetites and consuming drive for material possessions appear to be leading us on a course so often repeated in history. Greed, lust, and desire historically have only led mankind to waste, destruction, and suffering.

“James E. Talmage has written:

“Material belongings, relative wealth or poverty, physical environment—the things on which we are prone to set our hearts and anchor our aspirations, the things for which we sweat and strive, oftentimes at the sacrifice of happiness and to the forfeiture of real success—these after all are but externals, the worth of which in the reckoning to come shall be counted in terms of the use we have made of them.’ (James E. Talmage, *The Vitality of Mormonism*, 1919, p. 352.)

“Isn’t this the time and isn’t this the hour to follow the admonition of the Lord to ‘consider your ways?’” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 14; or *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 20.)

Take some time to consider your ways. List in your journal the ways you may need to change.



Esther: Queen of Persia and Advocate for Her People

(31-1) Introduction

Esther's beauty was such that it could catch and hold the eye of an oriental emperor accustomed to being surrounded by loveliness. Combined with physical charms were qualities of spirit that revealed that she had inward beauty as well. The qualities were loyalty, love, and dedication. Submissive yet courageous, yielding yet faithful, she was able to avert the intent of evil individuals determined to destroy her people. Indeed, she saved God's covenant people from an intended extinction.

The story of Esther is sacred to the Jews and compelling to all because of her dauntless defense of her convictions and her people. Her name, in the Persian tongue, means "a star"; the many meanings of that symbol are most fitting.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Esther.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ESTHER

(31-2) Esther 1:1–12. Who Was King Ahasuerus?

The book of Esther opens with the description of a grand banquet in the opulent courts of Susa (called Shushan in v. 2), palace of the great Persian Emperor Ahasuerus. This name is a Hebrew transliteration of the Persian *Khsyayarsha*, better known in history as Xerxes (the Greek form of the name). Most scholars place the events recorded in the book of Esther between about 482 B.C. and 478 B.C.

One feature of the banquet was a large amount of wine which, according to one translation of verse 8, was to be given to the guests in any quantity they desired (see D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 415). That was probably the reason for Queen Vashti's refusal to appear. After seven days of heavy drinking, the guests were probably quite inebriated, and she may have considered it beneath the dignity of the queen to parade before such a lot simply to display her beauty.

(31-3) Esther 1:19. Irrevocable Edicts

Queen Vashti's refusal to obey a direct summons of the king may engender the sympathy of modern readers,

but in an age when women were expected to be subservient and when an emperor had absolute power over life and death, her stubbornness is surprising. But the reaction of the assembly is not too surprising. The men present at the banquet immediately sensed that such independence of spirit in Vashti, who was unquestionably envied by the other women of the empire, would inspire a similar independence of spirit in their wives. If Vashti's rebelliousness (as viewed by these men) were to go unpunished, they knew it would inspire similar responses in their wives. Therefore they pushed Ahasuerus for action, and particularly asked for a decree that could not be "altered" (v. 19).

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch explained why that edict was important: "An edict issued by the king, entered among the laws of the Persians and Medes, and sealed with the royal signet [Esther 8:8], does not pass away, i.e. remains in force, is irrevocable [compare Daniel 6:9]. The counsellors press for the issue of such an edict, for the purpose of making it impossible to the king to take Vashti again into favour, lest they should experience her vengeance on the restoration of her influence." (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:3:331.)

The king agreed, the decree was made, and Vashti lost her place as queen, setting up the opportunity for Esther to be selected as one of the king's wives and eventually to save her people.

(31-4) Esther 2:5–8. What Was the Relationship between Mordecai and Esther?

Little is known for sure of the background of Mordecai. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, and his great-grandfather was apparently carried into captivity in the first Jewish deportation into Babylon. Some Jewish writers believe that he held a high office in the Persian hierarchy that gave him access to the court (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:3:337). It is apparent from the biblical narrative that He was a devout Hebrew with great faith in Jehovah. He was also courageous, forthright, and practical.

To his father's brother was born a daughter who was given the name Hadassah, meaning "myrtle" in Hebrew. Throughout the sacred record, however, she is referred to by her Persian name, Esther, which means "star." When her parents died, Mordecai adopted her and raised her in his home.

(31-5) Esther 2:10. Why Had Esther "Not Shewed Her People?"

Esther was shown respect and deference because, in obedience to Mordecai's charge to her, she had not admitted her Jewish lineage. A Jewish maiden would not have experienced such friendly treatment. Even after her selection as queen, she continued to keep her racial identity secret at the request of Mordecai (see v. 20).

(31-6) Esther 2:12–17. What Were the Days of Purification?

Adam Clarke noted that “the most beautiful of all the young virgins of all the provinces of Babylon were to be selected; and these were taken out of all *classes* of the people, indiscriminately; consequently there must have been many who were brought up in low life.” (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:810.) An extended period of beautification and preparation of these women would be required to prepare them for presentation to the king.

The statement that each virgin could take “whatsoever she desired” (v. 13) seems to imply that she could choose jewelry and other adornments in order to make the most favorable impression. Esther did not use this privilege, but took only what Hegai, the King’s chamberlain, or keeper of the harem, gave her. She must have been of remarkable loveliness to be chosen by the king.

It is also likely that the days of purification were used in training and education in the ways of the king’s court as well as in just physical purification.

(31-7) Esther 2:21–23. What Did Mordecai Do That Esther Reported to the King?

Evidently, Mordecai, who served in the king’s court, heard of a plot to assassinate the king. Kings in ancient times were keenly aware of the risk of assassination and were well guarded. But Bigthan and Teresh “kept the door” (v. 21), or, in other words, were part of the king’s personal bodyguard and watched over his personal quarters. Their conspiracy to kill the king was especially dangerous because they had access to him. Mordecai somehow learned of this plot and reported it to the king through Esther. The account of Mordecai’s loyalty was inserted here because of the central part it plays later in the narrative.

(31-8) Esther 3:1–6. Why Would Mordecai Not Bow to Haman?

There probably was nothing personal in Mordecai’s refusal to bow to Haman. “The only explanation offered is that Mordecai claimed exemption on the ground that he was a Jew. Probably the inference is justified that Haman was demanding not mere allegiance but worship, and Mordecai would not break the first commandment. . . . If fear of idolatry lay behind the refusal to bow down then no Jew would bow down, and Haman’s decision to take vengeance on the whole people becomes understandable. Similar acts of revenge involving wholesale slaughter are recorded by Herodotus (i. 106; iii. 79). . . . In Esther, however, anti-semitism proper makes its appearance with Haman’s express intention of wiping out the Jewish race. It might well seem incredible that one man’s injured pride should lead to such an irrational conclusion if it were not that history has produced an equally irrational attack on the Jews in the 20th century.” (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, pp. 416–17.)

(31-9) Esther 3:7–15. Why Was the Decree Prematurely Published

Esther was queen for three years before Haman put his plot to work. This he did by first casting *pur*, or lots, to determine the day for carrying out the decree—first

for the day of the month and then for the month of the year (see Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 417).

“Here the question is forced upon us, why the decree should have been so prematurely published. The scribes were summoned to prepare it on the thirteenth day of the first month. For this purpose, even though many copies had to be made in different languages, no very long time would be required in a well-appointed government office. As soon as the scribes had finished their work, the decree was sent out by the posts into all quarters of the realm, and would arrive in even the most distant provinces in three weeks at furthest. This would place almost eleven, and in the remotest parts about ten months between the publication and execution of the decree. What then was the motive for such an interval? Certainly so long a time could not be required for preparing to carry it out, nor is this hinted at in the text. . . . Nor could it be intended that the Jews should suffer a long period of anxiety. On the contrary, the motive seems to have been . . . to cause many Jews to leave their property and escape to other lands, for the sake of preserving their lives. Thus Haman would attain his object. He would be relieved of the presence of the Jews, and be able to enrich himself by the appropriation of their possessions (comp. p. 307). On the other hand, the providence of God overruling the event in the interest of the Jews, is unmistakably evident both in Haman’s haste to satisfy his desire for vengeance, and in the falling of the lot upon so distant a day. It was only because there was so long an interval between the publication of the decree and the day appointed by lot for its execution, that it was possible for the Jews to take means for averting the destruction with which they were threatened, as the further development of the history will show.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:3:348–49.)

(31-10) Esther 4:1–17. Was Esther Foreordained?

“The Jewish people of the empire suffered deep shock when the terrible news was spread. And upon Esther there came a double burden: first the saddening news of the proclamation of death for her people; then the challenge to risk death herself to try to avert the general calamity.

“One of the hints of religiousness in the major characters of this story is given in Mordecai’s challenging statement to Esther, ‘. . . Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? It appears that an overseeing Providence and purpose are implied, even though God is not explicitly mentioned here or elsewhere in this book.” (Ellis T. Rasmussen, *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings*, 2:116.)

In other words, Mordecai told Esther that she was, perhaps, raised up at that time for that very purpose. It is also implied that Esther’s beauty was a gift from God to put her into the position where she could gain the favor of the king and save her people.

(31-11) Esther 4:11–16. “If I Perish, I Perish”

Two things in this verse make it of particular importance: Esther’s admonition to fast for three days and three nights, and her determination to endanger her life if need be to save her people. She had not been called to go in to the king for thirty days (see v. 11) and

had most likely concluded that she did not please him and would be unwelcome if she went to him unbidden. Her words are an expression not of despair but of resignation in light of what she had determined she had to do (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:3:352–54). Oriental kings usually had numerous wives, who usually appeared only when summoned and did not take it upon themselves to see him. Going into the king's presence without permission was a capital offense. Esther's life was in jeopardy.

(31-12) Esther 5:1–8. Why Was Esther's Timing So Important?

Esther seized advantage in her first favorable reception to enhance her good standing with the king and to bring about a strategic announcement of her request. But the first delay was not enough. She offered a second banquet the next night. What happened in those twenty-four hours was of the greatest importance (see chap. 6). The sudden desire of the king to read the records was obviously inspired from the Lord. The fasting and faithfulness of Esther and her people was productive and brought the Lord into the situation. With Haman's powerful position and favor in the eyes of the king (see Esther 3:1–2), a direct accusation by Esther might well have been rejected had the king not been prepared beforehand.

(31-13) Esther 5:9–14. How High Was the Gallows?

The gallows was probably not an elaborate gallows, but rather a high pole or stake from which Mordecai could be hanged. Fifty cubits would be about seventy-five feet high. The higher the stake, the farther it could be seen. Haman's intent seems to have been to make a real example of Mordecai.

(31-14) Esther 6. Honors for Mordecai, Not Haman

"It was ironic that at that particular time the king availed himself of the services of Haman to gain from him a suggestion as to how to honor a certain deserving man. Haman didn't know it was Mordecai for whom he was suggesting honors at the very time he had come to get permission to hang Mordecai!

"And thus it was that Haman had the frustration and humiliation of doing for Mordecai what Haman had hoped was to be done for himself; moreover, he had no opportunity to do what he had planned to do to Mordecai. Note that Haman's own wife had ominously predicted dire fate would befall him if his opponent be 'of the seed of the Jews.'" (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2:117.)

(31-15) Esther 7:7–8. Why Did Haman Fall on Esther's Bed?

In the Middle East in ancient times, banquets were served to the guests as they reclined on pillows or couches. The Hebrew word translated in verse 8 as *bed* may have been a couch or a place of reclining. It seems likely that Haman rushed over to Esther at the banquet and fell on her couch to plead for his life. The king's abrupt departure from the banquet may have been prompted by a desire to check Esther's story with some of the other aides in the court. When the king returned to the banquet, he interpreted Haman's

position as a sexual advance and ordered his death. Thus, with no direct suggestion by Esther about what Haman's punishment should be, circumstances brought about the swift execution of the man who could have proven, even after his fall from favor, to be a powerful enemy to the queen.

(31-16) Esther 8. Why Were Some of the Persians "Converted" to Judaism?

"The task of saving the rest of the Jews after Esther and Mordecai had been saved and exalted in the realm was complicated by the announced principle that any edict which had been issued in the king's name could not be revoked. They had to devise a way to give the Jews authority to fight for their lives against those who would try to obey that first edict of death on the thirteenth day of Adar.

"Note the typical psychological phenomenon of the 'conversion' of many people to Judaism as they saw the growing power of the Jews in the realm! (verse 17)." (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2:117.)

(31-17) Esther 9:17–32. The Festival of Purim

The *pur* (plural *purim*), or lots, Haman used (see Esther 3:7) to determine the day of destruction for the Jews were now viewed by the Jews as a great blessing. The fact that the lot had fallen on a day some distance into the future allowed Esther and Mordecai time to save the people. In celebration of this great deliverance, the Jews initiated a new festival which is still observed among them to this day. It is called *Purim* for the lots cast by Haman and is a festival of great joy. A modern Jewish writer described its celebration:

"Purim is the nearest thing Judaism has to a carnival. It is another full-moon celebration, falling on the fourteenth of Adar, usually in February or March. The origin of the holy day is in the Book of Esther. The occasion is, of course, the famous deliverance of the Persian Jews from their Hitler-like oppressor, Haman. . . .

"The day before Purim is the Fast of Esther, a sunrise-to-sundown abstention. At sundown the synagogues fill up. The marked difference between this and all other occasions of the Jewish year is the number of children on hand. Purim is Children's Night in the house of the Lord. It always has been, and the children sense their rights and exercise them. They carry flags and noisemakers, the traditional whirling rattles called 'groggers,' which can make a staggering racket. After the evening prayers the reading of the Book of Esther begins, solemnly enough, with the customary blessing over a scroll and the chanting of the opening verses in a special musical mode heard only on this holiday. The children are poised, waiting. The Reader chants through the first and second chapters and comes at last to the long-awaited sentence, 'After these things, the king raised to power Haman the Agagite'—but nobody hears the last two words. The name 'Haman' triggers off stamping, pounding, and a hurricane of groggers. The Reader waits patiently. The din dies. He chants on, and soon strikes another 'Haman.' Bedlam breaks loose again. This continues, and since Haman is now a chief figure in the story, the noisy outbursts come pretty frequently. The children, far from getting tired or bored, warm to the work.

They do it with sure mob instinct: poised silence during the reading, explosions on each 'Haman.' Passages occur where Haman's name crops up several times in a very short space. The children's assaults come like pistol shots. The Reader's patience wears thin and finally breaks. It is impossible to read with so many interruptions. He gestures angrily at the children through the grogger storm and shoots a glance of appeal to the rabbi. This, of course, is what the children have been waiting for. The stag is down. Thereafter to the end it is a merciless battle between the Reader and the children. He tries to slur over the thick-falling 'Hamans,' they trip him every time with raucous salvos. He stumbles on to the final verse, exhausted, beaten, furious, and all is disordered hilarity in the synagogue. It is perhaps not quite fair to make the Reader stand in for Haman on this evening, but that is approximately what happens. . . .

"Beyond this gaiety, it carries four religious obligations: to hear the *Megillah* (the Scroll of Esther) read, to distribute largesse to the poor, to make a feast, and to exchange presents with neighbors and friends. This last institution is *Shalakh Manos*, the Sending of Gifts: things that can be eaten and drunk the same day." (Herman Wouk, *This Is My God*, pp. 98–100.)

(31-18) Esther 10:1–3. Why Did Most of the Jews Stay in Babylon?

Having Mordecai near the king undoubtedly relieved the Jews of much oppression and gave them a favorable place in the empire. This good treatment may have been the reason most Jews elected to remain in Babylon rather than return to Judea when the opportunity came.

POINTS TO PONDER

(31-19) Mordecai: In the World But Not of It

Mordecai's situation is parallel in some ways to that in which modern followers of Jesus find themselves. For Mordecai, Babylon was a physical reality. He was forced to function in the midst of an alien society. Today, Babylon, or the world, is a spiritual reality. The standards of the modern world are increasingly alien to the values held by the disciples of the Savior. The challenge is to keep the values intact and yet find ways, as did Mordecai, to be of service both to society and to Christ. Mordecai could not have done what he did if he had compromised his standards. Because he had prepared himself and was willing to become involved, he eventually became the chief minister of the king.

"The Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants tells us to be anxiously engaged in good causes. This suggests we can't respond to all causes. We must be selective in the things we seek to do in terms of community and civic chores. But it also suggests we ought to devote a

measure of our time and talent to do these things, for they do count on the scales of action as God sees it.

"The world is full of fads. The world is full of the marches of lemmings to the sea. The world is full of causes that lead into conceptual cul-de-sacs. Our task, therefore, is to be wise in the selection of good causes, using the scriptures and the modern prophets as our guide.

"Anne Morrow Lindbergh, in her book *Gift from the Sea*, says: 'My life cannot implement in action all the demands of all the people to whom my heart responds.' You will care for more things than you will be able to do things about. Wise selection of causes is one of the highest forms of the use of free agency that there is, and, really, one of the ways God tests our basic wisdom and our capacity to love." (Neal A. Maxwell, speech delivered at Catalina Young Adult Conference, 23 Oct. 1972.)

(31-20) Have You Come "for Such a Time As This"?

Esther means a "star" in the Persian tongue. How fitting a title for a woman who may have been there "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons [and daughters] of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). Though the text does not mention any foreordination or calling for Esther, Mordecai's question, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14) suggests that Esther came into the world to save God's covenant people.

F. M. Bareham wrote:

"We fancy God can manage His world only with great battalions, when all the time He is doing it with beautiful babies.

"When a wrong wants righting, or a truth wants preaching, or a continent wants discovering, God sends a baby into the world." (In Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 323.)

What about you? Have you ever stopped to contemplate what your own foreordination may entail? Consider these thoughts from Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "We are quite well aware that Joseph Smith and Jeremiah and the apostles and prophets, the wise, the great, and the good were foreordained to particular ministries. But that is only a part of the doctrine of foreordination. The great and glorious thing about foreordination is that the whole House of Israel was foreordained, that millions upon millions—comparatively few compared to the total preexistent host—but millions of people were foreordained." (*Making Our Calling and Election Sure*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, [25 Mar. 1969], p. 6.)

It may be that your calling is not to save a nation, or to lead one. But one thing is certain: you are here now not by chance but by design. If you will, you have a role to play in building the kingdom that will eventually produce Zion and prepare for the Second Coming of Christ.



Nehemiah: Builder of Walls and Wills

(32-1) Introduction

Nehemiah stands out as one of the noble men in the Old Testament. As he fulfilled a necessary mission in his day, he demonstrated the highest level of dedication and courage, both in the practical matter of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and also in the spiritual matter of rebuilding the religious life of his people.

“The book of Nehemiah carries the history of the Jewish people down to a later date than any other of the avowedly historical works in the canon of the OT. Its interest is manifold, since it describes not only the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, but the reconstruction of the Jewish ecclesiastical organization; and as an authority for the events it relates, is first-rate, since it is largely based upon contemporary materials. And its value is augmented by its vivid portrayal of the noble character of Nehemiah himself. His career presents an exceptional combination of strong self-reliance with humble trust in God, of penetrating shrewdness with perfect simplicity of purpose, of persistent prayerfulness with the most energetic activity; and for religious faith and practical sagacity he stands conspicuous among the illustrious personages of the Bible.” (J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 278.)

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Nehemiah.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON NEHEMIAH

(32-2) Nehemiah 1. Who Was Nehemiah? Where and When Did His Narrative Begin?

Little is known about the background of Nehemiah except that he was a Jew born while the Jews were in exile. His age is not given, but it is likely that he was born after Cyrus had decreed the Jews could return to their homeland. As was explained in Notes and Commentary on Ezra and Enrichment J, only a small number of the Jews in exile chose to return. Nehemiah’s family must have been one of those that did not. They were probably of some influence, since Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes (see Nehemiah 2:1). Assassination was a constant threat to a king, and poisoned food or drink was one of the most effective ways to accomplish it. The cupbearer, the one who ensured that the king’s food and drink were safe, was in a position of great trust and responsibility. Even though he was in Persia enjoying power and importance,

Nehemiah had not forgotten his people and homeland. When he heard of their sad condition, he fasted and prayed for his people.

(32-3) Nehemiah 2:1–11. The King Sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem

The favor in which Nehemiah was held by King Artaxerxes is evident not only in that he granted him permission to return but also in that he gave him guards, an escort, and a safe conduct through the lands on his return to Judah “beyond the river,” or west of the Euphrates. The king also granted him permission to use timber from the royal forests to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem as well as the gates and his own house.

(32-4) Nehemiah 2:10. Who Was Sanballat?

Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and the governors of other nearby areas opposed the plans of the Jews for Jerusalem and resented the protection given them by the Persian king. A deep bitterness had developed between the Samaritans and the Jews who had returned with Zerubbabel (see Notes and Commentary on Ezra 4). For Nehemiah to return with full power from the emperor to refortify Jerusalem was a great setback for the Samaritans, and they openly opposed it. Sanballat of Samaria led this group (see v. 19) and made it necessary for Nehemiah to arm those who worked on the walls of Jerusalem (see chapters 4 and 6).

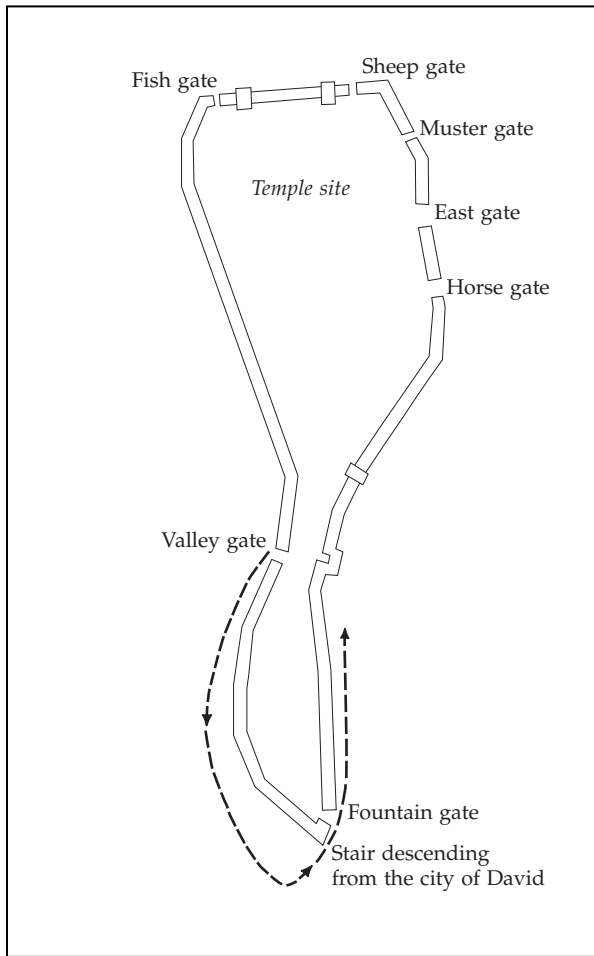
(32-5) Nehemiah 2:12–16. Nehemiah’s Night Journey around the Walls

Nehemiah wrote in such detail about his night reconnaissance and the later reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem that we have a good idea of the actual sites of much that he reported. The accompanying map shows the estimated locations.

See Maps, “Jerusalem,” for a comparison of Jerusalem in Nehemiah’s time with the city in Jesus’ time.

(32-6) Nehemiah 4:16–18. “The Other Hand Held a Weapon”

The names of the families assigned to repair the walls and gates are given in Nehemiah 3. But the leaders of the surrounding communities were angry that the Jews were fortifying Jerusalem and resuming their former religious practices. Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, was especially angry. But the plan they laid to attack and prevent the repair of the walls, now about halfway up (see Nehemiah 4:6), was frustrated by Nehemiah, who had those who guarded and those who labored arm themselves by day and by night (see vv. 21–22). Nehemiah’s encouragement to the Jews to defend their families and homes (see v. 14) is similar to the charge Moroni gave in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 43:46–47; 46:12).



Nehemiah's night walk

Members of the Church earlier in this dispensation experienced similar opposition. Consider what President George Q. Cannon, who was a member of the First Presidency, said of the persecution in Utah around 1884: "It is very encouraging to think that, in the midst of the assaults which are being made upon the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the threats that are in circulation concerning us and our future fate, there is faith enough found in the midst of the people to pursue, without discouragement and without cessation, the great work which we feel that our Father has laid upon us. We have not been situated as we were in Nauvoo, when we finished our temple there, for then the workmen who labored upon it, were like the Jews in the days of Nehemiah, when they undertook to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and had to labor a portion of the time at least, and a great portion of it too, with their instruments of labor in one hand, and weapons to defend themselves in the other. We were surrounded by mobs, and living in a constant state, it may be said of fear, because of the threats which were made and the combinations which were formed, and the attacks upon our outlying settlements in the burning of houses, in the destruction of grain, in the shooting down of cattle, and in the driving out of the people from their homes." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 25:167.)

(32-7) Nehemiah 5. Nehemiah Demanded Social Reforms among His People

Nehemiah's true greatness shines forth in these verses. One of the reasons the Jews were still in great poverty was the unrighteous oppression of the people by their previous rulers. Nehemiah could have glutted himself in the same manner, but instead he became angry about the over taxation (the king's tribute), usury (interest), slavery, and the confiscation of private property.

Although his predecessors "were chargeable unto the people" (Nehemiah 5:15) or, in other words, laid a heavy burden upon the people, Nehemiah showed his greatness as the governor by not accepting a salary from the taxes of the people. He was wealthy and chose to serve without remuneration.

The righteous kings in the Book of Mormon had the same sense of public morality and worked for their livelihood rather than burdening their people (see Mosiah 2:14; 29:40).

(32-8) Nehemiah 6. What Was the Importance of the Wall?

Sanballat tried to lure Nehemiah into some "mischief" (Nehemiah 6:2) through an invitation for negotiations, but Nehemiah was not deceived. In fact, he was not even intimidated by Sanballat's threat to report a Jewish rebellion to King Artaxerxes.

The wall was finished in fifty-two days (see v. 15), and watches were set to protect those who lived in the city. The walls were a protection, but they were also an important physical symbol of the establishment of the Jews as a people. The holy city became a unifying force as families were chosen by lot to come live in it (see Nehemiah 11:1-2). Sanballat and the other enemies of Judah fully understood the significance of the walls and of Nehemiah's unifying leadership. That is why their opposition was so persistent.

(32-9) Nehemiah 7:63-65. What Did It Mean to Be "Put from the Priesthood"?

Those who could not trace their genealogy, or who tried to hide it, were denied the priesthood. The same situation was reported in Ezra 2:62. "The Tirshatha" is a title for the governor (see Nehemiah 7:65, 70).

(32-10) Nehemiah 8:1-12. Establishing the Synagogue and the Feast

The reading of the law to the people by Ezra the scribe is of particular importance because it appears to have been the first time a synagogue, or a place to read and expound the scriptures, was established in Jerusalem after the return from Babylon. One Bible scholar commented on verse 8 as follows: "The Israelites, having been lately brought out of the Babylonish captivity, in which they had continued *seventy years*, according to the prediction of Jeremiah, [25:11], were not only extremely corrupt, but it appears that they had in general lost the knowledge of the ancient Hebrew to such a degree, that when the book of the law was read, they did not understand it: but certain Levites *stood by, and gave the sense*, i.e., translated into the Chaldee dialect. . . . It appears that the people were not only

ignorant of their ancient language, but also of the rites and ceremonies of their religion, having been so long in Babylon, where they were not permitted to observe them. This being the case, not only the *language* must be *interpreted*, but the meaning of the *rites and ceremonies* must also be explained; for we find from ver. 13, &c., of this chapter, that they had even forgotten the *feast of tabernacles*, and every thing relative to that ceremony." (Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:781–82; see also Enrichment H.)

(32-11) Nehemiah 8:10. Care for the Poor

Once again, Nehemiah's great goodness was demonstrated. He did not call for religious observance alone. He called on the people not only to join in a religious feast but to remember the poor, to share their joy in God's goodness by charitable service.

(32-12) Nehemiah 8:13–18. Why Did Nehemiah Reestablish the Feast of Tabernacles?

Unless one understands the significance of the feast of Tabernacles, it may seem peculiar that Ezra chose this feast as so important. The commandments for its observance are found in Leviticus 23:34–44. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained its peculiar significance: "One of the three great feasts at which the attendance of all male Israelites was compulsory, the Feast of Tabernacles, was by all odds Israel's greatest feast. Coming five days after the Day of Atonement, it was thus celebrated when the sins of the chosen people had been removed and when their special covenant relation to Jehovah had been renewed and restored. Above all other occasions it was one for rejoicing, bearing testimony, and praising the Lord. In the full sense, it is the Feast of Jehovah, the one Mosaic celebration which, as part of the restitution of all



A booth for the feast of Tabernacles

things, shall be restored when Jehovah comes to reign personally upon the earth for a thousand years. Even now we perform one of its chief rituals in our solemn assemblies, the giving of the Hosanna Shout, and the worshipers of Jehovah shall yet be privileged to exult in other of its sacred rituals.

"Also known as the Feast of Booths, because Israel dwelt in booths while in the wilderness, and as the Feast of Ingathering, because it came after the completion of the full harvest, it was a time of gladsome rejoicing and the extensive offering of sacrifices. More sacrifices were offered during the Feast of the Passover than at any other time because a lamb was slain for and eaten by each family or group, but at the Feast of Tabernacles more sacrifices of bullocks, rams, lambs, and goats were offered by the priests for the nation as a whole than at all the other Israelite feasts combined. The fact that it celebrated the completion of the full harvest symbolizes the gospel reality that it is the mission of the house of Israel to gather all nations to Jehovah, a process that is now going forward, but will not be completed until that millennial day when 'the Lord shall be king over all the earth,' and shall reign personally thereon. Then shall be fulfilled that which is written: [Zechariah 14:9–21]. That will be the day when the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Manifestly when the Feast of Tabernacles is kept in that day, its ritualistic performances will conform to the new gospel order and not include the Mosaic order of the past." (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 432–33.)

(32-13) Nehemiah 9. Remembering the Lord

Separated from the foreigners (strangers) in their midst, the Jews fasted, prayed, praised the Lord, and recited their long history and God's blessings to them through the generations from Abraham to their own day. The Levites (the priesthood group) led in this, and their praise of God seems to have been stimulated by the study of the Law. Many references from Nehemiah 9 refer to historical events found in the five books of Moses:

1. Verse 6 refers to the Creation (Genesis 1).
2. Verse 7 refers to the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 11–17).
3. Verses 9–11 refer to the Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 1–14).
4. Verse 12 refers to the pillar of fire and smoke (Exodus 13:21–22).
5. Verses 13–14 refer to the giving of the Law (Exodus 20).
6. Verse 15 refers to the manna and to water from a rock (Exodus 16–17).
7. Verse 17 refers to the rebelliousness of the Israelites (numerous examples appear in Exodus and Numbers).
8. Verse 18 refers to the golden calf incident (Exodus 32).

The references to historical events continue in this fashion.

The Levites constantly referred to the scriptures in praising the Lord. It says much about the spiritual state of the returning exiles that the scriptures had become so neglected. And it says much about Nehemiah's and Ezra's wisdom that they sought to bring the people back into the covenant by using the scriptures.

(32-14) Nehemiah 10:28–39. The Jews Renewed Their Covenants

In their new spirit of unity and national pride, the Jews made covenants to marry within Israel (see Nehemiah 10:30); keep the Sabbath (see v. 31); pay the “temple tax” instituted by Moses (see v. 32); make offerings (see vv. 33–35); dedicate the firstborn to the Lord (see v. 36); support the Levites and priests with their tithes (see vv. 37–38); and do all things necessary to sustain the temple (see v. 39). In other words, they covenanted to reestablish obedience to the law of Moses.

Nehemiah 10:38 mentions “the tithes of the tithes.” The Levites were to tithe their own support money for the priests. Originally the temple tax was half a shekel for everyone over twenty years of age (see Exodus 30:13). This amount was reduced to a “third part,” or one third of a shekel. Such offerings were still a practice in the days of Jesus (see Luke 21:1–4).

(32-15) Nehemiah 10:29. Did the People Enter into a Curse?

The phrase “and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God’s law” (v. 29) was clarified by Joseph Smith to read: “And entered into an oath, that a curse should come upon them if they did not walk in God’s law” (JST, Nehemiah 10:29).

(32-16) Nehemiah 11:1–2. A Tithe of the People Also

Lots were cast, and one of every ten families in Persia came to dwell in Jerusalem as a tithe to the Holy City.

(32-17) Nehemiah 13. Nehemiah Established More Reforms

Nehemiah cleared the synagogues of foreigners (see Nehemiah 13:1–3) and then cleansed the temple of a resident apostate (see vv. 4–9). He enforced controls on buying and selling on the Sabbath (see vv. 14–21) and further advised all Israel to marry wives from among their own people. Here was a man who left a position of great wealth and influence and out of love for God and his people dedicated his life to righteous purposes. Surely Nehemiah will be counted as one of God’s chosen servants.

(32-18) Nehemiah 13:28–31. What Event Was Recorded in These Verses, and Why Is It Significant?

In later times the Samaritans viewed Mount Gerizim as the holy mountain in opposition to the Jews who saw Jerusalem as the sacred place (see John 4:19–22). Although it is not specifically stated, the conflict mentioned here in Nehemiah was what led to the establishment of Mount Gerizim as the holy place of the Samaritans.

“After the return from the Babylonian captivity Gerizim again became a place of importance, as the center of the Samaritan worship. A certain Manasseh, son or grandson of Joiada, a priest in Jerusalem (Neh. 13:28), had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Refusing to put her away, he was expelled from the priesthood, and took refuge with the Samaritans, among whom, as a member of the high priestly family, he set up upon Mount Gerizim a rival temple and priesthood (John 4:20).” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Gerizim.”)



Mount Gerizim

POINTS TO PONDER

(32-19) A Time for Confidence and Covenant Making

As you review the Old Testament, you will see evidence again and again that circumstances could have been better if the people had kept all their covenants. But you can also see that the Lord never loses control. Under what seemed almost impossible circumstances, the rulers, priests, and prophets of the Lord were told to do things calculated to supply all the blessings the covenant people were willing to receive. It did not appear possible to do what the Lord asked of the people through Zerubbabel, Ezra, or Nehemiah. Yet with a little prodding from the prophets, the confidence of the people increased and they forged ahead.

President Brigham Young said of having confidence during trials: “*Confidence*, brethren, CONFIDENCE in our God, and in each other. . . . I may say, that we have it already; but I think that an increase of faith in our God, and confidence in each other, is desirable. If we could obtain that faith and confidence in each other, and in our God, that when we ask a favor, we could do so with a full assurance and knowledge that we should receive, do you not perceive that it would lead us directly to do as we would be done by, in every transaction and circumstance of life. It would prompt us to do, not only as much as requested, but more. If your brother should request you to go with him a mile, you would go two; if he should sue you for your coat, you would give him your cloak also. This principle prompts us to do all we can to promote the interest of each other, the cause of God on the earth, and whatever the Lord desires us to do; makes us ready and willing to perform it at once.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 1:115.)

There were the valiant who worked diligently, there were those who were fainthearted, and there were those who were bitter enemies of the Lord’s work and His servants. Yet the work was done and became a monument to the faith and courage of those who had accepted their responsibility.

The Jews in the day of Nehemiah took vows to renew their covenants that they and their fathers had taken. Some people today take their covenants lightly, an attitude on which President Joseph Fielding Smith had the following comment:

“We should fully and sincerely comprehend the fact that no requirement, request, or commandment made of man by the Father or the Son is given except for the purpose of advancing man on the path of eternal perfection. Never at any time has the Lord given to man a commandment which was not intended to exalt him and bring him nearer to eternal companionship with the Father and the Son. Too many of us receive the commandments of the Lord in the spirit of indifference or with the attitude of mind toward them that they have been given for the sole purpose of depriving us of some comfort or pleasure without any real profit to be derived in the observance of them.

“Every covenant, contract, bond, obligation, and commandment we have received by revelation and coming from the Almighty has the one purpose in view, the exaltation and perfection of the individual who will in full faith and obedience accept it. He that ‘receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned,’ [D&C 58:29] the Lord has said. Unfortunately there are a great many who receive covenants in that way.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:155–56.)



Preparations for the Lord's Return in Glory

(33-1) Introduction

When God gives a task, the faithful move with speed and diligence to complete the work assigned. While it is sometimes simple to begin, it is not always easy or convenient to finish. Time moves on, and procrastination is a thief of time.

So it was with ancient Judah. When Cyrus, king of Persia, gave permission for the Jews to return from exile in Babylon, he also granted that the city walls and sacred temple of Jerusalem be rebuilt. The returning Jews went to work almost at once. But a good start is not necessarily a good finish. The work on the temple lagged until the Lord sent Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people. With their encouragement, the people began in earnest to finish the temple. Although never as magnificent as the temple of Solomon, the second temple became a symbol of devotion and obedience to those who sacrificed to build it for the Lord.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Zechariah.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON ZECHARIAH

(33-2) Zechariah 1:1. Who Was Zechariah?

Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, who was “the son of Iddo the Prophet” (v. 1). Iddo was one of “the priests and the Levites” who accompanied Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, home from exile in Babylon (see Nehemiah 12:1, 4, 7).

Some confuse Zechariah with the Zacharias mentioned in the New Testament (see Matthew 23:55; Luke 11:51). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, however, that they are two different individuals (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 261).

(33-3) Zechariah 1:2–6. Is the Word of the Lord Always Fulfilled?

Zechariah told the people who came out of exile from Babylon that they were witnesses to the fulfillment of the word of God that He gave through the prophets to their forefathers (see Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch suggested that Zechariah said: “Your fathers have indeed been long dead, and even the prophets do not, or cannot, live for ever; but notwithstanding this, the words of the earlier prophets

were fulfilled in the case of the fathers. The words and decrees of God uttered by the prophets did reach the fathers, so that they were obliged to confess that God had really done to them what He threatened, *i.e.*, had carried out the threatened punishment.” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10:2:226.)

Zechariah pleaded with the people not to resist the words of the prophets as their forefathers had done.

(33-4) Zechariah 1:8–17. First Vision of Zechariah

This is the first of seven visions given to Zechariah. “The occasion of the visions is the growing impatience of the returned exiles. They could perceive no sign of God’s presence, or of His interest in their labours and difficulties. Haggai had assured them that in ‘a little while’ God would ‘shake the kingdoms’ and fill His house with glory (Haggai 2:6, 7). But time passed and there was no sign of this. The people began to lose faith in God. These visions of Zechariah thus came at a most important crisis. To his countrymen they were a bright panorama of hope, revealing the marvellous providence of God, and His love for His people.

“The first vision assures them that God knows every detail of their circumstances. His messengers are ever on the alert, bringing tidings to their King from all parts of the earth.” (J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 601.)

(33-5) Zechariah 1:8. What Is the Meaning of the Different-Colored Horses?

“A man riding upon a red horse is probably the angel of the Lord (*cf.* v. 11; see also Introduction to Exodus, p. 116). In this scene, enacted in the valley bottom, he is the protector of God’s people. Aspects of the divine providence are represented in the colours of the heavenly scouts. *Red* depicts battle and bloodshed (*cf.* Rev. 6:4); *white* represents victory and peace (*cf.* Rev. 6:2); *sorrel* [speckled in the King James Version], *i.e.* reddish brown, is the aftermath of confusion in the unsettled period after the end of hostilities (*cf.* Rev. 6:5–8).” (D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 789.)

(33-6) Zechariah 1:9–11. Mission of the Riders

“The riders sent out by God now return and report that the earth is by no means shaken and in motion, but the whole world sits quiet and at rest. We must not, indeed, infer from this account that the riders were all sent for the simple and exclusive purpose of obtaining information concerning the state of the earth, and communicating it to the Lord. For it would have been quite superfluous and unmeaning to send out an entire troop, on horses of different colours, for this purpose alone. Their mission was rather to take an active part in the agitation of the nations, if any such existed, and guide it to the divinely appointed end, and that in the manner indicated by the colour of their horses; viz.

according to [Revelation 6], those upon the red horses by war and bloodshed; those upon the starling-grey, or speckled horses, by famine, pestilence, and other plagues; and lastly, those upon the white horses, by victory and the conquest of the world." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:234.)

(33-7) Zechariah 1:12–17. Restoration of Jerusalem

For seventy years Jerusalem lay in ruins after the terrible destruction by the Babylonians at the time of King Zedekiah, king of Judah. Zechariah now prophesied of a time when the land of Judah would again prosper. Cities would cover the land, and Jerusalem would be rebuilt and be adorned with a temple. The Lord will yet accept His people and own Jerusalem. Here again was a dualistic prophecy. Jerusalem was rebuilt under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah and again became the capital of the Jewish nation. But in A.D. 70 Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Jews as a nation. Not until 1948, when Israel once again became an independent nation, did Jerusalem again become the seat of government for a Jewish nation. On 13 December 1949, the Israeli government announced that "Jerusalem was and would remain Israel's eternal capital" (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 9:1486).

(33-8) Zechariah 1:16. "A Line Shall Be Stretched Forth upon Jerusalem"

This was a way of saying that the city would be measured and built accordingly (see Jeremiah 31:38–40).

(33-9) Zechariah 1:18–19. What Are the Horns?

"The horn is a symbol of power [compare Amos 6:13]. The horns therefore symbolize the powers of the world, which rise up in hostility against Judah and hurt it. . . . The four horns which are seen simultaneously [may] represent nations which succeeded one another. This is shown still more clearly by the visions in [Daniel 2 and 7], in which not only the colossal image seen in a dream by Nebuchadnezzar [Daniel 2], but also the four beasts which are seen by Daniel to ascend simultaneously from the sea, symbolize the four empires, which rose up in succession one after the other. It is to these four empires that the four horns of our vision refer. . . . Zechariah sees these in all the full development of their power, in which they have oppressed and crushed the people of God, . . . and for which they are to be destroyed themselves." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:238–39.)

It is not clear which four empires are meant in this prophecy. If the prophecy referred to the empires of the past that engaged in the scattering, they would be Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Media. But if Zechariah was also looking to the future, as Daniel did, the four empires would be Assyria, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome. Persia and Media would be omitted, since they were responsible for the return of the exiles.

(33-10) Zechariah 1:20–21. What Is the Purpose of the Carpenters?

The Lord told Zechariah that the builders would "fray" and "cast out" the four horns. As Keil and Delitzsch noted: "The vision does not show what powers God will use for this purpose. It is simply designed to show to the people of God, that every

hostile power of the world which has risen up against it, or shall rise up, is to be judged and destroyed by the Lord." (*Commentary*, 10:2:241.)

(33-11) Zechariah 2:1–5. Why Wasn't Jerusalem to Be Measured?

"Jerusalem is in future to resemble an open country covered with unwalled cities and villages; it will no longer be a city closely encircled with walls; hence it will be extraordinarily enlarged, on account of the multitude of men and cattle with which it will be blessed [compare Isaiah 49:19–20; Ezekiel 38:11]. Moreover, . . . Jerusalem will then have no protecting wall surrounding it, because it will enjoy a superior protection. Jehovah will be to it a wall of fire round about, that is to say, a defence of fire which will consume every one who ventures to attack it [compare Isaiah 4:5; Deuteronomy 4:24]. Jehovah will also be the glory in the midst of Jerusalem, that is to say, will fill the city with His glory [compare Isaiah 60:19]." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:245.)

Not until modern times has the city of Jerusalem grown beyond its walls.



Modern Jerusalem extends beyond its walls.

(33-12) Zechariah 2:8. What Is the Meaning of the Expression "Apple of His Eye"?

"The apple of the eye (*lit.* the gate, the opening in which the eye is placed, or more probably the pupil of the eye, *pupilla*, as being the object most carefully preserved), is a figure used to denote the dearest possession or good, and in this sense is applied to the nation of Israel as early as [Deuteronomy 32:10]." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:248.)

(33-13) Zechariah 3. Who Was Joshua the High Priest?

Most scholars agree that the Joshua referred to here was the high priest of the time. But in typical prophetic fashion, there is dualism in this chapter. Joshua (Hebrew *Yeshua*, Greek *Hee-ay-sous*, English *Jesus*) was a type of Jesus Christ, the great High Priest (see Hebrews 4:14). The chapter is messianic.

"From the promises of a glorious future for the city and people of God, Zechariah turns to the means by which they are to be achieved. God will raise up

a perfect priestly Mediator, of whom Joshua and his fellow-priests are a foreshadowing." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 790.)

(33-14) Zechariah 3:2. How Is Israel "a Brand Plucked out of the Fire"?

This is "perhaps a proverbial expression. Israel as a nation had been rescued from the furnace of Babylon . . . to become a torch to enlighten the nations." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 791.)

(33-15) Zechariah 3:3-5. What Is the Symbolism of "Filthy Garments"?

"Joshua is opposed by Satan [see Zechariah 3:1], . . . not on account of any personal offences either in his private or his domestic life, but in his official capacity as high priest, and for sins which were connected with his office, or for offences which would involve the nation [Leviticus 4:3]; though not as the bearer of the sins of the people before the Lord, but as laden with his own and his people's sins. The dirty clothes, which he had on, point to this [Zechariah 3:3]." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:251.)

The garment of filthiness represents sin. Changing the garment symbolizes doing away with the old and putting on the new—which would be robes of righteousness.

(33-16) Zechariah 3:8-10. Who Is the Branch?

See Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:1. This is a messianic reference.

(33-17) Zechariah 4:2. What Does the Candlestick Represent?

The candlestick represents Judah, who had returned from exile in Babylon (see Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 603).

(33-18) Zechariah 4:3, 11-14. Who Are the Two Olive Trees?

The two olive trees represent Joshua and Zerubbabel (see Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:510).

Joshua and Zerubbabel can be seen as messianic types, "who as Spirit-filled men convey blessing from God to church and state, and are a type of the Messiah as Priest and King" (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 791). The same imagery was used by John in Revelation 11:4.

(33-19) Zechariah 4:7. What Is the Meaning of the Mountain before Zerubbabel?

The mountain represents the obstacles that stood before Zerubbabel as he tried to complete the temple. The mountain became a plain; that is, the obstacles were removed, and Zerubbabel was able to complete his work on the temple (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:270-72).

(33-20) Zechariah 4:10. "The Eyes of the Lord"

The Prophet Joseph Smith changed this phrase to "servants of the Lord" (see JST, Zechariah 4:10; compare Revelation 4:8; D&C 77:4).



Two olive trees

(33-21) Zechariah 5:1-4. What Is the Meaning of the "Flying Roll"?

The roll was a scroll or book, which Zechariah saw flying through the air. "The flying scroll appears to represent the main provisions of the law, both moral and religious, and symbolizes the divine standard of holiness. Its flight in the heavens shows from which quarter judgment comes and also the speed of its execution. Two particular sins are condemned, one on each side of the scroll, according to the force of the Hebrew. The curse lights upon every thief and perjurer, theft and lying being typical sins of a poor community (cf. 7:9, 10; 8:17). So penetrating and permanent is the penalty that it enters and consumes the very structure of the house of the wrongdoer as though the building were defiled by leprosy (cf. Lv. 14:45)." (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 792.)

(33-22) Zechariah 5:6-11. The Seventh Vision

To understand this vision it is necessary to understand several symbols:

Ephah. A round vessel that was one of the largest measures of capacity among the Jews.

Talent of lead. The talent was the largest measure of weight. A talent of lead suggests a very weighty matter.

Woman. A symbol of Israel and her sins.

Shinar. A symbol of Babylon or the world (see Genesis 10:10).

Zechariah saw in the vision the woman being put in an ephah, covered with a lid made of lead, and carried away into Babylon. Babylon was "regarded as the counterpart of Zion and the proper home of all that

is evil, especially of sins such as fraud and false swearing. The vision is remarkable. God not only forgives the sins of His people, but carries them altogether away from their land, that they may deceive them no more." (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 604.)

(33-23) Zechariah 6:1–8. What Was the Mission of the Four Servants?

The Prophet Joseph Smith changed the phrase "four spirits" (v. 5) to read "four servants" (JST, Zechariah 6:5). This major change is vital to an understanding of these verses. Servants of the Lord are priesthood holders who labor to bring about the purposes of God.

The servants came from between two mountains (two places where the Lord will judge the nations) which were made of brass (a symbol of firmness; see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:286–87). The four servants went throughout the earth in chariots drawn by horses of different colors (see Notes and Commentary on Zechariah 1:8). The black horses, the only ones not previously mentioned, seem to represent death or mourning.

John the Revelator also spoke of the four servants, or angels, who stood at the four corners of the earth (see Revelation 7:1–3). On 6 December 1832, the Savior told the Prophet Joseph Smith that these angels were crying unto Him day and night for permission to reap down the earth and burn the tares (see D&C 86:4–7). Zechariah 6:7 states that the angels could not go forth upon the earth until given permission by the Lord.

Sixty-one years after the revelation in section 86 of the Doctrine and Covenants was given, President Wilford Woodruff declared that the Lord had released those destroying angels and they were then upon the earth separating the tares from the wheat in preparation for the burning that would soon take place: "God has held the angels of destruction for many years, lest they should reap down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, that those angels have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over this people and this nation now, and are hovering over the earth waiting to pour out the judgments. *And from this very day they shall be poured out.* Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. Remember this, and reflect upon these matters. If you do your duty, and I do my duty, we'll have protection, and shall pass through the afflictions in peace and in safety." ("The Temple Workers' Excursion," *Young Woman's Journal*, Aug. 1894, pp. 512–13; emphasis added.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

"Now I want to make some comments in regard to the statement by President Woodruff and this parable [the parable of the wheat and tares in D&C 86].

"The Lord said that the sending forth of these angels was to be at the end of the harvest, and the harvest is the end of the world. Now, that ought to cause us some very serious reflections. And the angels have been pleading, as I have read it to you, before the Lord to be sent on their mission. Until 1893 the Lord said to them no, and then He set them loose. According to the revelation of President Woodruff, the Lord sent them out on that mission.

"What do we gather out of that? That we are at the time of the end. This is the time of the harvest. This is

the time spoken of which is called the end of the world." (*The Signs of the Times*, pp. 11–21.)

(33-24) Zechariah 6:9–15. A Messianic Type

"A party of Jews had just come from Babylon. Zechariah is instructed to take part of the silver and gold which they have brought for the Temple, and to make a set of circlets for Joshua, the high priest. Thus he will more fully be a type of One to come, who is both Priest and King to His people." (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 605.)

(33-25) Zechariah 7:1–14. Righteousness More Important Than Ritual

This chapter contains the explanation of why the Lord refused to hear the prayers of Judah and permitted Nebuchadnezzar to scatter the Jews from their homeland for a time. It begins with the question of whether the Jews who had returned from Babylon should continue to observe the feasts and fasts that they had observed while in exile as memorials of the burning of Jerusalem and the temple at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. "Zechariah's answer, which is intended to reach the ears of *all the people* (v. 5), is of special significance when we remember his profound interest in the Temple; it shows that he, like *the former*, i.e., the pre-exiles, *prophets . . .*, cared infinitely more for righteousness than for ritual. Their fasting, he reminds them, like their eating and drinking, did not in any way affect God, but only themselves. His demand, voiced by those prophets, was for something very different—for true *justice* (cf. Amos 5:24), *kindness* (cf. Hos. 6:6) and *pity* in their social relationships, and for the temper which would scorn to exploit the defenseless members of society or to harbor malicious designs against them (vv. 9b–11). This prophetic *law* (v. 12), i.e., instruction, though it had been mediated by the divine *Spirit*, they had willfully rejected, *turning a stubborn shoulder* (v. 11) like an animal that refuses to bear the yoke, with the result that Jehovah was indignant (v. 12), scattered them among strange nations (v. 14a), and abandoned their lovely land to desolation (v. 14b)." (Frederick Carl Eiselen, ed., *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 824.)

(33-26) Zechariah 7:5, 8:19. What Was the Purpose of the Feasts?

While the Jews were in captivity in Babylon, they celebrated four different feasts in remembrance of events that took place when Babylon attacked and destroyed Jerusalem.

One feast was celebrated in the tenth month, the month in which the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 39:1).

A second feast, celebrated in the fourth month, commemorated the destruction of Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 39:2; 52:67).

A third feast, held in the fifth month, marked the destruction of the temple (see Jeremiah 52:12–14).

A fourth feast was celebrated in the seventh month to commemorate the assassination of Gedaliah, the puppet king placed over Judah by the Babylonians after they destroyed Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 25:25).

Zechariah reminded the people that they had set up the feast days to remind them of tragedies, but not once did they remember the Lord through feasts while in captivity.

(33-27) Zechariah 8:1–8. What Did Zechariah Envision Here?

Looking at Jerusalem as he saw it during the period when God’s people were scattered on the earth, Zechariah spoke of a broken city, denuded of both the very old and very young. The vision given to him by the Lord permitted him to see a future day in which Jerusalem shall be “a city of truth and the mountain of the Lord” (the temple) and shall stand once again. “Old men and old women” shall “dwell in the streets of Jerusalem” and “the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof” (vv. 4–5).

“Like Joel, and the other prophets, Zechariah vigorously condemned Israel’s sins, yet he foresaw a restoration of God’s favors as a reward for repentance and adherence to His laws. . . . He was an optimist who loved to linger on the bright and beautiful things of life, though not afraid to recognize and make known the ills that needed to be corrected. He liked to think of Jerusalem restored to her one-time glory, filled with many families of happy children and with prosperity and peace abounding all around; with hate and selfishness banished and God’s tender care and love guiding His children. . . .

“Too often are people prone to consider the gloomy side of the messages of the prophets. A little care will lead to the realization that the bright side overshadows the darker one and reveals a hope for the future in which God and right will triumph and the world emerge in righteousness as He wills. Zechariah was one whose visions of light excelled many others.” (Roy A. Welker, *Spiritual Values of the Old Testament*, pp. 308–9.)

(33-28) Zechariah 8:11–17. Promise to Judah

The Lord promised to gather Judah (see JST, Zechariah 8:13 in footnote 13b) and restore the people to the land of Jerusalem. The heavens would no longer be sealed, and the thirsty land would become productive. As the promises of punishments were fulfilled to their forefathers, just as surely will the promises of blessings be fulfilled (see vv. 14–15).

The Lord will require then, as always, that His people keep His commandments and walk in continual righteousness (see vv. 16–17).

(33-29) Zechariah 8:20–23. When Will This Prophecy Be Fulfilled?

A time will come in the history of the earth when the work will spread from city to city. Many people will then come to the tribe of Judah to obtain from them the knowledge of these blessings. This prophecy will be fulfilled when the tribe of Judah turn their hearts to the God of Israel, accept the responsibility of the priesthood, and keep the commandments. Then peace will come to a troubled land and to the people.

It is possible that the word *Jew* is used here to refer to Israelites in general and not just a descendant of the tribe of Judah (see Romans 2:28–29; 9:6; 2 Nephi 30:2).

(33-30) Zechariah 9:1–8. Enemies of Judah

Many Bible scholars interpreted these verses as having been fulfilled at the time of Alexander the Great. It is true that Alexander the Great in approximately 332 B.C. destroyed these cities with his army. But the meaning of these verses is broader than that. “Of these the prophet simply refers to Damascus and Hamath in general terms; and it is only in the case of the Phoenician and Philistian cities that he proceeds to a special description of their fall from their lofty eminence, because they stood nearest to the kingdom of Israel, and represented the might of the kingdom of the world, and its hostility to the kingdom of God, partly in the worldly development of their own might, and partly in their hostility to the covenant nation. The description is an individualizing one throughout, exemplifying general facts by particular cities. This is also evident from the announcement of salvation for Zion in vers. 8–10, from which we may see that the overthrow of the nations hostile to Israel stands in intimate connection with the establishment of the Messianic kingdom; and it is also confirmed by the second half of our chapter, where the conquest of the imperial power by the people of God is set forth in the victories of Judah and Ephraim over the sons of Javan. That the several peoples and cities mentioned by name are simply introduced as representatives of the imperial power, is evident from the distinction made in this verse between (the rest of) mankind and all the tribes of Israel.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:325–26.)

(33-31) Zechariah 9:9. What Special Relevance Did This Verse Have to the Life of Jesus?

After issuing a threat of judgment on the wicked nations surrounding Judah, Zechariah recorded a passage that both Matthew and John saw as having been fulfilled by Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey’s back (compare Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1–11; and John 12:12–15).

(33-32) Zechariah 9:11–12. Who Are the Prisoners?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “It was of these that Zechariah prophesied when as part of a longer Messianic utterance, he spoke of ‘prisoners of hope’; it was of these that he gave assurance that ‘the Lord their God shall save them.’ He gives the Messianic message in these words: ‘By the blood of the covenant’—that is, because of the gospel covenant, which is efficacious because of the shedding of the blood of Christ—‘I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.’ (Zech. 9:11–16.) ‘Wherein is no water’—how aptly and succinctly this crystallizes the thought that the saving water, which is baptism, is an earthly ordinance and cannot be performed by spirit beings while they dwell in the spirit world. Did not Paul say in this same connection, ‘What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?’ (1 Cor. 15:29.)” (*The Promised Messiah*, p. 241.)

(33-33) Zechariah 9:13–17. Judah and Ephraim Blessed

There will come a day when Judah and Ephraim will be one—all Israel will be united. The Lord will



Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem

defend His people Israel against Greece (the world). In that day, Israel will become as a crown of precious stones and an ensign to all people. (See Notes and Commentary on Isaiah 11:13–14.)

(33-34) Zechariah 10:1–12. Follow the True Shepherd

Jesus Christ is the true shepherd of our souls (see John 10:7–15). He has control over the elements of nature and the power to save us eternally. Still there were those who preferred to rely on false shepherds. They turned to soothsayers and idols for rain. But those who do will find themselves without a real shepherd (see vv. 1–2). Those who follow Christ, on the other hand, will find a God who cares for His people (see v. 3), who uses them to carry out His purposes in the earth (see vv. 4–5), and who will restore both Judah and Ephraim to their rightful place before the Lord (see vv. 6–12).

(33-35) Zechariah 10:4. What Is the Meaning of the Symbols As They Relate to Judah?

“*Out of them* is repeated four times in this verse. Judah will provide the corner-stone for security. In Is. 28:16 this is a figure for the Davidic king. The *tent peg*, or nail, was the hooked peg built into a wall to hold the implements of war as well as the household utensils. This is the attribute of reliability (*cf.* Is. 22:23).

The *battle bow* refers to effective power in leadership (*cf.* Ho. 1:5). *Every ruler* (lit. ‘oppressor’); usually the word is employed in a bad sense, but here it is used positively. Their prince-leader will not oppress by unjust taxation or impose crushing burdens too great for the poor to bear, but will exact tribute from their vanquished enemies. Oesterly ascribed the above titles to Simon, Judas, and Jonathan Maccabeus, but each one of the four is undoubtedly Messianic. The ultimate reference is to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, by whose aid His people will conquer every foe.” (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 796.)

(33-36) Zechariah 10:10–11. Gathering of Israel

“Egypt, as we have already shown at [Hosea 9:3; compare 8:13], is rather introduced in all the passages mentioned simply as a type of the land of bondage, on account of its having been the land in which Israel lived in the olden time, under the oppression of the heathen world. And Asshur [Assyria] is introduced in the same way, as the land into which the ten tribes had been afterwards exiled. This typical [symbolical] significance is placed beyond all doubt by ver. 11, since the redemption of Israel out of the countries named is there exhibited under the type of the liberation of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt under the guidance of Moses. . . . The Ephraimites are to return into the land

of Gilead and Lebanon; the former representing the territory of the ten tribes in the olden time to the east of Jordan, the latter that to the west [compare Micah 7:14].” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:351–52.)

(33-37) Zechariah 11. Armageddon

Zechariah 11–13 deals with the battle of Armageddon and its attendant horrors (see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 74, 324–25; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:46–47). Ezekiel also referred to this battle (see Ezekiel 38–39). This battle will take place before the Second Coming of the Savior.

Zechariah 11 is a preface to chapters 12–13, in which Zechariah prophesied of the battle of Armageddon (see Enrichment I).

(33-38) Zechariah 11:1–3. Destruction of the Political Kingdom of Judah

“The cedars and cypresses of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan are simply figures denoting what is lofty, glorious, and powerful in the world of nature and humanity, and are only to be referred to persons so far as their lofty position in the state is concerned. Consequently we get the following as the thought of these verses: The land of Israel, with all its powerful and glorious creatures, is to become desolate. Now, inasmuch as the desolation of a land also involves the desolation of the people living in the land, and of its institutions, the destruction of the cedars, cypresses, etc., does include the destruction of everything lofty and exalted in the nation and kingdom; so that in this sense the devastation of Lebanon is a figurative representation of the destruction of the Israelitish kingdom, or of the dissolution of the political existence of the ancient covenant nation. This judgment was executed upon the land and people of Israel by the imperial power of Rome. This historical reference is evident from the description which follows of the facts by which this catastrophe is brought to pass.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:356–57.)

(33-39) Zechariah 11:4–14. What Is the Meaning of the Expression “Feed the Flock of the Slaughter”?

“Flock of slaughtering, is an expression that may be applied either to a flock that is being slaughtered, or to one that is destined to be slaughtered in the future” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:358).

Keil and Delitzsch then explained the significance of the phrase:

“But although a flock is eventually destined for slaughtering, it is not fed for this purpose only, but generally to yield profit to its owner. Moreover, the figure of feeding is never used in the Scriptures in the sense of making ready for destruction, but always denotes fostering and affectionate care for the preservation of anything; and in the case before us, the shepherd feeds the flock entrusted to him, by slaying the three bad shepherds; and it is not till the flock has become weary of his tending that he breaks the shepherd’s staves, and lays down his pastoral office, to give them up to destruction. . . . Israel was given up by Jehovah into the hands of the nations of the world, or the imperial powers, to punish it for its sin. But as

these nations abused the power entrusted to them, and sought utterly to destroy the nation of God, which they ought only to have chastised, the Lord takes charge of His people as their shepherd, because He will no longer spare the nations of the world, *i.e.* will not any longer let them deal with His people at pleasure, without being punished. The termination of the sparing will show itself in the fact that God causes the nations to destroy themselves by civil wars, and to be smitten by tyrannical kings. . . . These smite them in pieces, *i.e.* devastate the earth by civil war and tyranny, without any interposition on the part of God to rescue the inhabitants of the earth, or nations beyond the limits of Israel, out of their hand, or to put any restraint upon tyranny and self-destruction.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:360–61.)

(33-40) Zechariah 11:11–13. Thirty Pieces of Silver

The true Shepherd, the only one who could save Israel from the impending judgments, would be sold for thirty pieces of silver by His own people.



Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver

(33-41) Zechariah 11:15–17. Worthless Shepherd

“The chapter foreshadows the terrible afflictions of the Jews, subsequent to their rejection of the Messiah, and the ultimate downfall of their overlords. That this ruler is spoken of as *my* shepherd offers significant light on the sovereignty of the divine rule over history. He is where he is by divine appointment (v. 16) and the scandalous acts which his wicked heart teaches him to perform are the Lord’s dread judgment on a people which rejected the true shepherd.” (Guthrie and Motyer, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 798.)

(33-42) Zechariah 12:3. “Jerusalem a Burdensome Stone”

“Those nations that take in hand to capture and rule Jerusalem will find it difficult. Probably the idea is that of raising and carrying a boulder that is too heavy for a man’s strength.” (Dummelow, *Commentary*, p. 610.)

(33-43) Zechariah 12:11. "Mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddon"

"In vers. 11, the depth and bitterness of the pain on account of the slain Messiah are depicted by comparing it to the mourning of Hadad-rimmon. Jerome says with regard to this: 'Adadremmon is a city near Jerusalem, which was formerly called by this name, but is now called Maximianopolis, in the field of Mageddon, where the good king Josiah was wounded by Pharaoh Necho.' . . . The mourning of Hadad-rimmon is therefore the mourning for the calamity which befell Israel at Hadad-rimmon in the death of the good king Josiah, who was mortally wounded in the valley Megiddo, according to [2 Chronicles 35:22-24], so that he very soon gave up the ghost. The death of this most pious of all the kings of Judah was bewailed by the people, especially the righteous members of the nation, so bitterly, that not only did the prophet Jeremiah compose an elegy on his death, but other singers, both male and female, bewailed him in dirges, which were placed in a collection of elegiac songs, and preserved in Israel till long after the captivity [2 Chronicles 35:25]. Zechariah compares the lamentation for the putting of the Messiah to death to this great national mourning." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:390.)

(33-44) Zechariah 12:11-14. "In That Day Shall There Be a Great Mourning in Jerusalem"

There will be great mourning in that day for at least three reasons: (1) many Jews will have been killed by the besieging armies; (2) families will be scattered and unable to contact one another; (3) the saved Jews will realize that He whom they have long rejected and whom their forefathers persecuted and killed is truly the Messiah for whom they waited for so long.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said: "Then they will accept Him as their Redeemer, which they have never been willing to do. Then is the time as spoken of in this passage from Zechariah when every family will go and mourn apart; the house of David, the house of Nathan, the Jews. They will fall down. They will rend their garments, and they will mourn and they will weep because they were not willing to accept the Son of God but accepted the teachings of their fathers and rejected their Redeemer and Messiah. Then they will fall down at His feet and worship Him. After these days will come their redemption and the building of Jerusalem. They will be given their own land again, and every man 'will live under his own vine and his own fig tree and they will learn to love the Lord and keep his commandments and walk in the light, and He will be their God and they will be His people, and that is right at our doors.'" (*Signs of the Times*, pp. 171-72.)

(33-45) Zechariah 13. More Views of Armageddon

Zechariah still was viewing the last great battle. The explanation for these verses is found in Enrichment I.

(33-46) Zechariah 13:7. Who Is the Shepherd Who Would Be Smitten?

The Shepherd of Israel is Jesus Christ. The sheep are those who know His voice, that is, members of the Church (see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 609).

"The offending of the disciples took place when Jesus was taken prisoner, and they all fled. This flight was a

prelude to the dispersion of the flock at the death of the shepherd. But the Lord soon brought back His hand over the disciples. The promise, 'But after my resurrection I will go before you into Galilee,' is a practical exposition of the bringing back of the hand over the small ones, which shows that the expression is to be understood here in a good sense, and that it began to be fulfilled in the gathering together of the disciples by the risen Saviour. This special fulfilment did not indeed exhaust the meaning of the verses before us; but they had a much more general fulfilment in the whole of the nation of Israel." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 10:2:399.)

(33-47) Zechariah 14:12-15. Destruction of the Army

See the commentary on Armageddon in Enrichment I.

(33-48) Zechariah 14:16-19. Will There Be "Heathen," or Non-Israelites, Who Survive Armageddon?

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "While in conversation at Judge Adams' during the evening, I said, Christ and the resurrected Saints will reign over the earth during the thousand years. They will not probably dwell upon the earth, but will visit it when they please, or when it is necessary to govern it. There will be wicked men on the earth during the thousand years. The heathen nations who will not come up to worship will be visited with the judgments of God, and must eventually be destroyed from the earth. (Dec. 30, 1842)." (*Teachings*, pp. 268-69.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented: "During the millennium, however, the Lord will use the forces of nature to turn people's attention to the truth. 'Whoso will not come up,' said Zechariah, 'of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.'" (Zech. 14:16-19.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 499.)

(33-49) Zechariah 14:20-21. Why Will the Bells of the Horses Have "Holiness unto the Lord" on Them?

In beautiful imagery, Zechariah taught that in the Millennium peace and righteousness will prevail to a point where everything (symbolized by such trifles as the trappings on horses and earthen jars) shall be holy and pure and where "there shall be no more the



The battle of Armageddon will center on Jerusalem.

Canaanite [the wicked] in the house of the Lord of hosts" (v. 21).

POINTS TO PONDER

(33-50) "Finishers Wanted"

When the Jews returned from their Babylonian exile, they received permission to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord. The people began earnestly, but their zeal soon waned, the work lagged, and soon it stopped altogether.

Suppose our Savior were such a poor finisher. Where would that leave us? But the Lord is a great finisher, even of distasteful tasks. He told us that while He shrank from drinking the bitter cup of the price for our sins, He nonetheless "partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:18). Speaking of His relation to the Father, Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

We must learn to finish our assignments as the Lord did His. He is our great exemplar. Only as we finish the preparations for His return do we manifest for Him the kind of love He manifest for us in making an atonement for our sins.

Elder Thomas S. Monson made this interesting analogy about those who complete their tasks:

"On sunlit days during the noon hour, the streets of Salt Lake City abound with men and women who for a moment leave the confines of the tall office buildings and engage in that universal delight called window shopping. On occasion I, too, am a participant.

"One Wednesday I paused before the elegant show window of a prestigious furniture store. That which caught and held my attention was not the beautifully designed sofa nor the comfortable-appearing chair that stood at its side. Neither was it the beautiful chandelier positioned overhead. Rather, my eyes rested upon a small sign that had been placed at the bottom right-hand corner of the window. Its message was brief: 'Finishers Wanted.'

"The store had need of those persons who possessed the talent and the skill to make ready for final sale the expensive furniture that the firm manufactured and sold. 'Finishers Wanted.' The words remained with me as I returned to the pressing activities of the day.

"In life, as in business, there has always been a need for those persons who could be called finishers. Their ranks are few, their opportunities many, their contributions great.

"From the very beginning to the present time, a fundamental question remains to be answered by each who runs the race of life. Shall I falter or shall I finish? On the answer await the blessings of joy and happiness here in mortality and eternal life in the world to come." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, pp. 69–70; or *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 68.)

Elder Thomas S. Monson gave the following six marks of a true finisher:

"Times change, circumstances vary, but the true marks of a finisher remain. Note them well, for they are vital to our success.

"1. *The Mark of Vision*. It has been said that the doorways of history turn on small hinges, and so do

people's lives. We are constantly making small decisions. The outcome determines the success or failure of our lives. That is why it is worthwhile to look ahead, set a course, and at least be partly ready when the moment of decision comes. True finishers have the capacity to visualize their objective.

"2. *The Mark of Effort*. Vision without effort is daydreaming, effort without vision is drudgery; but vision, coupled with effort, will obtain the prize.

"Needed is the capacity to make the second effort when life's challenges lay us low. . . .

"3. *The Mark of Faith*. Long years ago the psalmist wrote: 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man: It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.' (Ps. 118:8–9.) Recognize that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other.

"4. *The Mark of Virtue*. ' . . . let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly. . . .' (D&C 121:45.) This counsel from the Lord will provide staying power in the race we run.

"5. *The Mark of Courage*. Courage becomes a living and attractive virtue when it is regarded not as a willingness to die manfully, but the determination to live decently. Have the courage—

"To dream the impossible dream;
To fight the unbeatable foe;
To bear with unbearable sorrow;
To run where the brave dare not go.

"To right the unrightable wrong
To love, pure and chaste, from afar;
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star."

[Joe Darion, "The Impossible Dream."]

—and you will thus become a finisher.

"6. *The Mark of Prayer*. When the burdens of life become heavy, when trials test one's faith, when pain, sorrow, and despair cause the light of hope to flicker and burn low, communication with our Heavenly Father provides peace.

"These, the marks of a true finisher, will be as a lamp to our feet in the journey through life. Ever beckoning us onward and lifting us upward is he who pleaded, ' . . . come, follow me.' (Luke 18:22)" (In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, pp. 71–72; or *Ensign*, July 1972, pp. 69–70.)

Consider how these six marks of a true finisher could apply to your own life. You might list them in your journal and then set goals for each one.

Someday, we know not when, Christ will come again. It behooves us all to live faithfully and thus prepare ourselves for that grand event. May we be able to say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me . . . and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7).

The Second Coming of the Lord will be a dramatic finish to His work before the Millennium. Those who labor with and wait for His appearance will not be disappointed. But only *finishers*, those who endure to the end, will be there.



“Behold, I Will Send You Elijah the Prophet”

(34-1) Introduction

On the evening of 21 September 1823, Joseph Smith sought the Lord in prayer for a remission of his sins. The Lord’s reply came in the person of a heavenly messenger, Moroni, who told the young man of important events soon to transpire on the earth. After telling Joseph about the sacred plates buried in the Hill Cumorah, Moroni began quoting prophecies from the Old Testament. Joseph Smith recorded that he quoted from Malachi (see JS—H 1:36–39).

When the passages Moroni quoted are compared with their counterparts in the King James Version of the Bible, it is evident that many changes were made. There is more than just passing significance in these changes. For example, Moroni spoke of “promises made to the fathers,” whereas the King James Version does not. What were these promises, and to which “fathers” were they made? What does it mean to be left with “neither root nor branch”? What did Elijah reveal by the priesthood—what keys and to whom? Why would the whole earth be “utterly wasted at his [the Lord’s] coming” if Elijah were not sent? How does Elijah’s coming help to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers? What does that mean?

In calling the people of Judah to repentance, Malachi uttered prophecies of great significance for this day and time. In studying this book, consider whether it is significant that the Old Testament closes with Malachi’s statement that Elijah would be sent. If so, what is that significance for modern Latter-day Saints?

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study the book of Malachi.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON MALACHI

(34-2) Malachi 1:1. Who Was Malachi and When Did He Live?

As with so many of the prophets, little is known of the life of Malachi, apart from what can be learned in his book. Malachi lived after the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and is believed to have been a contemporary of Nehemiah. The book was probably written about four hundred years before the birth of Christ. Lehi and his family left Jerusalem in 600 B.C., nearly two hundred years before the time of Malachi. The Nephites, therefore,

could not have obtained the words of Malachi except from the Lord. The plates of Laban could not have contained them.

(34-3) Malachi 1:2–5. Did the Lord Really “Hate” Esau?

The word *hated* in Hebrew means to be loved less than someone else, not to be disliked with bitter hostility (compare Genesis 29:31). Esau was the brother of Jacob, who became Israel, father of the twelve tribes. Students of the scriptures know that the Lord hates the sin rather than the sinner, but when people array themselves against the Lord as Esau and his descendants, the Edomites, had done for centuries, the Lord withdraws His blessings. In this sense, Jacob was loved and Esau hated.

So complete was the rejection of the Lord by Esau’s descendants that they came to symbolize to the prophets the wickedness of humanity in general (see D&C 1:36; see also Notes and Commentary for Isaiah 34:1–10). Before Malachi’s time they were known as Edomites, or Idumeans, and their place of habitation was known as Edom.

Jacob stood as a symbol for Israel or the chosen people while Esau (Edom) symbolized the world. This gives the Lord’s statement much broader meaning.

(34-4) Malachi 1:6–14. Of What Sins Was Ancient Judah Also Guilty and Why?

Edom was not alone in her wickedness. The people of Judah, and particularly the Levites living among them, were also polluted and corrupt. As the spiritual sons and servants of the Lord (see v. 6), their offerings to God had become common and worthless. Inasmuch as the sacrifices that they made for the people typified the coming sacrifice and Atonement of the Son of God, the only acceptable sacrifice was that which was spotless.

The priests and Levites of Malachi’s day were mocking God by offering sacrifices to the Lord with sick, blind, and lame animals and calling them acceptable (v. 8). They had no reverence for what they were doing. The Lord told them: “I have no pleasure in you, . . . neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (v. 10). They were selfish and worldly, and not one of them would kindle a fire on the hearth of the altar unless he were paid for it. The Lord had been insulted. The table on which the offering was made was polluted. The offering itself was “contemptible” (v. 12). Such action, Malachi promised, would result in cursing rather than blessing.

Elder James E. Talmage explained: “The atonement was plainly to be a vicarious sacrifice, voluntary and love-inspired on the Savior’s part, universal in its application to mankind so far as men shall accept the means of deliverance thus placed within their reach. For such a mission only one who was without sin could

be eligible. Even the altar victims of ancient Israel offered as a provisional propitiation for the offenses of the people under the Mosaic law had to be clean and devoid of spot or blemish; otherwise they were unacceptable and the attempt to offer them was sacrilege." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 21; for the special requirements of a sacrifice under the law of Moses, see Leviticus 22:18–22; Deuteronomy 15:21; 17:1.)

(34-5) Malachi 2:5–7. What a Priesthood Holder Should Be Like

The faithful priesthood bearer is a sincere worshiper. He acts as if he were in the Lord's presence when upon the Lord's errand. He is honest in all his dealings with others, and his speech is dignified and appropriate. He walks with the Lord with confidence and assurance and is comfortable in his role of blessing others and leading them into a better way of life. He is a student of the scriptures and has the capacity to teach the words of life to others. "He is the messenger [teacher, tool, representative] of the Lord of hosts" (v. 7).

(34-6) Malachi 2:8–10. The Lord's Anger toward Unfaithful Priesthood Bearers

The Lord's promises are conditional. How could the priesthood of Malachi's day enjoy the Spirit and find success in their labors unless they were worthy? In these verses the Lord reminded the priests and Levites that His representatives were men who formerly walked with Him in peace and equity and turned many away from iniquity (see v. 6). He then spelled out the sins of Judah and her priesthood. The latter, for example, had "caused many to stumble at the law" by rendering unjust and immoral decisions, thus bringing them to spiritual destruction and ruin (v. 8). When compared with the instructions to the Levites set forth in Deuteronomy 33:8–11, such conduct falls short of God's intended standard. For this reason they were contemptible to the people rather than loved by them as the Lord had intended (see vv. 8–9). We are all children of the same God. When we mistreat a brother or sister, we offend our Heavenly Father as well.

(34-7) Malachi 2:11–17. Of What Sins Was Judah Guilty?

As a result of the failure of the priests to judge and lead in righteousness, Judah had fallen once again into a serious sin. She "hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange God" (Malachi 2:11). This passage calls to mind again the often used figure in the Old Testament of the husband (Jehovah) and the wife (Judah/Israel). As solemn a bond or covenant exists between Jehovah and Israel as exists between a husband and his wife. But Judah had chosen another partner, "the daughter of a strange God," meaning that Judah had formed a temporal or spiritual alliance with a nation that did not regard Jehovah as the Lord of heaven.

"The master and the scholar" (v. 12) is he who teaches such doctrine (profaning the Lord by marrying women who worship idols) and he who follows it. They will both be cut off.

One of the gross sins among the ancient people of the Lord was unfaithfulness in marriage vows. Some of the

Hebrew men, tiring of their wives and the mothers of their children, were seeking the companionship of younger women. The wives would come to the temple and make an appeal to God at the altar. In this unfaithfulness to marriage vows, the Lord declared, the men had dealt treacherously (see vv. 13–14). The Lord was angry with these men because they did not remain true to their wives, but He also expressed anger toward the priests for knowing the problem and not executing justice. He told the men to scrutinize their innermost feelings toward the women whom they had loved in their youth, who had borne their children, and who had loved and served them, and not to put away their wives (v. 15). For "the Lord . . . hateth putting away" (v. 16).

(34-8) Malachi 3:1. Who Was the Messenger Sent to Prepare the Way of the Lord, and Who Was the Messenger of the Covenant?

One of the messengers sent to prepare the way of the Lord at His first coming was John the Baptist. John's mission was performed in the spirit and power of the priesthood of *Elias* (see Luke 1:17). Elias is a name for a forerunner, one who goes before or prepares the way for someone or something greater. In that sense the Aaronic Priesthood is the priesthood of Elias because it prepares and qualifies individuals for greater blessings. Joseph Smith explained: "The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood of Elias, or the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys of the power of Elias, it was called the doctrine of Elias, even from the early ages of the world." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 335–36.)



John the Baptist was an Elias.

Joseph Smith was also an Elias in that he was a forerunner, one who prepared the way, who laid the foundation for the Second Coming through the restoration of the gospel.

In the meridian of time the way was prepared by John for the Messenger of the Covenant Himself to come and bring the greater blessings (see Matthew 3:1–3, 11–12). He who was mightier than John and followed after him to baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is called the Messenger of the Covenant because He mediates the gospel of salvation unto men. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “Our Lord is the *Messenger of the Covenant*. (Mal. 3:1.) He came in his Father’s name (John 5:43), bearing his Father’s message (John 7:16–17), to fulfill the covenant of the Father that a Redeemer and Savior would be provided for men. (Moses 4:1–3; Abra. 3:27–28.) Also, through his ministry the terms of the everlasting covenant of salvation became operative; the message he taught was that salvation comes through the gospel covenant.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 488.)

When He comes to earth a second time, He will make more than one appearance before He comes in the clouds of heaven for all flesh to see Him together (D&C 88:93; 101:23). At least one of those appearances includes a sudden visit to His temple, yet to be built, in Jackson County, Missouri. Elder McConkie stated:

“Malachi recorded the promise, speaking of latter-day events, that *‘The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.’* (Mal. 3:1.) Certainly the Almighty is not limited in the number of appearances and returns to earth needed to fulfill the scriptures, usher in the final dispensation, and consummate his great latter-day work.

“This sudden latter-day appearance in the temple does not have reference to his appearance at the great and dreadful day, for that coming will be when he sets his foot upon the Mount of Olivet in the midst of the final great war. The temple appearance was fulfilled, in part at least, by his return to the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836; and it may well be that he will come again, suddenly, to others of his temples, more particularly that which will be erected in Jackson County, Missouri.

“In this connection it is worthy of note that whenever and wherever the Lord appears, he will come suddenly, that is ‘quickly, in an hour you think not.’ (D. & C. 51:20.) His oft repeated warning, ‘Behold, I come quickly’ (D. & C. 35:27), means that when the appointed hour arrives, he will come with a speed and a suddenness which will leave no further time for preparation for that great day.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 693–94.)

(34-9) Malachi 3:2. “Who May Abide the Day of His Coming?”

The Lord’s return to earth in glory will be a great and dreadful day. As John the Baptist told the Jews, the Savior will gather in the wheat (the righteous), and the chaff (the wicked) He will burn with “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12). The only ones who survive will be those who have kept their covenants with the Lord or who are worthy of at least a paradisiacal, or terrestrial, glory. All wickedness will be destroyed from the earth.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “When Christ comes the second time it will be in the clouds of heaven, and it shall be the day of vengeance against the ungodly, when those who have loved wickedness and

have been guilty of transgression and rebellion against the laws of God will be destroyed. All during the ministry of Christ wickedness ruled and seemed to prevail, but when he comes in the clouds of glory as it is declared in this message of Malachi to the world, and which was said by Moroni to be near at hand, then Christ will appear as the refiner and purifier of both man and beast and all that pertains to this earth, for the earth itself shall undergo a change and receive its former paradisiacal glory.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:11.)

(34-10) Malachi 3:3–6. What Is the Offering in Righteousness to Be Made by the Sons of Levi?

There is more than one meaning for the “offering in righteousness” to be made by the sons of Levi at or near the Second Coming of the Lord. With regard to animal sacrifice, Joseph Smith said:

“It is generally supposed that sacrifice was entirely done away when the Great Sacrifice [i.e.,] the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in [the] future; but those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges and authority of the Priesthood, or with the Prophets.

“The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the Priesthood. It began with the Priesthood, and will be continued until after the coming of Christ, from generation to generation. We frequently have mention made of the offering of sacrifice by the servants of the Most High in ancient days, prior to the law of Moses; which ordinances will be continued when the priesthood is restored with all its authority, power and blessings. . . .

“These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. This ever did and ever will exist when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood are sufficiently manifest; else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by the holy prophets be brought to pass. It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses’ day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued.” (*Teachings*, pp. 172–73.)

(34-11) Malachi 3:7–9. “Will a Man Rob God?”

At this point the Lord, through Malachi, engaged Judah in a series of questions and answers. He said they have strayed from His ordinances, and He begs them to return. “Wherein shall we return?” they ask (v. 7). He replies that they have robbed Him, even God. Again they question, “Wherein have we robbed thee?” to which He replies, “In tithes and offerings” (v. 8). Therefore, He says, they “are cursed with a curse” (v. 9). Elder LeGrand Richards said:

“In addition to giving ourselves, and giving our services, the Lord has asked us to give of our means and our substance. We have men in the Church who give their time, they will go when they are asked to preach, they will perform a public duty, but it is hard to do the little duty that is seen in secret by them and God alone and their presiding officers. And so we are



Honest payment of tithes secures promised blessings.

asked to contribute our tithes and offerings, not only because the Church needs money to build itself, for before there was an organization of the Church, God introduced the principle of sacrifice in order that his servants and his children might be tested, that they should bring the best of their lands and of their herds. . . . They were burned upon the altar of sacrifice; but the giving sanctified the souls of those who gave. . . .

“The prophet Malachi declared that in the last days the Lord should send his messenger to prepared the way before him, and he called upon Israel, and I interpret that to mean latter-day Israel, to return unto him and promised that he would return unto them, and they said: “Wherein shall we return unto Thee?” And he said: ‘In your tithes and offerings . . . for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house.’

“And I want to say to you, my brethren and sisters, that we need the tithes of the Saints in order that the kingdom might go on, for it shall be builded just as rapidly as the faith of the Saints can build it, and it is retarded when there is a lack of faith.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1939, pp. 44–45.)

(34-12) Malachi 3:10–12. Blessings for Paying Tithes

To Israel, ancient and modern, the Lord promised to “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (v. 10). All material and spiritual things are His to

give as He sees fit. Included in His “blessings from heaven” are revelations from Him in one’s personal life. All blessings are, of course, conditional (see D&C 82:10; 130:21; 132:5). He desires to bless His faithful children abundantly (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).

“The devourer” may mean locusts and other pests to agriculture, but it may refer to Satan as well. The Lord promised that the fruits of the ground and vine will not come forth ahead of their time when they would be of little or no value. The implication is that our efforts to provide for ourselves would be blessed and bear fruit in their season.

Because of the blessings that will come to the faithful, they will be recognized by the world around them, both individually and as a people.

(34-13) Malachi 3:13–15. Is It Vain to Serve the Lord?

One truth about covenant relationships is that both parties must observe their promises in order to keep the covenant in force. Sometimes when those lacking faith lose promised blessings, they blame the Lord (see D&C 58:29–33). But the Lord is God; He never breaks a promise (see D&C 82:10).

The difficulty, as described by Malachi, is that the critics of the Lord have twisted the truth. They question the profit stemming from observing the ordinances of the Lord and maintain that “it is vain to serve God” (v. 14). They see inequity when the wicked prosper and those who work evil are elevated, and they blame the Lord for permitting such things to exist. Thus, their words of criticism are “stout” against the Lord (v. 13). President Spencer W. Kimball said:

“Some time ago a sister said to me, ‘Why is it, Brother Kimball, that those who do the least in the building of the kingdom seem to prosper most? We drive a Ford; our neighbors drive a Cadillac. We observe the Sabbath and attend our meetings; they play golf, hunt, fish, and play. We abstain from the forbidden while they eat, drink, and are merry and are unrestrained. We pay tithing and other church donations; they have their entire large income to lavish upon themselves. We are tied home with our large family of small children, often ill; they are totally free for social life—to dine and dance. We wear cottons and woollens, and I wear a three-season coat, but they wear silks and costly apparel, and she wears a mink coat. Our meager income is always strained and never seems adequate for necessities, while their wealth seems enough to allow them every luxury. And yet the Lord promises blessings to the faithful! It seems to me that it does not pay to live the gospel—that the proud and the covenant breakers are the ones who prosper.’

“Then I said to her, ‘Yours is an ancient question. Job and Jeremiah made the same complaint.’ And I quoted for her the Lord’s answer through Malachi [Malachi 4:1–2].

“Then I said to the disconsolate sister, ‘But for many rewards you need not wait until the judgment day. You have many blessings *today*. You have your family of lovely, righteous children. What a rich reward for the so-called sacrifices! The blessings that you enjoy cannot be purchased with all your neighbor’s wealth.’” (Faith Precedes the Miracle, pp. 221–22.)

(34-14) Malachi 3:16–18. What Is the “Book of Remembrance”?

Those who devote themselves to the Lord earn for themselves the privilege of having their names recorded in the Lamb’s book of life. This sacred “book of remembrance” (v. 16) is kept in heaven and contains the names of the faithful children of Father in Heaven, or, in other words, those who are His precious jewels. (See D&C 128:6–7; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5; 21:27.) They are those who will inherit eternal life, for this book contains “the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world” (D&C 88:2). Those whose names are written there and who afterwards return to sinful ways will have their names blotted from the book (see Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 22:19).

The book of life is the Lord’s book of remembrance, not unlike records that He has commanded the Saints to keep in all ages of the world. Elder McConkie explained:

“Adam kept a written account of his faithful descendants in which he recorded their faith and works, their righteousness and devotion, their revelations and visions, and their adherence to the revealed plan of salvation. To signify the importance of honoring our worthy ancestors and of hearkening to the great truths revealed to them, Adam called his record a *book of remembrance*. It was prepared ‘according to the pattern given by the finger of God.’ (Moses 6:4–6, 46.)

“Similar records have been kept by the saints in all ages. (Mal. 3:16–17; 3 Ne. 24:15–16.) Many of our present scriptures have come down to us because they were first written by prophets who were following Adam’s pattern of keeping a book of remembrance. The Church keeps similar records today (D. & C. 85) and urges its members to keep their own personal and family books of remembrance.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 100.)

(34-15) Malachi 4:1. “All the Proud, Yea, and All That Do Wickedly, Shall Be Stubble”

Malachi stated that “the day cometh” when there would be great destruction of the wicked (v. 1). Elder Theodore M. Burton said:

“When Malachi prophesied of the second coming of Christ, he spoke of ‘the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly.’ Of whom was he speaking? First, of those who rejected Christ because of the pride of their hearts, and second, of those who, having accepted Jesus, were not valiant in keeping his commandments.

“Malachi went on to say they ‘shall burn as stubble.’ This means that they shall be destroyed. By whom? Malachi explains, ‘They that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts.’” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 81.)

Every corruptible and impure thing, including human and animal, fish and fowl, will be cleansed from the earth (see D&C 64:24, 101:24–25).

(34-16) Malachi 4:1. “It Shall Leave Them Neither Root nor Branch”

Each person belongs to a family tree. Our “roots” are the ancestors from whom we descend, and our “branches” are those who descend from us. To be “left with neither root nor branch” is to be cut off from one’s ancestry and posterity eternally. That is precisely the condition of those for whom the sealing blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood have not been performed or for those who, having had the ordinances performed, fail to live worthy of claiming their blessings. To prevent this great catastrophe, Elijah was sent to earth in the latter days with the sealing powers (see D&C 110:13–16).

(34-17) Malachi 4:5–6. What Is the Great Work Elijah Commenced?

This earth has a destiny. Its purpose is to provide a place for people to work out their eternal salvation before the Lord. Part of that salvation depends on their acquiring the necessary ordinances, in righteousness, that will seal them to God and to each other for time and all eternity. But the ordinances are not for the living only. Otherwise, billions would have been denied these blessings simply because the necessary priesthood power was not available in the time or place they lived.

Joseph Smith was told by Moroni that Elijah would come. Moroni mentioned the “promises made to the fathers” (JS—H 1:39) in ancient times. These promises, Moroni said, would assist in turning the hearts of the children to their fathers. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “What was the promise made to the fathers that



“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet” (Malachi 4:5).

was to be fulfilled in the latter-days by the turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers? It was the promise of the Lord made through Enoch, Isaiah, and the prophets, to the nations of the earth, that the time should come when the dead should be redeemed. And the turning of the hearts of the children is fulfilled in the performing of the vicarious temple work and in the preparation of their genealogies." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:154.)

Elijah came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in fulfillment of the Lord's promise recorded by Malachi. His visit occurred on 3 April 1836 in the Kirtland Temple. The priesthood keys Elijah brought were the sealing powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the means whereby that which is bound and sealed on the earth is also bound and sealed in the heavens. (See D&C 110:13–16.)

Commenting on the meaning of turning hearts, Joseph Smith said: "Now, the word *turn* here should be translated *bind*, or seal. But what is the object of this important mission? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion." (*Teachings*, p. 330.)

Elder Theodore M. Burton said: "This turning of hearts to family relationships means establishing and sealing patriarchal lineage within the sacred confines of the temple and carrying that family inheritance into our daily lives. That is why, even if we do build temples, if we do not keep the covenants made in them, we will be rejected as a people." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 81.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(34-18) The Message of Malachi

To most people, the words *tithing* and *genealogy* come to mind first when the book of Malachi is mentioned. These subjects are treated extensively, and we can learn a great deal about them from Malachi, but did you learn anything else from this prophet? What should a priesthood holder be like, according to Malachi? Make a list of the things he teaches in chapter 2 about the model priesthood bearer.

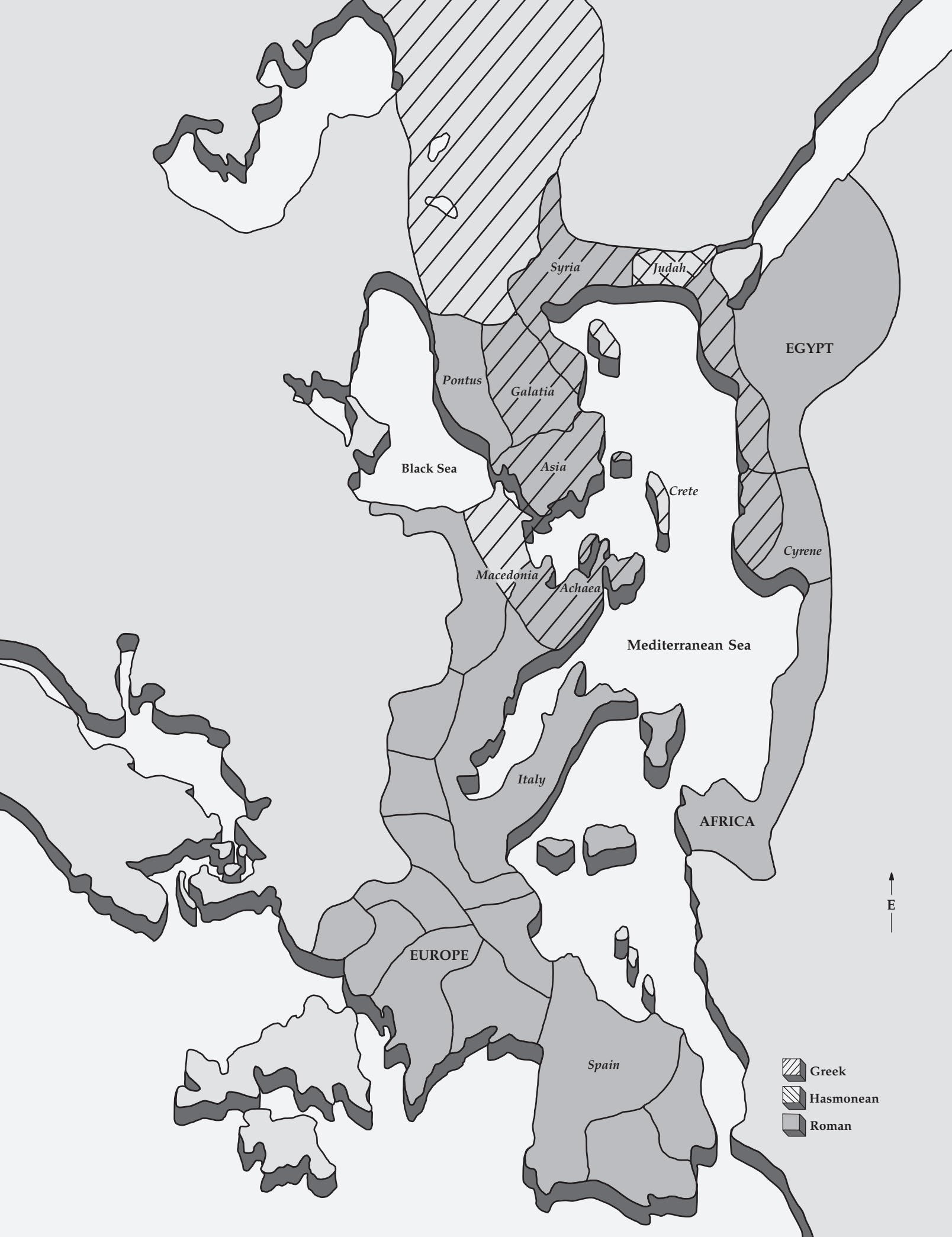
Does the Lord ever declare that there is more expected of us in financial obligations than the payment of tithing? What of budget contributions, building fund, missionary fund, temple fund, and fast offerings? President Spencer W. Kimball said:

"Sometimes we have been a bit penurious and figured that we had for breakfast one egg and that cost so many cents and then we give that to the Lord. I think that when we are affluent, as many of us are, that we ought to be very, very generous. . . .

"I think we should . . . give, instead of the amount saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more when we are in a position to do it." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1974, p. 184.)

"Fast offerings have long constituted the means from which the needs of the Lord's poor have been provided. It has been, and now is, the desire and objective of the Church to obtain from fast offerings the necessary funds to meet the cash needs of the welfare program; and to obtain from welfare production projects the commodity needs. If we give a generous fast offering, we shall increase our own prosperity both spiritually and temporally." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1977, p. 126.)

What will you do next month about fasting and contribution to the fast offering fund? Can you do more?



Between the Testaments

(K-1) The Last Recorded Prophet in Old Testament Israel

For years Israel had denied, dishonored, persecuted, fought, and rebelled against the prophets. Malachi was the last of the true prophets in Israel in the Old Testament period of whom we have a record. God had desired that this nation be holy, His peculiar treasure. Upon them He had promised to heap His riches, glory, and power: "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." (Psalm 132:15–16.) Not only this, but He desired to have them sufficiently pure that He could make their cities His place of habitation. They were to become Zion, where the Lord declared He would make His abode forever. (See Psalm 132:13–14.) By rejecting the prophets, Israel forfeited the promises and potential of becoming like Enoch's people.

After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish nation zealously taught and practiced the law and gathered and preserved the words of the prophets. This in itself was good, but by the time of Christ, the learning of scribes gained precedence over continuing revelation, and the oral tradition in many cases had come to overshadow the law. The temptation for the Jews during this period was to honor dead prophets over living ones. Dead prophets do not have power to say "no," any more than did the false gods worshiped by the Israelites in earlier times. Dead prophets call only past generations to repentance, or so it seems to those who reject the living ones. The word of God to dead prophets can be falsified, misinterpreted, and bent to where it has lost its power to bring people to the Lord. Individuals are able to maintain a false sense of piety and righteousness even as they reject the living oracles. Christ criticized the people of His day for building the tombs of the prophets (Luke 11:48), and Samuel the Lamanite called the Book of Mormon people to repentance for the same sin (see Helaman 13:25–27). Elder Hartman Rector Jr., who was a member of the Seventy, said of those in our day: "Following the living prophet is the only way that we can follow the Lord God and do his will. You can't do it by quoting the dead prophets or ignoring or throwing rocks at the living prophets" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1972, 172; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 131).

The men who guided Israel during the period of Persian domination, unlike Moses, did not derive their authority from divine revelation but from the commission of a foreign emperor. A human king gave status and authority to the Torah, encouraged its codification, and threatened any offender of Mosaic precepts with fines, banishment, or death. In this way the law of Moses was established and made known to, even imposed upon, all Jewry under foreign rule. (See Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*, pp. 9–10.) Unfortunately, the human hand by itself can preserve only the letter of the law.

Being a part of the empires of the day was a blessing for physical, if not spiritual, Israel.

Throughout Israel's history the sedentary Israelites were continually pressured by the Arabic and Aramean nomads. The power of the Persian, and later the Greek, armies preserved the security of the Jewish population during those periods when the nation was too weak to defend itself. Had Judah not been part of the gentile empires, the nomads might have overwhelmed the inhabitants of Judea. They could have pushed the Jews into the sea. (See Bickerman, *Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*, p. 10.) Thus, as in so many other things, the centuries of subjection brought Israel both blessings and problems.

(K-2) The Rise of the Scribes

When Judah returned from exile in Babylon, they brought back with them a number of things that were not a part of their original beliefs. If one of these things could be picked out to typify all the rest and symbolize what they meant, it would be the scribes. The scribes were originally educated men who made their livelihood keeping the records of the empire or as copyists of the scriptures (see Enrichment H). These they studied diligently, both to detect scribal errors and to understand the scriptures' meaning. Eventually their role expanded. Not only did they supply copies of the scriptures to the growing number of synagogues, but they also became teachers of the law. As long as Israel had prophets, the scribes remained teachers and copyists. But when the prophetic voice ceased in Israel, these experts in the law of Moses began to fill the vacuum.

"Once the true prophet has been duly rejected and passed to his reward, swarms of experts descend upon his words to begin the learned business of exegesis [drawing meaning out of the written word]. The words of the dead prophets become the peculiar possession of armies of specially trained and carefully conditioned scholars." (Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, pp. 24–25.)

A major factor contributing to the escalation of the power of the scribes was the shift of the common language of the people from Hebrew to Aramaic. Though a sister tongue, Aramaic was still sufficiently different that it made the Hebrew of the scriptures hard to understand. So, the people had to rely on the scholars for their information and understanding. The titles the scribes took upon themselves reflected their growing importance: lawyers, doctors, elders, and rabbis. It should not be surprising that there was no unity of interpretation among these scholars, nor that they competed to bring people to their varying points of view. The result was the creation of such distinct religious sects in Judah as the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes.

(K-3) The Hellenization of Judea

In the closing years of the fourth century B.C., a new power was preparing to force itself to the forefront of world history. The continual pressure of the Persian Empire served as a catalyst to unite a number of Greek city-states under one administrative head: King Philip of Macedonia. Under his direction the whole Greek peninsula was soon unified and prepared to challenge the supremacy of the Persians. Under Philip's son Alexander a war of conquest began. In 334 B.C. he successfully attacked the Persian Empire and defeated it. From there he quickly swept through the entire Middle East, conquering all the nations that lay before him, including Judea. Behind him came hordes of Greek colonists—merchants, craftsmen, laborers—eager to impose the Greek culture. (See *Everyday Life in Bible Times*, p. 291.) Within a few years Alexander died, but the Hellenic, or Greek, influence was felt for centuries. With his conquest of the little Judean state, the Jewish world pivoted westward and came under the influence of the civilizations of Europe. In the past the Jews had been carried and scattered to the northeast and to the south; now it would be to the north and to the west. In the past their masters had been from the Oriental East, like themselves. Now the Occidental, or Western, peoples took over.

The Greeks were sure that their culture held the solution to the world's problems. It was their goal, at least initially, to convert the youth of the world to a classical Greek viewpoint. To accomplish this objective, they established cities where learning was to take place uninhibited by old customs. Further, retired Greek soldiers were given land throughout the empire. In this way, the Greeks attempted to ensure the learning of Hellenic ideas. (See T. Edgar Lyon, "Greco-Roman Influences on the Holy Land," *Ensign*, Sept. 1974, p. 20.) As a result, Greek became the new language of the empire and the Hellenic culture became the standard. Thus, new pagan influences and challenges faced the Jewish people. Greeks looked on the traditions, customs, and religion of the Jews as primitive, archaic, and barbaric; they set about to "enlighten" them. Even the surrounding peoples quickly accepted the Greek rule, and soon the Jews were an island in a sea of Greek influence. The crucial question arose about whether, against the force of this united front, the Jewish nation could hold its own or whether it would be subsumed culturally and religiously as it had been politically and thus lose its identity. (See H. H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People*, pp. 196–97.)

The danger was real. The intoxicating influence of the heady Greek philosophy and materialism soon penetrated the upper strata of Jewish society. Even the prestigious Zadok family, which had dominated the high priest's office and thus controlled both temple worship and the more political council of elders, succumbed to the pressure and abandoned part of the simple cloak of the Torah for the more elaborate garb of the Gentiles. Compromise, if not abandonment, was the order of the day. A number of the Hellenized Jewish elite entered the very profitable ranks of Greek tax collectors. Their open concessions to the way of the pagan caused many of the more pious to lump these opportunists with sinners in general—an association that would endure to the time of Christ.

About this time an interesting irony developed. Since the days of the captivity, Samaria had been a land in which Israelite blood had been greatly diluted by that of Gentiles. Even so, the inhabitants, to the days of Nehemiah, had looked to Jerusalem for their spiritual light. Only when the returning Jews refused to allow them to contribute to the rebuilding of the temple did the Samaritans revolt and lay the foundation of their own temple on Mount Gerizim. (See Ezra 4–5; Nehemiah 13:27–31; John 4:20; Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Gerizim.") Mount Gerizim became for the Samaritans what the temple mount, Mount Moriah, was to the Jews. Under Greek pressure Samaria quickly adopted gentile ways and became a stronghold for Hellenic ideas.

Though the Jews at Jerusalem made concessions right and left, the seemingly wholesale abandonment of the ways of the fathers by the Samaritans caused dismay that eventually hardened into hatred. This enmity destroyed forever any possible union between Jerusalem and Samaria. By the time of Christ, the bitterness had become so entrenched that some Jews would take a lengthy detour around Samaria when traveling from Galilee to Judea rather than risk contamination by their so-called evil influence.

(K-4) Judea under the Hellenistic Kingdoms

Wars swept over the entire east after the death of Alexander. His generals fought to gain control of the empire. Two of the generals finally came to dominate in the Holy Land. Seleucus (pronounced Sel-ay-ooh-cus) conquered Syria and the northern part of the Middle East. Ptolemy (pronounced Toll-oh-mee) took Egypt. Judea lay directly between the two rivals. The Holy Land changed hands several times during the next few years as Ptolemies and Seleucids fought for its control, causing disastrous results to the towns and population of Judea. In 301 B.C. it finally fell to the Ptolemies of Egypt, to whom it belonged for one hundred years. But during this entire time, the Seleucids contested their rule. Judea was for the Ptolemies, as it had been for many rulers of Egypt, Persia, and Assyria, of strategic importance. For the Egyptians it served as an advance defense base. In addition, it had great economic value because of the trade routes that crossed it. On the other hand, the Seleucids, who had firmly established themselves in Syria, did not want to have the Ptolemies rule a country so close to the heart of their land. Thus, Judea remained a point of contention between the two rival powers. It was not until 200 B.C. that the Seleucids were able to capture and hold Judea.

The change of administration from one Hellenic dynasty to the other caused more trouble for the Jews than the change from the Persians to Greeks. Under the Ptolemies, the Hellenizing pressures were subtle and were felt primarily by the wealthy. As long as the lower classes paid their taxes, there was little problem. During this period the Jewish population greatly increased, especially outside the Holy Land. The city of Alexandria in Egypt, for example, had the largest Jewish community in the world. There were also large colonies in Babylon and other cities. The Jews of the Diaspora outnumbered the Jews of Judea.



The name of Pilate is inscribed on a stone at Caesarea.

When Antiochus IV, a Seleucid king, came to power in 175 B.C., the relative tranquility of the Palestinian Jews came to an end. Antiochus decided the Greeks had been tolerant of what they considered Jewish narrowness and superstitious barbarity long enough. He attempted to destroy the religion of the Jews by imposing the Greek religion. He built a gymnasium in Jerusalem and introduced Greek philosophy, drama, and education. Most of the upper classes of the Jewish population accepted this change with little problem. They had the most to gain from friendly relations with the Gentiles and the most to lose should the wrath of their rulers be kindled. But most of the population saw these trends as alarming abandonments of their religion.

The word *gymnasium* comes from the Greek word *gymnos*, which means "naked." The Greeks glorified the beauty of the human body and had the young men in the gymnasiums (schools or academies) participate in athletic contests in the nude. This practice was seen by the more conservative people as a great abomination. But to add to the shame, the families of the wealthy began to turn away from the law of circumcision since their sons would thus be different and easily distinguished in the gymnasiums. In some cases, the young men even underwent painful operations to hide the token of the Abrahamic covenant. (See Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus*, p. 25.)

The pressure applied by Antiochus on the Jews to Hellenize came partly from his desire to make them "civilized," but political reasons entered in as well. Rome was fast coming to world power. The Mediterranean areas had already fallen, as had Egypt and parts of Asia Minor. Antiochus saw that Syria and Judea were logical targets. He needed a strong, stable people under him to counterbalance the growing threat. The Jews were notoriously rebellious and difficult to govern, and obviously their attitude was closely related to their religion. To Antiochus, the answer was clear: Judaism had to go, and so he began to increase the pressures. (See Ben-Sasson, *History of the Jewish People*, p. 191.)

In 169 B.C. the temple was plundered under orders of Antiochus. Two years later his troops were sent into the holy city on the Sabbath. The Jews, interpreting the fourth commandment strictly, did not resist, and thousands were killed. Shortly thereafter the city's walls were knocked down, and a garrison was established in a fortress built near the desecrated Temple Mount. The limited temple worship that did take place was soon suspended. Sabbath observance, celebrations, and circumcision were forbidden on penalty of death. Pigs, unclean under the Mosaic law and viewed as an abomination by the Jews, were offered in sacrifice as the troops of Antiochus stood watch. The people were forced to worship idols of Zeus and other false gods.

(K-5) Pharisees and Sadducees

At this point in history two important Jewish groups emerged. Although there is quite a bit of disagreement concerning the origin and history of each group, many authorities agree that while their roots go back to the era of the Babylonian captivity, the Sadducees and Pharisees gained prominence when Judah was trying to cope with the strong Hellenizing efforts of the Seleucids. By the time the Hasmonean revolt (discussed below) was over, these parties had become powerful and rival sects.

The party from which the Pharisees evolved was probably the *Hasidim*, a name meaning "the holy ones." This sect promoted the observance of Jewish rituals and the study of the Torah. Some of these took a vow to separate themselves from the impurities of those living around them and to follow strictly their interpretation of the law. The Hasidim not only maintained the validity of the Torah, the written scriptures, as the source of their religion, but they enlarged on this background. In an effort to adapt old codes to new conditions, they took a more figurative interpretation of the law. This interpretation became known as the oral law, since for the most part it was memorized and passed on by word of mouth. The Hasidim believed in a combination of free will and predestination, in the resurrection of the dead, and in a judgment resulting in reward or punishment in the life to come. (See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Pharisees.")

Deeply alarmed by the growing abandonment of the traditional values of Judaism, more and more of the population began to look with favor upon the Hasidim, who seemed to be the only ones interested in preserving

the religion. A major group began to form around the Hasidim, dedicating themselves to the preservation of the Mosaic code. To counteract the Greek influences they turned to a strict, almost rigid, obedience to the law. Because of their attempts to keep themselves separate from the worldly taint of false ideas, this group began to be called the *powrashim*, from the Hebrew *powrash*, which means "to be separated." Thus evolved the name *Pharisees*, which is the Greek transliteration of *powrashim*.

Because of their appeal to the majority of the population, the Pharisees constituted a much larger group than the Sadducees and had more support from the people, a fact that held true even until the time of the Savior.

While the Pharisees were primarily from the common people, the Sadducees were from the upper level of society: priests, merchants, and aristocrats. The name of the sect (*Zedukim* in Hebrew) is probably derived from Zadok, the high priest in the days of King David. Ezekiel entrusted Zadok's family with control of the temple (see Ezekiel 40:46; 43:19; 44:10-15), and the descendants of this family controlled the temple hierarchy until about 200 B.C. Hence, the name *Sadducees* referred to those who were sympathetic with the Zadokites. (See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Sadducees.") It was largely among this wealthy class that acceptance of the Greek culture was taking place; thus, the Sadducees were not popular with the majority of the people.

This sect, on the whole, was conservative. Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees rejected the oral law as binding except for that part that was based strictly on the Torah. Further, they denied the afterlife and, therefore, the Resurrection. The purpose of keeping the law was for divine assistance in mortality. Their theology tended to bring God down to man, and the worship offered Him was not unlike the homage paid to a human ruler. His law was to be strictly interpreted. No symbolic or allegorical interpretation, a favorite of the Pharisees, was allowed.

In the power struggle between these two sects can be traced the inception of formal synagogue worship. The Pharisees sought to undermine the religious authority of the Sadducees, which was based on their exclusive priestly domination of the temple. To weaken this control, the Pharisees advocated taking certain ceremonies, previously associated exclusively with the temple, and practicing them in the home. In addition, formal places of worship, the synagogue, were set up that promulgated and perpetuated their doctrine. It was in this way that learned men of other than priestly descent began to play a role in national religious affairs.

(K-6) The Essenes

The idea of separation from society to avoid religious impurity went so far with some people that it led to the formation of another sect, known as Essenes. The name is found only in Greek writings and probably means "the pious ones." Interest in this group was acutely aroused in the late 1940s because of the discovery of their sacred writings, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, at Qumran. This sect varied only in degree from the Pharisees, the main differences resulting from the extremes to which they went to practice their beliefs.

The Essenes believed the Pharisees did not go far enough in their attempts to separate themselves from the world. They separated themselves literally as well as spiritually, setting up communities in such isolated areas as the shores of the Dead Sea, where they could completely escape the world.

Life in these communes was strict and highly structured. Members did not usually marry, because of the pollutions to which women were subject, according to the Mosaic law, and because of the idea that marriage was a hindrance to a devotional state of mind. They abstained from temple worship and those sacrifices associated therewith. They arose before sunrise and met together in common prayer, then carried out their respective duties until approximately 11:00 A.M. At that time they were all baptized, put on white robes, and ate a common meal. After the meal they would remove their sacred garments, don their work clothes, and labor until evening, when they would again partake of a common meal. They raised crops and tended flocks and were self-sufficient.

(K-7) The Hasmoneans and the Maccabean Revolt

The efforts of Antiochus to stamp out Judaism became more and more brutal. His soldiers would surround a village and conduct a house-to-house search. If a male child was found that had been circumcised, the infant was killed and tied around the neck of the mother as a warning to others. Then the mothers were hurled off a high wall. (See 2 Maccabees 6:10.) In another case, a woman with seven sons was forced to watch each killed in a horrible way when they refused to eat the flesh of pigs. Exhorting each to keep the faith, she did not weaken and finally was herself put to death. (See 2 Maccabees 7.)



A menorah, symbol of Maccabean independence and renewal

The brutality and horror had the opposite effect to the one intended. The resistance stiffened, hatred for Antiochus and his Greek soldiers spread like wildfire, and rebellion smoldered in the hearts of the people. Finally, a spark was ignited that exploded into open revolt.

In 167 B.C., in a little village called Modin, the Greek soldiers gathered the people and demanded that Mattathias, an old priest of the Asmonean family, offer a sacrifice to the pagan god. Mattathias refused, even

though he was threatened with death. Another priest stepped forward and agreed to do as the soldier demanded. As this weaker priest lifted the knife, an enraged Mattathias grabbed a sword and cut down both the priest and the Syrian officer. Mattathias and his five sons then fled to the hills and called on all of Judah to join them. (See 1 Maccabees 2:1–27.) The revolt had begun! It roared through the land, gathering support on every side as the Jews turned on the hated Greeks. By the time Antiochus took the revolt seriously, he faced an entire nation thirsting for freedom.

Since Mattathias was a priest seeking to defend the Mosaic code, the Pharisees threw their support to the Asmonean family (often anglicized to Hasmonean). Mattathias himself died shortly after the revolt began, but he had five sons. Upon his death, Judah took over. Judah was a military genius and again and again exhorted his vastly outnumbered and poorly equipped troops to have faith in God and the righteousness of their cause. Again and again he devastated forces two to four times the size of his own. (See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 12, chap. 7, par. 3.) By 164 B.C. the city of Jerusalem had been reconquered and the temple cleansed of its impurities and rededicated to the worship of Jehovah. The Jews became independent of their foreign overlords for the first time in over four hundred years.

The Hasmonean revolt is more commonly known as the Maccabean revolt because Mattathias's son was called Judah the Maccabee or Judas Maccabeas. Most scholars believe the word *Maccabee* comes from the Hebrew word for "hammer" and may have been given to Judah because of his success in warfare. One authority, however, suggested an explanation that has interesting parallels to the Book of Mormon.

According to Humphrey Prideaux, Judah raised a banner or standard to which those loyal to his cause gathered. On that standard he abbreviated a sentence taken from scripture (Exodus 15:11): "*Mi Camo-ka Baelim Jehovah*, i.e. *who is like unto thee among the Gods O Jehovah* . . . the initial letters of these Words put together, which made the artificial word *Maccabi*, hence all that fought under that Standard were called *Maccabees* or *Maccabeans*." (*The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations*, part 2, vol. 3, pp. 260–61.)

Judah continued to strive for the autonomy of Judea and won additional victories against the Seleucid forces. By 161 B.C. he had established an alliance with Rome. Though Judah's death in battle slowed Judea's progress toward independence, his brothers Jonathan and Simeon continued his policies, taking advantage of the lessening political power of the Seleucid dynasty to strengthen their own influence and to extend the borders of Judea.

The hard-won victories of Mattathias and his sons were short-lived, however. Very quickly, the people and the descendants of the Hasmoneans forgot that it was the Lord who had delivered them. Like Saul and David and Solomon, the members of the new dynasty were corrupted by the power and glory of the courts of power. The sons and grandsons of the Maccabees degenerated into a mode of politics as usual, and before a hundred years had passed they had become so corrupt that the land of Israel fell like a ripe plum

into the hands of the Romans when Pompey annexed Judea in 63 B.C.

Because the Pharisees had thrown their support to the Hasmoneans and helped gain the independence of the nation, they not only became immensely popular but were brought into the upper reaches of power in the kingdom. The Sadducees, who traditionally held the favored position, fell out of favor because they had been most favorable to the Greeks. By the time of Jesus, however, though the Pharisees still had the support of the common people, the Sadducees were back in power, controlling the Sanhedrin and the office of the high priest.

Schurer explained what happened to bring this change about: "The ostensible occasion of the breach between Hyrcanus [the Hasmonean king and grandson of Mattathias] and the Pharisees is described by Josephus and the Talmud in a similar manner as follows. Hyrcanus once made the request, when many Pharisees were with him at dinner, that if they observed him doing anything not according to the law, they should call attention to it, and point out to him the right way. But all present were full of his praise. Only one, Eleasar, rose up and said: 'Since thou desirest to know the truth, if thou wilt be righteous in earnest, lay down the high-priesthood and content thyself with the civil government of the people.' And when Hyrcanus wished to know for what cause he should do so, Eleasar answered: 'We have heard it from old men that thy mother had been a captive under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes' [an accusation which implied Hyrcanus was an illegitimate son of Antiochus]. But this statement was incorrect. On account of it Hyrcanus was incensed against him in the highest degree. When then Hyrcanus laid before the Pharisees the question as to the punishment which Eleasar deserved, they made answer, 'stripes and bonds.' Hyrcanus, who believed for such an offence nothing less than death was due, became now still more angry, and thought that Eleasar had given expression to a sentiment that was approved of by his party. Forthwith he separated himself entirely from the Pharisees, forbade under penalties the observance of the laws ordained by them, and attached himself to the Sadducees." (*Jewish People*, p. 77.)

(K-8) Judea under the Romans

As the peace of Rome settled over the Near East, the war of philosophies escalated. The idea of reason and the supremacy of the mind is the root of Greek philosophy. One of the ironies of this period was that the Pharisees, who strove so desperately to keep Judaism free of heathen influence, elevated reason to an equivalent degree. Reason was the basis of the oral law. In an important sense, the Hellenic axiom that public education was the key to transforming people was taken over by the Pharisees in the synagogue. There the people were given rules regarding exactly what they must do. In the house, on the street, in the shop and market, every movement of the pious was regulated. (See Bickerman, *Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*, pp. 160–65.) Since these rules and regulations affected every area of life, though there

were many righteous among the Jews, it was possible to have a strong sense of religiosity without having the law enter into one's heart or mind at all. Even more ironic than the role of reason was the fact that the scribes and Pharisees, the defenders of the law, presented the most organized opposition to Jesus Christ, to whom the law pointed. Christ criticized them severely and repeatedly for false piety, telling them they drew near to the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him (see Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:7-9).

When Pompey took over Judea for Rome, he appointed one of the Hasmoneans to be king. The adviser to this puppet king was an Idumean, a people hated by the Jews, named Antipater (An-tip-i-ter). He quickly ingratiated himself with Rome and took over power from the Jewish king. Antipater consolidated his power by helping Rome in their struggle against the Parthians, an enemy from the east that constantly threatened Rome's interest. In payment for this aid, Antipater was granted the right to have his son appointed king of Judea. Thus came on the scene a man destined to have a profound effect on the history of the Jews and who is well known for his role in the first attempted assassination of Jesus: Herod the Great.

Herod was hated by the Jewish people for many reasons, not the least of which was that he was not a Jew, though he had supposedly converted to Judaism. He was brutal and vicious, though an able administrator of his kingdom. The Romans were pleased, for he kept control in what was well known to be a troublesome province, and he was completely loyal to Rome. Herod was a great supporter of Hellenic and Roman culture and reinstated it in Judea. In conjunction with this Hellenization, he undertook great building programs, all of which the people paid for through heavy taxation. The Jews saw their money erect fortresses, gymnasiums, and pagan temples. To placate them, as well as to give more power and prestige to the Sadducees, who were generally his supporters, Herod began an elaborate expansion program on the temple mount, eventually making it into one of the marvels of the ancient world. This building program was still in progress in Christ's day.

Under the Romans, the Jews themselves were given limited political power. What little there was was invested in a religious and political body traditionally composed of seventy-one men and presided over by the high priest. This council was the remnant of the important council of elders that had dominated Judean affairs until about 100 B.C. Under the Hasmoneans, in a somewhat weakened condition, it was given the name of all Hellenic councils that served kings: Synedrion, or Sanhedrin. (See Chaim Potok, *Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews*, p. 191.)

Herod the Great died shortly after the birth of Jesus, and the Romans divided the kingdom among Herod's three sons. Philip ruled north and east of Galilee; Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea; and Archelaus ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Because of Archelaus's extreme and oppressive measures, the Jews were successful in having him removed in A.D. 6. His territory was then given to Herod Antipas to rule.

(K-9) The Herodians and the Zealots

Two other groups mentioned in the New Testament grew up during the period between the testaments. A group of Jews favored the reign of Herod Antipas and urged the people to support his sovereignty. For that reason they were called Herodians. The Herodians saw Herod Antipas's rise to power as the fulfillment of certain messianic ideas then current. They preached these ideas and opposed any whom they felt might upset the status quo. This political party joined forces with the religious sect of the Pharisees to oppose Jesus (see Matthew 22:16) since they saw the Master as a threat to their political aims.

In opposition to the Herodians stood the Zealots. This party was formed in A.D. 6 under the head of Judah of Galilee in opposition to Roman taxation. These rebels had some of the spirit of the Maccabees in their opposition to gentile rule and influence and desired to keep Judea free. It was not just to the Maccabees that they looked as a prototype, however, but to Aaron's grandson Phinehas (see Numbers 25:7-13). During the Exodus from Egypt, Phinehas killed a man and a woman who had blatantly violated the laws of God in the wilderness and threatened the safety of the whole house of Israel. The Lord commended Phinehas for his "zeal" in defending the law of God. The Zealots thus reasoned that violence was justified in seeking to overthrow Rome. The Romans called them the *Sicarii*, from the Latin word for dagger, since they would sometimes mingle in a crowd with daggers under their cloaks. They would then assassinate those known to favor Rome or sometimes Roman officials themselves. Though violent, the Zealots were strictly religious, justifying themselves on the grounds that only through the overthrow of Rome could God's kingdom come about. Their very name suggested great zeal for the law of Moses. Their initial rebellion in A.D. 6 was successfully suppressed by the Romans, after which the survivors went to the deserts where they continued to put pressure on the Romans through guerrilla tactics during the time of the Savior. After the death of Jesus,



Stones shaped by King Herod's masons

it was the Zealots primarily who led the revolt against Rome that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

(K-10) Conclusion

During the four hundred years that followed Malachi, we know of no prophet in Israel. Though services had been interrupted, the temple rites had continued during most of that time. Priests had made the proper sacrifice on the great altar, and the people had continued to pray daily while a priest had offered incense upon the altar in the holy place. All had gone like clockwork until one day a priest named Zacharias did not reappear as quickly as he should have from the holy place after his service. The people began to marvel and conjecture. And well they should have, for once again the veil had been lifted, and God's word was proclaimed. The humble and aged Zacharias, of

the priestly order of Abia, stood in the presence of an angel. "Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son. . . . And he shall . . . make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13, 17.) This long-desired child was to be a messenger who would go forth in the spirit and power of Elias to declare that the kingdom of God was at hand. Once more Israel would be extended the covenant and the promise. Once more the keys and power were to be proffered to them. He who came to prepare the way was called John, or in Hebrew, *Johanan*, "gift of God." Israel had a prophet once again, a forerunner, the prophet that would prepare the way for Jehovah's coming to earth as the Son of God and the Messiah that Judah had awaited for so long. And thus the Old Testament, or old covenant, was brought to a close and the New Testament, or new covenant, begun.

חֲקִים וּמְשַׁפְּטִים: הִנֵּה אֲנִי שִׁלַּח לָכֶם אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא
 לְפָנָי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא: וְהָשִׁיב לִב־אֲבוֹת
 עַל־בָּנִים וְלִב בָּנִים עַל־אֲבוֹתָם פֶּן־אָבּוּא וְהִפִּיתִי אֶת־
 הָאָרֶץ חָרָם: * ע"כ

הנה אנכי שלח לכם את אליה הנביא לפני בוא יום
 יהוה הגדול והנורא:

י'ת'ק'ק' סימן

ח ז ק

סכום פסוקי תרי עשר

הושע מאה ותשעים ושבעה: ורגלך לא בצקה סימן.
 יואל שבעים ושלשה: שלחו מגל סימן.
 עמוס מאה וארבעים וששה: קמו בניה סימן.
 עובדיה עשרים ואחד: אך טוב לישראל סימן.
 יונה ארבעים ושמונה: ישראל עושה חיל סימן.
 מיכה מאה וחמשה: עלה אלהים בתרועה סימן.
 נחום ארבעים ושבעה: יזל מים סימן.
 חבקוק חמשים וששה: ולך תהיה צדקה סימן:
 צפניה חמשים ושלשה: גן נעול סימן.
 חגי שלשים ושמונה: כי אם גלה סודו סימן.
 זכריה מאתים ואחד עשר: אשרי כל ירא י"י סימן.
 מלאכי חמשים וחמשה: ויעקב הלך לדרכו סימן:
 סכום הפסוקים של כל שנים עשר נביאים אלה וחמשים כי שרית
 עם אלהים סימן. וחציו. לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש. וסדריו
 עשרים ואחד. ולכבוד אהיה בתוכה סימן:

(35-1) Introduction

The Old Testament contains a record of God’s dealings with His children over a period of approximately four thousand years. It has hundreds of examples of the application of principles that govern and dictate the well-being or the adversity of humankind. All these principles are based on the use of agency by individuals to accept and follow or to reject and disregard the Lord’s counsels given through His servants the prophets. The Lord’s ever-present interest for the welfare of His children is manifest throughout the Old Testament. Those who are guided by the spirit of revelation and who have an understanding of the true gospel, which has been the same from the time of Adam to the present, are best prepared to see that interest and understand the message of the Old Testament. The Lord’s interest in the welfare of His children is amply attested to by the record of His dealings with the Old Testament peoples. This chapter is a summary of the most significant themes of the Old Testament and a statement of its paramount purpose.

Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary and the scriptures cited as a summary of the message of the Old Testament.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual-study students should complete all of this section.)

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

(35-2) The Old Testament Is a Witness for Christ

Jehovah, the great God of the Old Testament, is Jesus Christ. He, having a fulness of authority and power from His Father, is the God of the whole earth. He created it, and its eternal destiny is a function of His mission and nature. The purpose of the Old Testament is to testify of Him and to bring people to Him and thus to His Father, who is the Father of the whole human family. Only those who understand this purpose can understand the message of this sacred book of scripture.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught that the “Old Testament prophets from Adam to Malachi are testifying of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, and it was He who conversed with Abraham and Moses. It was He who inspired Isaiah and Jeremiah; it was He who foretold through those chosen men the happenings of the future, even to the latest day and hour.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1977, p. 113; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 76.)

Book of Mormon prophets taught the same thing. The prophet Jacob said that the Old Testament scriptures did “truly testify of Christ” and that “none

of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 7:11). He also said that “all the holy prophets which were before [him]” knew of Christ and had a hope of His glory (Jacob 4:4; emphasis added).

Nephi taught specifically about the purpose of the law of Moses: “Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him” (2 Nephi 11:4). The prophet Abinadi said that “all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began” (Mosiah 13:33) spoke of the coming of Christ to redeem mankind. That message is the heart of the Old Testament. All who study the Old Testament must obtain a knowledge of the reality and mission of the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ, or they have not received the greatest benefit the Old Testament was brought forth to provide.

Following are examples of some of the great teachings in the Old Testament that point to and teach of Jesus Christ:

1. The laws of sacrifices and offerings typified the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.
2. The Lord’s command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac symbolized the future sacrifice of Christ (see Jacob 4:5).
3. The annual feast of the Passover, which began at the time of the Exodus, taught of the deliverance from spiritual death provided by the Firstborn Son of God.
4. The exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, their wanderings in the wilderness, and their entry into the promised land symbolized the freedom from the bondage of sin that all may obtain through Christ and the means He has provided for us to obtain eternal life.

5. The rites and ordinances of the law of Moses all taught of Christ. The cleansing of a leper, for example, typified the cleansing of a sinner through Christ’s Atonement. (See *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 175–76.)

6. Many prophecies directly taught of the coming of Christ and His Atonement for mankind.

Numerous principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are found in the Old Testament together with much that Saints can use to bring about a more Christlike way of living. “The message of the Old Testament is the message of Christ and his coming and his atonement” (Marion G. Romney, “The Message of the Old Testament,” *A Symposium on the Old Testament*, p. 5).

(35-3) The Old Testament and the Lord’s Covenants with His Children

The Old Testament record provides important insights and instructions concerning the covenant-making process between God and His children and the consequences both of keeping and of breaking the covenants. The prophet Adam and all the righteous

from the beginning entered into covenants with God. Those who kept their covenants were able to obtain eternal life, whereas those who did not lost the great blessings they might otherwise have received. In the record of God's dealings with the Old Testament people there is much important information about the covenant-making process, including specific details about the promises and obligations of the covenants and their implications for all generations. The gospel covenant was made with the early patriarchs (see Moses 6:64–68; 7:51; 8:2; Abraham 2:6–11) and was recorded in detail in the Old Testament as it was renewed with Abraham and his seed (see Genesis 17; 22:15–18; 26:1–4; 28; 35:9–13; 48:3–4). The Mosaic covenant was later established with the children of Israel after their exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 19:1–8; 34:28; Deuteronomy 5:1–4; 7:6–11) and continued until the renewal of the gospel covenant at the time of Christ. Only as one understands these covenants does one understand the purpose for a “chosen” people and God's intentions in choosing them from the world. The Old Testament is a detailed record of what happens, both to individuals and to nations, when people are obedient to the covenants they have made with God; likewise, the record clearly describes the effects of disobedience and wickedness. When Israel, as the Lord's covenant people, maintained their covenants with the Lord, they were blessed and they prospered. When they neglected or willfully turned from their covenants, they experienced difficulty, oppression, and captivity. Their history during the time of the judges, during the united kingdom, and during the divided kingdoms, was a repeated cycle of righteousness, prosperity, pride, wickedness, oppression, bondage, captivity, humility, and finally repentance; then the cycle would begin again. Moses prophesied of their future (see Deuteronomy 28). It should be clear to anyone who studies the Old Testament that the way of righteousness, though it does not circumvent difficulty, is the only way to true success and happiness, and the path of sin and covenant breaking is the way of disappointment and sorrow.

(35-4) The Old Testament Is a Book of Prophecy

The Old Testament was written by “holy men of God [who] spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Those who were thus moved spoke the mind and will of God (see D&C 68:4). By the power of the Spirit of God they were able to speak the truth concerning things that to them were past, present, and future (see Mosiah 8:15–17). Being given a knowledge of all these things, these men of God were able to proclaim to the people of their time, as well as those future to them, the conditions, challenges, and blessings that would come:

1. The Old Testament foretold the wickedness and consequent destruction and scattering of the house of Israel (see Leviticus 26:14–39; Jeremiah 13:19; 15:1–4; 29:16–19; Ezekiel 22:15; Amos 9:8–9).
2. Old Testament prophets foretold many details about the future history of nations and their impact upon the world (see Isaiah 15–21; Ezekiel 25–32; Daniel 2).
3. The Old Testament prophets knew that the Messiah would come into mortality to save us from our sins, and they foretold many important details about His

mortal ministry (see Isaiah 7:14–16; 9:6–7; 42:1–9; 53; Jeremiah 33:14–26; Micah 5:2).

4. Old Testament prophets predicted the rejection of the Messiah and the subsequent apostasy that would sweep the earth (see Isaiah 53; 24:1–5; Amos 8:11–12).

5. Old Testament prophets prophesied that the gospel would be restored in the last days and that a record preserved by the hand of God would play an important part in that restoration (see Isaiah 2:2–4; 29; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 37:15–21; Daniel 2:44–45; Malachi 4:5–6).

6. Old Testament prophets foretold the gathering of Israel in the last days and the reestablishment of the covenant with Israel, including the gathering into their promised lands (see Deuteronomy 30:1–5; Isaiah 11:11–12; Jeremiah 3:12–18; 12:14–15; 16:15–16; 23:3; 30:3; Ezekiel 11:17; 28:25–26; 34:13; 37:21–27).

7. The Old Testament foretells many of the events connected with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His millennial reign on the earth (see Isaiah 2:4–5; 11:1–9; 40:3–5; 66:15–24; Daniel 7:13–14; Joel 3:15–17; Zechariah 12:8–11; 13:4–6; 14:1–9).

Learning of the numerous prophecies made by Old Testament prophets that have been fulfilled provides powerful witness of the truth of the book as well as of the existence of God and the truth that He does indeed deal directly with mankind. The Old Testament is of particular value to the Saints of this dispensation, for it includes many prophecies concerning our time. By it, in great measure, the Saints are able to see their part in the Lord's plan for the house of Israel and the earth's inhabitants in general.

(35-5) The Old Testament and the Nature of God

The *Lectures on Faith*, compiled under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, state:

“Three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

“First, the idea that he actually exists.

“Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes.

“Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful.” (3:2–5.)

The Old Testament, when seen in its correct perspective and when properly interpreted, reveals to humanity the character and attributes of God. It shows that He is a God of love and compassion who has a fatherly care for His children. He has provided the means by which they can become like Him and is seeking continually to bring to pass their immortality and eternal life (see Moses 1:39).

(35-6) The Old Testament: A Foundation for Other Scriptures

When the family of Lehi were traveling in the wilderness after their escape from Jerusalem, the Lord commanded Lehi to send his sons back to obtain the “plates of brass” (1 Nephi 3:3). This record contained



The Old Testament was Lehi's guide and stay.

"the words . . . of all the holy prophets . . . since the world began, even down unto this present [Lehi's] time" (1 Nephi 3:20). The plates were considered to be of such value that the Spirit of the Lord told Nephi that without them his nation would "dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13). These records correspond in great measure to the Old Testament record from Genesis to the time of Jeremiah. Lehi prophesied that "these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed" (1 Nephi 5:18) and that they "should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time" (1 Nephi 5:19). Such is the case, for much of their content has been preserved in the Old Testament and has been quoted, recorded, and used as a source of inspiration and knowledge in all other scriptural books. In the New Testament, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price there are hundreds of passages quoted from the Old Testament. Many other passages in these other scriptures show parallels to Old Testament passages.

A listing of New Testament passages with Old Testament origins is given in the Bible Dictionary under "quotations." Large blocks of scripture quoted from the Old Testament record are found in 2 Nephi 6-8; 12-24; 3 Nephi 22, 24-25. References connecting the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament are listed in Monte S. Nyman, "Two Sticks: One in Thine Hand," *Symposium on the Old Testament*, pp. 246-51. Doctrine and Covenants references to Old Testament passages are given in a presentation by Robert J. Woodford (see "Doctrine and Covenants References That Aid in an Interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures," *Symposium*

on the Old Testament, pp. 276-91). The Old Testament connection with the Pearl of Great Price is obvious, for it contains the books of Moses and Abraham. Several other Old Testament passages are found in the writings of Joseph Smith in the Pearl of Great Price.

(35-7) The Old Testament Teaches How to Deal with Life's Challenges

President Marion G. Romney said: "In all dispensations holy men have been taught and instructed from heaven with respect to the gospel of Jesus Christ. These teachings and instructions have been preserved in the scriptures so that all who will may learn whom to worship, how to worship, and how to live in order to accomplish the purpose of mortality and thereby gain the promised rewards." ("Records of Great Worth," *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, p. 3.)

President Romney also said that "the Old Testament, like other scriptures, is a handbook on how to proceed in times of threatened adversity. Because of the sharp and graphic contrasts that have been preserved in it, the lessons become unmistakable." ("Records of Great Worth," p. 6.)

Many incidents in the Old Testament are of great teaching value for the Saints. President Romney cited a few examples and indicated their relevance to our time:

"The Old Testament provides many examples of the importance of heeding and following the Lord's warnings concerning impending distress or disaster. The Lord warned Joseph, and the people of Egypt survived a famine because they heeded his words. The Lord preserved the human family and other forms of life through Noah's obedience in building the ark. He preserved Moses, Abraham, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. He warned Israel on numerous occasions. At times they heeded and at times they did not. In our own dispensation the warning to prepare has been declared repeatedly. In the preface of the Doctrine and Covenants we read this emphatic statement: 'Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh' (D&C 1:12).

"The Lord knows of the calamity which is to come upon the inhabitants of the earth before he comes, and he has given directions for our protection, just as he did in days of old. The record in the Old Testament should be a lesson for us. Through the revealed welfare program, the Church is today pointing the way to the solution of society's economic problems. In the future, a disintegrating generation can point to that solution as a light on a hill capable of solving the world's chaotic disorder. Civilization is crumbling while the Church is moving forward on the same eternal principles taught in the Old Testament. Our young people need to learn the importance of preparation and the principles that make it possible. This can be accomplished in large part from a study of the Old Testament." ("Records of Great Worth," pp. 6-7.)

In a message to the Church, President Spencer W. Kimball said:

"Brethren and sisters, my purpose in preparing this message is to encourage you to study the scriptures. As the Lord has said, 'Search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me.' (John 5:39.)

"Perhaps you will have noticed that for many years the General Authorities have urged us all with increasing frequency and in a spirit of love to adopt a program of daily gospel study in our homes, both as individuals and as families. Also, the standard works have replaced all other materials as texts in the adult curriculum of the Church, and scarcely a meeting comes to a close without an inspired admonition from priesthood leaders to read and study the scriptures." ("How Rare a Possession—The Scriptures!" *Ensign*, Sept. 1976, p. 2.)

Some people do not study the Old Testament because they feel they cannot understand it. As with all scripture, understanding of the Old Testament may be gained by studying it again and again. President Kimball said: "I am convinced that each of us, at some time in our lives, must discover the scriptures for ourselves—and not just discover them once, but rediscover them again and again.

"... We must all of us return to the scriptures just as King Josiah did [see 2 Kings 22–23] and let them work mightily within us, impelling us to an unwavering determination to serve the Lord." ("How Rare a Possession—The Scriptures!" pp. 4–5.)

President Marion G. Romney gave the following examples regarding the value of studying the teachings of the Old Testament:

"It seems to me that a study of the Old Testament yields convincing proof of the value and rewards for searching the scriptures.

"The writings of Moses constituted the scriptures for ancient Israel. Included in them was the 'Book of the Law.' As the following examples illustrate, over and over again the Lord urged Israel to search these scriptures and live by 'the law.'

"—To Joshua, who was to lead Israel over Jordan into the promised land, the Lord said: [Joshua 1:7–8].

"Note that Joshua was to 'meditate therein [upon the law] day and night,' an important step in understanding the scriptures.

"—The story of Israel is one long series of heights and depths, lights and shadows. Both the people and their civilization rise and fall as they search and obey or neglect and reject the law of the scriptures.

"Following the Babylonian captivity, one of the first things the humbled Jews did upon their return to Jerusalem was gather 'themselves together . . . [and direct] Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses . . . before the congregation. . . . And he read therein . . . the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading' (Neh. 8:1–3, 8).

"—Isaiah's counsel was to test familiar spirits and wizards by the teachings of the scriptures. 'To the law and to the testimony,' he said, 'if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them' (Isa. 8:19–20)." ("Records of Great Worth," pp. 3–4.)



The Old Testament is a witness of Christ.

POINTS TO PONDER

(35-8) Treasuring Up the Words of Life

Do you ever have difficulty understanding the Old Testament? During your study of the Old Testament have you paid the price required to gain the understanding and inspiration that is available from it? Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught:

"We would like all Latter-day Saint[s] . . . to read all of the Standard Works, to ponder in their hearts the eternal truths that are found in them, and to get on their knees and ask the Lord in sincerity and in faith for understanding and comprehension and guidance. We would like each of you to read them, either by yourself . . . or with your families, and not simply read the words but ponder and pray about their content so that there will come into your lives the desires for righteousness that grow out of the study of the pure, perfect word of God. We would like the Church to start drinking at the fountain—undiluted—the pure, perfect message that the Lord has given by the mouths of his prophets, the message found in the Standard Works of the Church. . . .

"... It is not reading alone; it is reading, pondering, and praying so that the Spirit of the Almighty gets involved in the study and gives understanding." ("Drink from the Fountain," *Ensign*, Apr. 1975, pp. 70–71).

President Marion G. Romney talked of the cycle of learning that enables us to grow in understanding of the gospel. The concept he taught certainly applies to the Old Testament, as it does to all scripture: "A knowledge of the gospel comes by degrees: one learns a little, obeys what he learns; learns a little more and obeys that. This cycle continues in an endless round. Such is the pattern by which one can move on to a full knowledge of the gospel." ("Records of Great Worth," p. 4.)

What can you do to improve your understanding of the Old Testament?

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Explanatory Notes

The first column designates the scripture reference; the second column identifies the reading block where this reference is found.

Example:

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c—commentary. A short, explanatory comment is made about the scripture.

m—meaning. The meaning of a word or phrase in the scripture is discussed.

q—quotation. The scripture is quoted partially or in full.

r—reference. The scripture is merely referred to.

JST—The Joseph Smith Translation is used.

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