

General Comments on Isaiah

Preface

This material is intended to be a resource for in-depth study. It is mainly intended to be a reference, as it does not read well. Hopefully it can make the book of Isaiah accessible such that you can independently pursue your own studies.

As I have studied over time I have changed readings on particular verses frequently and changed positions on major themes occasionally. That is the natural order of things as you learn.

If these commentaries stir your thoughts, answer some questions, and get you back into the scriptures, then they have served their purpose.

Introduction

This commentary is aimed at members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It simply assumes the LDS cannon is Scripture, and draws on LDS sources. However, as the comments tend to rely primarily on OT-sourced material they are of use to persons who do not generally subscribe to LDS positions.

This commentary is intended for use with the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation of the TANAKH. The JPS was used because it is the only major direct Hebrew to English translation that has been thoroughly peer reviewed. The text of the JPS translation is broken into lines and strophes making it easier to discern poetical structures. The JPS is a non-profit publishing house which prints Judaica from children's books to scholarly commentaries. Copies of the JPS TANAKH are typically available at any bookstore with a large Judaica section, or directly from them at 800-234-3151.

In the text, the usage of cp., cf., ct. are as follows:

cp. - compare - see the provided reference for text similar to the subject currently being discussed.

cf. - confer - see the provided reference for text supporting the assertion being made.

ct. - contrast - see the provided reference for text that differs from or is opposite to the subject being

discussed.

Chapter and verse references without a book preceding them are internal to Isaiah, any verse without a chapter preceding it indicates it is in the chapter currently being discussed. Verse references with letters following them indicate which particular line in the verse is being remarked upon. These letters are assigned consecutively in ascending alphabetical order (e.g., the first line of v. 1 would be v. 1a, second line is v. 1b, third line is v. 1c, and so on) and are indexed against the JPS arrangement of the text.

The terms "eschatological" and "millennial" appear fairly frequently throughout the text. In this text the term "eschatological" refers to the times and events leading up to and including the Day of the Lord (i.e., the Second Advent), or "the last days". "Millennial" refers to the times and events after the Day of the Lord when the earth enjoys a thousand years of peace.

Present State of Scholarly Opinion on Authorship

In the past hundred or so years the idea of there being multiple authors to the book of Isaiah has become the norm among scholarly commentators. This is largely based on the unwillingness to believe the original Isaiah could have predicted the Jews being freed from Babylonian captivity by Cyrus in 45:1. Some concluded that text must have post-dated the return from Babylonian exile, and thus there must have been a second, or deutero-Isaiah.

Once this theory became accepted, others argued for there being a third, or trito-Isaiah who wrote the last several chapters. This theory is based on the style and continuity of the text.

Others, notably the Interpreter's Bible, then went on to see many final redactors for the text we have today, one for every subtle change in subject.

Given the additional information we have on the text from the Book of Mormon, the LDS audience rejects all of these theories, despite their popularity among scholars. While many non-LDS commentaries on Isaiah have excellent comments and provide valuable insight, the LDS reader needs to be aware of the general perception these authors will have when approaching the book of Isaiah.

Annotated Bibliography

Throughout the comments on Isaiah several sources are cited. Below is a brief review of these various sources. Most large public libraries have at least a few of these commentaries. Borrowing these books before purchasing is recommended as they tend to be expensive and oftentimes not very useful. For example, the typical Christian commentary on Isaiah is largely useless to an LDS reader because it will favor historical interpretations and multiple authorship, which the typical LDS reader rejects outright. The list below is not exhaustive, but does review the more prominent commentaries.

Fox, Everett. 1995. The Five Books of Moses, The Schocken Bible, Vol. 1, a New Translation, with Introductions, Commentary and Notes, Schocken Books.

As the book of Isaiah relies heavily on symbolism from the five books of Moses, familiarity with the Law certainly helps. Fox's translation, comments and insights are excellent. While the work is primarily aimed at Jews, he is careful to present the material in such a fashion that Christian readers will not be locked out by obscurities. The JPS has an excellent set of Torah commentaries as well, but they are much more technical and far less accessible to Christians than is Fox's. There are versions in print without the introductions, commentary, and note. Be certain to get a copy with this additional text.

Gileadi, Avraham. 1994. The Literary Message of Isaiah, Hebraus Press.

An edited and updated version of a 1988 Deseret edition with additional comments on textual structure and cross references provided in the text. The translation is modern and similar to the 1988 version. The book contains a review of the various "keys" of interpretation outlined in the Book of Mormon, which have appeared elsewhere in print. A near exhaustive concordance is added, which makes the book very handy. Copies of this book can be obtained directly from the publisher at Hebraus Press, P.O. Box 183, Cave Junction, OR 97523, and is also online at the Hebraus web site.

Heschel, Abraham. 1962. The Prophets, Harper & Row.

Heschel is a noted and respected Jewish author who is well published and heavily read among Jewish audiences. This particular book comes in two volumes and addresses the major prophets as well as several of the minor ones. It also

covers a number of overarching themes common to all of the prophets, all the while trying to discern what these men were like in person. The book provides excellent insight into the Jewish perspective on the OT prophets, addressing both historical and religious issues. The book tends to favor historical interpretations, and is aimed at Jewish audiences. It is not presented as a scholarly commentary, but as an interesting and informative primer for the layman.

Herbert. 1973. The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Cambridge University Press.

A scholarly commentary aimed at Christians that follows the traditional three author position. It tends to be more conservative in its presentation than the Interpreter's Bible. Issues of translation and textual structure are addressed. The exegesis tends to favor historical interpretations.

Interpreter's Bible, 1956. Vol 5. Abingdon Press.

A scholarly commentary aimed at Christian audiences. The IB tends to spend a considerable amount of time commenting directly on the language and syntax used, more so than other commentaries. The exegesis and comments provided for Isaiah tend to be more critical, and follow the "liberal" vein of three major authors and multiple final redactors.

Kaiser, Otto. 1974. The Old Testament Library: Isaiah 13-39; a Commentary, Westminster Press. Philadelphia.

A relatively conservative commentary. Forwards the Deutero and Trito Isaiah hypothesis. Comments on textual structure and stylistic issues to a greater degree than the other commentaries. Cautiously avoids Christian proof-text issues common to other commentaries, but is aimed at Christian audiences. Translated from German.

McKenzie, John L. 1964. The Anchor Bible on Second Isaiah, Anchor Publishing.

A relatively conservative commentary aimed at a Christian audience. Forwards Deutero-Isaiah authorship and historical interpretations.

Nyman, Monte. 1980. Great Are the Words of Isaiah, Bookcraft.

This book comprehensively, if not exhaustively, reviews all

LDS General Authority documented comments on Isaiah. It contains very little original material by Nyman, so it is largely a reference work. What little commentary he provides blatantly favors pro-LDS positions, and he frequently makes disparaging remarks about "Bible scholars". It also contains several appendices, one of which exhaustively cross references all Isaiah quotes into the complete LDS canon.

Vermes, G. 1972. The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Penguin Books.

The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a number of commentaries on the book of Isaiah. Any review of these texts would be sufficient, this one happens to be widely available in paperback and common in libraries. Vermes' translation is generally regarded as one of the most fair to the Hebrew and least biased by politics.

General Comments on Isaiah 1

Chapter 1 forms a general introduction and overview to the entire book of Isaiah. The themes initially presented here are addressed repeatedly in the subsequent chapters. Chapters in particular 50-66 address the same topics, but go into much greater detail, thus chapter 1 forms something of a summary of the book of Isaiah. It is entirely possible that chapter 1 was written after ch. 50-66.

The contents of ch. 1 are a particularly harsh way of introducing the book. The tone is overwhelmingly negative and attacks Israel in general, but more specifically Judah as they were the leading tribe among Israel. Isaiah calls them a bunch of rebellious, hypocritical apostates. Isaiah uses many classical rhetorical devices established in the Torah (i.e. the Law of Moses), which anyone familiar with it would immediately recognize. The most blatant of which is his use of covenant based maledictions, or curses. Isaiah draws heavily on the litany of curses served up in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, a set which any Israelite even remotely familiar with the Law would immediately recognize as being curses associated with failing to live covenants made at Sinai.

KJV Isaiah 1

1 THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: [but] Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart

JPS Isaiah 1

1The prophecies of Isaiah son of Amoz, who prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,
For the LORD has spoken:
"I reared children and brought them up—
And they have rebelled against Me!
³An ox knows its owner,
An ass its master's crib:
Israel does not know,
My people takes no thought."

⁴Ah, sinful nation!
People laden with iniquity!
Brood of evildoers!
Depraved children!
They have forsaken the LORD,
Spurned the Holy One of Israel,
Turned their backs [on Him].

⁵Why do you seek further beatings,
That you continue to offend?
Every head is ailing,

faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head [there is] no soundness in it; [but] wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. 7 Your country [is] desolate, your cities [are] burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and [it is] desolate, as overthrown by strangers. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. 9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, [and] we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

11 To what purpose [is] the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; [it is] iniquity, even the solem meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them]. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash you, make you clean;

And every heart is sick.

⁶From head to foot

No spot is sound:

All bruises, and welts,

And festering sores—

Not pressed out, not bound up,

Not softened with oil.

⁷Your land is a waste,

Your cities burnt down;

Before your eyes, the yield of your soil

Is consumed by strangers—

A wasteland as overthrown by strangers!

⁸Fair Zion is left

Like a booth in a vineyard,

Like a hut in a cucumber field,

Like a city beleaguered.

⁹Had not the LORD of Hosts

Left us some survivors,

We should be like Sodom,

Another Gomorrah.

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD,

You chieftains of Sodom;

Give ear to our God's instruction,

You folk of Gomorrah!

¹¹“What need have I of all your sacrifices?”

Says the LORD.

“I am sated with burnt offerings of rams,

And suet of fatlings,

And blood of bulls;

And I have no delight

In lambs and he-goats.

¹²That you come to appear before Me—

Who asked that of you?

Trample My courts ¹³ no more;

Bringing oblations is futile,

Incense is offensive to Me.

New moon and sabbath,

Proclaiming of solemnities,

Assemblies with iniquity,

I cannot abide.

¹⁴Your new moons and fixed seasons

Fill Me with loathing;

They are become a burden to Me,

I cannot endure them.

¹⁵And when you lift up your hands,

I will turn My eyes away from you;

Though you pray at length,

I will not listen.

Your hands are stained with crime—

¹⁶Wash yourselves clean;

put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. 22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: 23 Thy princes [are] rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. 24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: 25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: 26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. 27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. 28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners [shall be] together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 29 For they shall be ashamed of

Put your evil doings
Away from My sight.
Cease to do evil;
¹⁷Learn to do good.
Devote yourselves to justice;
Aid the wronged.
Uphold the rights of the orphan;
Defend the cause of the widow.

¹⁸“Come, let us reach an understanding,

—says the LORD.

Be your sins like crimson,
They can turn snow-white;
Be they red as dyed wool,
They can become like fleece.”
¹⁹If, then, you agree and give heed,
You will eat the good things of the earth;
²⁰But if you refuse and disobey,
You will be devoured [by] the sword.—
For it was the LORD who spoke.

²¹Alas, she has become a harlot,
The faithful city
That was filled with justice,
Where righteousness dwelt—
But now murderers.
²²Your silver has turned to dross;
Your wine is cut with water.
²³Your rulers are rogues
And cronies of thieves,
Every one avid for presents
And greedy for gifts;
They do not judge the case of the orphan,
And the widow’s cause never reaches them.

²⁴Assuredly, this is the declaration
Of the Sovereign, the LORD of Hosts,
The Mighty One of Israel:
“Ah, I will get satisfaction from My foes;
I will wreak vengeance on My enemies!
²⁵I will turn My hand against you,
And smelt out your dross as with lye,
And remove all your slag:
²⁶I will restore your magistrates as of old,
And your counselors as of yore.
After that you shall be called
City of Righteousness, Faithful City.”

²⁷Zion shall be saved in the judgment;
Her repentant ones, in the retribution.

²⁸But rebels and sinners shall all be crushed,

the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench [them].

And those who forsake the LORD shall perish.

²⁹Truly, you shall be shamed
Because of the terebinths you desired,
And you shall be confounded
Because of the gardens you coveted.

³⁰For you shall be like a terebinth
Wilted of leaf,
And like a garden
That has no water,

³¹Stored wealth shall become as tow,
And he who amassed it a spark;
And the two shall burn together,
With none to quench.

Specific Comments on Isaiah 1

The text can be arranged as a set of two inverted parallelisms, both of which deal with the purification of Israel, as follows:

Introduction of speaker (v. 1)

A - (v. 2-4) Rebellious Israel spurns the Lord

B - (v. 5-6) All of rebellious Israel is covenant cursed

C - (v. 7-9) Additional covenant curse, foreign invasion

D - (v. 10-15) Their bloody hands are covered with iniquity and hypocrisy rivaling that of Sodom and Gomorrah

E - (v. 16) Wash yourselves clean

E - (v. 17) Do good and be just

D - (v. 18) Your bloody hands can be washed clean

C - (v. 19-20) If you do good you receive the covenant blessing of prosperous land, but if you do not do good you will be consumed by invaders

B - (v. 21-23) Jerusalem and her leaders are playing the harlot, they are entirely corrupted

A - (v. 24) The Lord deals with His enemies

A - (v. 25) The Lord will smelt away the dross

B - (v. 26) The Lord will restore Jerusalem and make her Zion

C - (v. 27) Zion will be saved by justice and retribution

C - (v. 28) Rebels and sinners will be annihilated

B - (v. 29-30) Idolatrous gardens prepared for burning

A - (v. 31) They will be burned up

1 THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

v1 Isaiah introduces himself, identifies himself as Hebrew by noting who his father was, then gives the reigns of the kings in

which he served. The kings cited indicate Isaiah prophesied from about 740 B.C. to about 720 B.C.

"Judah and Jerusalem", historically referring to literal Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah is also eschatologically referring to those of spiritual "Israel" and "Judah", or those who are supposed to be of the true faith.

The term "Judah" is also used as referring to any Israelite living at or around Jerusalem, cp. 2 Ne. 29:5, 2 Ne. 30:2-4. There certainly was a mix of various tribes of Israel at Jerusalem, consider the Temple Levites, the Benjamites, and so on. As Judah was the prominent tribe though, they were all referred to as "Jews".

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: [but] Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

v2-4 Israel and Judah are deliberately rebellious, it is not a matter of being raised in ignorance.

v2a The Sinai covenant is invoked and the heavens and earth are called as witnesses against Israel following their historic witness of the original covenant made, cp. Deut. 4:26, Deut. 30:19, Deut. 31:28, Ps. 50:4.

v2c-3 A quotation of the Lord. It plainly states the reality of the relationship between Israel and Him in unflattering detail.

v2c-d The Lord refers to Himself as a fatherly figure. Throughout Isaiah the Lord is typically cast as the father figure and Jerusalem/Zion/Israel as either His wife or His children, cf. 54:1-8, 57:3-6. On Israel's rebellious nature, see ch. 28 and 63:8-10.

v3 Israel is said to be less intelligent than an ox and a mule, they "do not know" and "take no thought", in other words, they are about as smart as an animal. What is it they do not know? See 29:9-14.

Israel is symbolically called an ox in 1 Kings 7:25 and an ass in Hosea 8:9. So, this could be referring to true spiritual Israel knowing where its stall is. But, Israel is presently spiritually rebellious, and the context indicates the labeling is

pejorative.

v4-9 Commentary by Isaiah in response to the quotation from the Lord in v. 2c-3. He is pleading with Isreal to stop rebelling against the Lord. He is rhetorically asking "Why? Why do you continue to do this?"

v4 Isaiah casts a barrage of epithets: sinful, laden with iniquity, evildoers, depraved. This kind of accusation serves to polarize people into saying either he is honestly speaking the truth, or is a raving lunatic. The reaction would be dependant upon the spiritual condition of the hearer, cp. 6:9-10.

v4d "Depraved children!", with regard to being perverted offspring, cp. 57:3-6, Hosea 2:2-4.

v4c Compare 57:3-6.

v4e-g Compare 30:9-11.

v4f "the Holy One of Israel", one of Nephi's favorite titles for the Lord, cf. 1 Ne. 19:14-15, 1 Ne. 20:17.

5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head [there is] no soundness in it; [but] wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. 7 Your country [is] desolate, your cities [are] burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and [it is] desolate, as overthrown by strangers. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. 9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, [and] we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

v5-8 A classic series of covenant curses from the Law of Moses, cf. Lev. 26:17, 36-38, and Deut. 28:25, 49-52. Careful review of Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 shows all of these covenant curses are designed to compel Israel to be humble and return to the Lord, cf. Lev. 26:40-42.

v5-6 For the equation of the members of a body to Israel, see 9:15.

v6 Compare Deut. 28:35, Ps. 38:1-9.

v6f No balm in Gilead for rebellious Israel, cp. Jer. 8:22, Jer. 51:8.

v7 Compare 5:5-6, 9:18-19, 30:27-33, 66:15-16, Deut. 28:30-33.

v8 This verse is symbolically referring to the beleaguered and dilapidated condition Israel and her cities are in as a result of being covenant cursed.

The cottage/lodge/booth/hut is also a predictive symbol of the remnant/survivors which will remain of Israel after the Lord's retribution. Just as a booth stands alone in the midst of the field after the harvest is over, so will the remnant stand alone after the "harvest" of the wicked, cf. 17:4-5, 27:11-12, ct. 4:5-6.

v8a "Fair Zion", the "fair" is literally "Daughter". Israel/Zion is personified as the Lord's daughter, cp. 4:5-6.

v8d Compare 36:1-2.

v9-10 "Sodom...Gomorra", see 3:9, 13:19 as well as 5:7 for additional references to these nations and their comparison with Israel. For Israel to be compared to Sodom and Gomorra is just about the worst insult you can level at them. It also indicates their relative ripeness for destruction. The curse here is derivative of the one appearing in Deut. 29:9-28, esp. note Deut. 29:22. See also Hosea 11:8 for a similar equation.

v9a "Lord of Hosts", the title is an authority symbol, compare D&C 95:7.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorra. 11 To what purpose [is] the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; [it is] iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear [them]. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

v10-20 A lawsuit form of speech where the indictment and punishments are laid out in a systematic fashion. The general rejection of the hypocritical sacrificing also appears as a theme in 43:23-24 and 66:3. These verses are a quotation of the Lord.

v11 The Lord rejects form without content. This text is blatantly anti-sacrifice. While sacrifices were obviously required under the Law of Moses, the people had lost sight of the spiritual significance of such actions. For similar statements see 66:1-3, Num. 23:19, Ps. 40:6, Ps. 51:14-17, 1 Sam. 15:22, Jer. 7:21-23, Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:3-8.

v11-12 The text is framed in a Question and Answer: Q:11a A: 12a. These verses also invoke the theme of 1 Sam. 15:22.

v13-14 Regarding new moons and sabbaths, all of the holy days occur on the new moon. Sabbaths aren't necessarily Saturday only, as all of the Feasts (e.g., Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles) are considered sabbaths as well.

It should also be noted that aside from the three divinely appointed feasts (cf. Lev. 23) the Jews have added several additional feast days (e.g., Chanukah, Purim, Yom Ha-Sho`ah, Tisha Be-av, etc.). An eschatological interpretation could be the Lord saying He is tired of them adding feasts (or liturgy in general) and would prefer them to simply keep the spirit of the Law.

v13 Hypocrisy in covenant making, cp. 58:13-14.

v14 Compare 46:3-4, Amos. 6:21-25.

v14c "a burden to Me", cp. 46:3.

v15 Compare 59:2-3 for a similar statement. Line a employs temple imagery, compare 40:27, with a reversal of this in 58:9-11. Blood references are an OT symbol of corruption, compare v. 18. Edom in Hebrew means "red", and Edom is used by the prophets as a type of those who rebel against or disregard the covenants.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].

v16-20 The text is aimed at corporate Israel, not expressly at individuals (although, of course, any group is composed of individuals). Many of the symbols appearing here are employed in ch. 56-59.

v16-17 Compare 55:7, 58:6, D&C 88:123-124.

v16a "Wash yourselves", the Hebrew word here means "immerse" and can be taken to be referring to the Jewish "tevilah", a ritual ablution involving complete immersion in water in a "mikvah" (i.e., what Christians would consider a baptism in a font). This practice was common among ancient Jews, and is still in practice today among contemporary Jews. It is most commonly observed in preparation for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, or for converts to Judaism.

v17 An injunction of the Law of Moses, cp. 10:2, Exod. 22:21-22, Deut. 10:18.

v18 Note the atonement allusions using Law of Sacrifice symbols of blood and sheep. Also contrast this verse with Jer. 2:22 where caustic lye cannot remove the Israel's guilt. This forces a spiritual interpretation. Compare 43:25, D&C 50:10.

v19-20 Compare D&C 64:34-35.

v19 Classic covenant blessings, cp. 3:10, 7:21, 62:9, 65:21.

v20 "devoured by the sword", covenant curse meaning foreign invasion, cp. 65:11-12. A spiritual interpretation would be that of damnation as the word of God is frequently likened to a sword, cp. 3:25, 49:2 and Rev. 1:16.

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. 22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: 23 Thy princes [are] rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. 24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

v21 Jerusalem called a harlot, cp. 57:7-10, Hosea 1-2, Ezek. 16. The Lord is presented as the husband to Israel, and when Israel strays from the Lord by idolatry it is likened to adultery, cp. Judges 2:17, Micah 1:7.

v22-23 These verses compare polluted wine and cheaply alloyed silver to the corrupt leaders of Israel by way of synonymous parallel. The rulers are described as materialistic and self-seeking, cp. 56:10-12.

"Wine" is symbolic of the deeds of the people in the Qumran Damascus Rule (G. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Penguin

Books, 1972).

v24-25 In these verses the Lord's role changes from supporter of Israel, as was identified in v. 2-3, to the One who's responsibility is now to preserve and draw out a righteous remnant from the generally rebellious Israel. Thus, the Lord's relationship with Israel is interactive. As Israel in general slides into apostasy His goals change.

v24 The Lord describes His own people as His enemies because of their rebellions, cp. 59:18, 66:6, 14. This has strong negative implications as He is no longer calling them "My people" as in v. 3. This indicates a shift in His position as the allegations against Israel mount.

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: 26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. 27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. 28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners [shall be] together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench [them].

v25-31 Note the repeated fire/burning images associated with the punishment/purification of Israel, cp. 5:24, Ezek. 21:1-10, 2 Ne. 26:4-6.

v25 The purging and purification of the wicked must come by some harsh means, cp. 48:10. The Lord has repeatedly called them to repentance by His prophets and Israel has ignored them. So, the Lord must speak to them by covenant curses.

v25a "hand against", the Lord's hand is for punishment rather than salvation, cp. 5:25-30, Joel 2:1-11, Hab. 1:5-11. He is out for the destruction of wicked Israel, the "dross" and "slag" of v. 25.

v26 Wicked rulers are replaced by the surviving righteous remnant and the Lord personally arranges the government of Zion. Zion is thus granted a new name of "City of Righteousness", for more of Zion's new names cp. 62:4.

v27 The repentant and the just will be among the survivors in Zion, cp. 32:16-20.

v28 Compare 13:9, 65:11-15.

v29-30 Idolatrous nature worship was popular with ancient Israel as a result of Canaanite acculturation, cp. 57:3-6, 66:15-17, Hosea 4:11-14. Israel was specifically commanded to eliminate and keep these things out of their land, cf. Deut. 7:1-11, Deut. 13.

v30-31 The text presents various images portraying the transient nature of the materialistic pleasures of men and their might. Men may be mighty and be having fun at the moment, but when the Lord exposes their sin their pleasure will be turned to misery.

v30 People symbolically equated with trees. Compare 10:15 where one of Israel's punishers is called an axe and a saw. See also 2:13, 27:11.

v31b "spark", cp. 50:10-11 for a spiritual interpretation and 37:19 for a physical one.

v31d "none to quench", cp. 66:24.

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