

## General Comments on Isaiah 4

Note: This chapter appears in 2 Ne. 14.

The subject of this chapter is connected with that of the preceding one. In the preceding chapter the men of Israel are cursed, here the women of Israel are similarly cursed for their wickedness as well.

The cleansing symbolism of this chapter appears in later chapters of Isaiah, especially cp. 54:1-6.

While the general theme is that of the women being cursed, a redemption theme is introduced as well in v. 2-5. While at present the wicked among Israel are suffering, the larger goal is the cleansing of Israel. These verses serve as an introduction to the themes of ch. 9-12.

### KJV Isaiah 4

1 AND in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. 2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth [shall be] excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. 3 And it shall come to pass, [that he that is] left in Zion, and [he that] remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, [even] every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: 4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. 5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory [shall be] a defence. 6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

### JPS Isaiah 4

In that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying,

“We will eat our own food  
And wear our own clothes;  
Only let us be called by your name—  
Take away our disgrace!”

<sup>2</sup>In that day,  
The radiance of the LORD  
Will lend beauty and glory,  
And the splendor of the land  
[Will give] dignity and majesty,  
To the survivors of Israel.

<sup>3</sup>And those who remain in Zion  
And are left in Jerusalem—  
All who are inscribed for life in Jerusalem—  
Shall be called holy.

<sup>4</sup>When my Lord has washed away  
The filth of the daughters of Zion,  
And from Jerusalem's midst  
Has rinsed out her infamy—  
In a spirit of judgment  
And in a spirit of purging—

<sup>5</sup>the LORD will create over the whole shrine and meeting place of Mount Zion cloud by day and smoke with a glow of flaming fire by night. Indeed, over all the glory shall hang a canopy, <sup>6</sup>which shall serve as a pavilion for shade from heat by day and as a shelter for protection against drenching rain.

## Specific Comments on Isaiah 4

See the arrangement on the text of this chapter as presented with ch. 3 in the comments on ch. 3. Independent of ch. 3, this chapter can be arranged as a synthetical parallelism:

- A - (v. 1) The Lord humbles the women of Israel
- B - (v. 2-3) The survivors of Israel shall be holy
- A - (v. 4) The Lord washes Daughter Zion from her filth
- B - (v. 5-6) The Lord reclaims Israel, the cleansed bride

**1 AND in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.**

**2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth [shall be] excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. 3 And it shall come to pass, [that he that is] left in Zion, and [he that] remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, [even] every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:**

**4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.**

**5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory [shall be] a defence. 6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.**

v1 The references to war and men being slaughtered in the immediately preceding text (cf. 3:25-26, also cp. 5:25) indicate the context here is there are so few men left surviving that women will be willing to reduce themselves to the status of concubine rather than be left desolate.

"take away our reproach", the women of Israel are asking to be the bearers of children, cp. Gen. 29:31-35, 30:23, Luke 1:25. For a Hebrew woman to go childless is to be cursed of God. Consider the heinous acts committed by Lot's daughters in order to bear children, cf. Gen. 19:31-32.

Some LDS commentators see this as a prediction of the practice of polygamy in the latter-days. Such a reading is not contextual and the manner in which the women are offering themselves to the men is more akin to concubinage than celestial plural marriage. The offering on the part of the women is an indication of their desperation, where the women who were once

haughty are humbled and the wicked men are killed, leaving few men behind.

v2-4 These verses are a condensed and highly poetical summary of the Lord's intentions for redeeming Israel. The specific details on how this is to be accomplished is in ch. 9-12. As such, these verses serve to inform the reader that while Israel is presently being punished for her wickedness, the larger intent is to cleanse her and redeem her.

v2 The Lord's intent is not to utterly destroy Israel, but to sanctify her. It is important to note in the context of Lev. 26, the only reason the Lord resorts to war destroying the wicked is because all other non-lethal methods failed to persuade Israel to repent. The Lord is left with no alternative having attempted all other means. The survivors of Israel will be the more righteous, and the women will outnumber the men.

v3 "written among the living", symbolic of having one's name written in the Book of Life. This symbol is subsequently employed by John, cf. Rev. 3:5. The survivors will be those spared because of their righteousness, and will therefore constitute a group worthy to be called holy by the Lord.

v4 "washed away", invoking the imagery of Noah's Deluge where the flood was used to wash away evil from the earth. Isaiah uses similar symbolism elsewhere, cp. 8:8, 28:15-18.

"filth...blood", both have reference to ritual impurities (cf. Lev. 18:19, Ezek. 22:10), which implies Israel in general has rendered itself ritually impure.

"daughters of Zion", the reference makes a clear shift from the literal women of Israel to Israel as the Lord's figurative bride, which now becomes the subject. It also serves to tie the symbolism of what happens to the literal women of Israel to what happens to Israel in general.

"judgement...burning", the Day of the Lord is precipitated by Israel's wickedness and therefore the Lord's judgment upon Israel is just and is done in an effort to cleanse her.

v5 The verse conjures imagery from the Mount Horeb account in Exodus where the Lord appeared to Moses in person and to Israel by His voice. The implication is the Lord will make himself known to Israel and covenant with them again in a similar manner after she is cleansed.

"defence", a poor translation in the KJV, a better translation is "canopy". The Jewish "chiupa" is a wedding canopy used in a traditional marriage, hence the NT parables that have weddings as their setting, compare Joel 2:16. This also has reference to the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths or Sukkoth) where the pilgrims construct a canopy or bower of branches at the ingathering. An excerpt from a review of the major Jewish holy days states:

The Sukkah (a small booth covered with branches) reminds Jews how their ancestors dwelt in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. This Harvest Festival was celebrated in Temple times by pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Hospitality (Hakhnassat Orehim) is extended to family and friends who visit the Sukkah. Here rich and poor alike experience the impermanence of material possessions.

The reference to Tabernacles is poignant as part of the symbolism of that feast is the impermanence of worldly possessions, which is what Isaiah has been attacking Israel on in chapter 3. Tangential symbols would be that of the ingathering of the faithful, the righteous remnant, and of the harvest, the harvesting of the wicked and the righteous at the Day of the Lord.

On this verse, the BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

And the LORD will create  
upon every dwelling place  
of mount Zion, and  
upon her assemblies, a  
cloud and smoke  
by day, and  
the shining of a flaming fire  
by night:  
for upon all the glory  
[shall be] a defence.

BofM

And the Lord will create  
upon every dwelling-place  
of mount Zion, and  
upon her assemblies, a  
cloud and smoke  
by day and  
the shining of a flaming fire  
by night;  
for upon all the glory of Zion  
shall be a defence.

v6 Has reference to protection from the natural elements (one of the methods used to destroy the wicked, in this case natural disasters) as well as the heat of the day (Isaiah uses many symbols of fire, burning, smelting, etc. to symbolize the cleansing of Israel on the Day of the Lord), ct. 1:8.

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