

## **General Comments on Isaiah 9-12**

These chapters compliment ch. 2-5. Those chapters focus on the wickedness of Israel and their punishment at the hands of the king of Assyria. The present chapters reverse the themes of wickedness and captivity by discussing the redemption of the righteous remnant and the punishment of the king of Assyria.

Imagery of darkness turned to light (cf. 4:2, 5:30, 8:22) comes to fruition (cf. 9:2) as the Messiah comes to redeem Israel. While the Lord has placed Israel into the hands of an oppressor (5:3-6), He provides a deliverer (cf. 9:6-7, 11:1-5) and strikes down the oppressor (10:5-19) after Israel has been sufficiently chastened. The final result is Israel cleansed and the wicked, both Israelite and Gentile, destroyed.

Aside from the physical interpretation, the spiritual reading is mankind is delivered into the hands of the Adversary upon assuming mortality. But, the Lord provides a deliverer, the Messiah, to redeem them from the Adversary. This is why the king of Assyria is likened to the Adversary (cf. 14:12-15) and the day of judgement is presented in both physical (3:13-26, 5:26-30, 8:4-8, 10:1-4) and spiritual (2:12-21, 5:14-16, 8:16-22) terms. Particularly note the physical (cf. 9:4-7) and spiritual (cf. 11:1-5) aspects of the Messiah. Isaiah intertwines these two themes because they are one and the same, not separate.

Ignoring the spiritual aspect of these texts is why the Jews in general rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus did not overthrow the Romans and liberate Jerusalem as they expected him to. They focused on the deliverance from a physical oppressor. Jesus ignored this and told them their sins were what he was there to deliver them from. If they repented and forsook their sins, then He would have lifted the covenant curse and banished their oppressors. But, they never repented. Instead, they killed him for failing to deliver the overthrow predicted in these passages, and their captivity continued.

## **General Comments on Isaiah 9**

Note: this chapter appears in 2 Ne. 19.

As ch. 6-8 form something of a hiatus, ch. 9 resumes the theme from ch. 5. Chapter 5's primary theme is the invasion of Israel by a powerful army which is come to destroy the wicked. While the Lord is the One who brings the foreign invaders to strike the wicked (ch. 5), He also provides a deliverer for the righteous (ch. 9).

The chapter explains why the use of an oppressor and

deliverer is necessary. The wicked among Israel and Judah refuse to repent, no matter how often or how harshly they are smitten (v. 8-21). So the wicked must ultimately be destroyed. But, the righteous among Israel must be spared. As all of Israel's leaders are corrupt, the Lord Himself provides a deliverer for the righteous remnant, the Messiah.

Note the JPS arrangement below places what is v. 1 in the KJV with the preceding chapter. Verse numbers in the JPS are off by one when compared with the KJV.

#### KJV Isaiah 9

1 NEVERTHELESS the dimness [shall] not [be] such as [was] in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict [her by] the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. 2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, [and] not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, [and] as [men] rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. 5 For every battle of the warrior [is] with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but [this] shall be with burning [and] fuel of fire. 6 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. 7 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

#### JPS Isaiah 9

The people that walked in darkness  
Have seen a brilliant light;  
On those who dwelt in a land of gloom  
Light has dawned.  
<sup>2</sup>You have magnified that nation,  
Have given it great joy;  
They have rejoiced before You  
As they rejoice at reaping time,  
As they exult  
When dividing spoil.  
  
<sup>3</sup>For the yoke that they bore  
And the stick on their back—  
The rod of their taskmaster—  
You have broken as on the day of Midian.  
<sup>4</sup>Truly, all the boots put on to stamp with  
And all the garments donned in infamy  
Have been fed to the flames,  
Devoured by fire.  
<sup>5</sup>For a child has been born to us,  
A son has been given us.  
And authority has settled on his shoulders.  
He has been named  
“The Mighty God is planning grace;  
The Eternal Father, a peaceable ruler”—  
<sup>6</sup>In token of abundant authority  
And of peace without limit  
Upon David's throne and kingdom,  
That it may be firmly established  
In justice and in equity  
Now and evermore.

and with justice from  
henceforth even for ever. The  
zeal of the LORD of hosts  
will perform this.

8 The Lord sent a word into  
Jacob, and it hath lighted  
upon Israel. 9 And all the  
people shall know, [even]  
Ephraim and the inhabitant of  
Samaria, that say in the  
pride and stoutness of heart,  
10 The bricks are fallen  
down, but we will build with  
hewn stones: the sycamores  
are cut down, but we will  
change [them into] cedars. 11  
Therefore the LORD shall set  
up the adversaries of Rezin  
against him, and join his  
enemies together; 12 The  
Syrians before, and the  
Philistines behind; and they  
shall devour Israel with open  
mouth. For all this his anger  
is not turned away, but his  
hand [is] stretched out  
still. 13 For the people  
turneth not unto him that  
smieth them, neither do they  
seek the LORD of hosts. 14  
Therefore the LORD will cut  
off from Israel head and  
tail, branch and rush, in one  
day. 15 The ancient and  
honourable, he [is] the head;  
and the prophet that teacheth  
lies, he [is] the tail. 16  
For the leaders of this  
people cause [them] to err;  
and [they that are] led of  
them [are] destroyed. 17  
Therefore the Lord shall have  
no joy in their young men,  
neither shall have mercy on  
their fatherless and widows:  
for every one [is] an  
hypocrite and an evildoer,  
and every mouth speaketh  
folly. For all this his anger  
is not turned away, but his  
hand [is] stretched out  
still. 18 For wickedness  
burneth as the fire: it shall  
devour the briars and thorns,  
and shall kindle in the  
thickets of the forest, and  
they shall mount up [like]  
the lifting up of smoke. 19  
Through the wrath of the LORD  
of hosts is the land

The zeal of the LORD of Hosts  
Shall bring this to pass.

<sup>7</sup>My Lord

Let loose a word against Jacob  
And it fell upon Israel.

<sup>8</sup>But all the people noted—

Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—  
In arrogance and haughtiness:

<sup>9</sup>"Bricks have fallen—

We'll rebuild with dressed stone;

Sycamores have been felled—

We'll grow cedars instead!"

<sup>10</sup>So the LORD let the enemies of Rezin  
Triumph over it

And stirred up its foes—

<sup>11</sup>Aram from the east

And Philistia from the west—

Who devoured Israel

With greedy mouths.

Yet His anger has not turned back,  
And His arm is outstretched still.

<sup>12</sup>For the people has not turned back

To Him who struck it

And has not sought

The LORD of Hosts.

<sup>13</sup>So the LORD will cut off from Israel

Head and tail,

Palm branch and reed,

In a single day.

<sup>14</sup>Elders and magnates—

Such are the heads;

Prophets who give false instruction,

Such are the tails

<sup>15</sup>That people's leaders have been misleaders,

So they that are led have been confused.

<sup>16</sup>That is why my Lord

Will not spare their youths,

Nor show compassion

To their orphans and widows;

For all are ungodly and wicked,

And every mouth speaks impiety.

<sup>17</sup>Already wickedness has blazed forth like a fire  
Devouring thorn and thistle.

It has kindled the thickets of the wood,

Which have turned into billowing smoke.

Yet His anger has not turned back,  
And His arm is outstretched still.

darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. 20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: 21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: [and] they together [shall be] against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand [is] stretched out still.

<sup>18</sup>By the fury of the LORD of Hosts,  
The earth was shaken.

Next, the people became like devouring fire:  
No man spared his countryman.

<sup>19</sup>They snatched on the right, but remained hungry,  
And consumed on the left without being sated.  
Each devoured the flesh of his own kindred—

<sup>20</sup>Manasseh Ephraim's, and Ephraim Manasseh's,  
And both of them against Judah!

Yet His anger has not turned back,  
And His arm is outstretched still.

### Specific Comments on Isaiah 9

**1 NEVERTHELESS the dimness [shall] not [be] such as [was] in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict [her by] the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.**

v1 This verse is best read with ch. 8. It echoes 5:30, and sets up the imagery of v. 2. The wicked majority have brought misery and suffering upon all of Israel (v. 1), but the righteous who wait on the Lord (8:11-20) see the light of delivery (v. 2).

Note 8:20 uses the imagery of light and darkness to contrast the faithful with the idolatrous. The idolatrous are vexed and cursed in darkness, while the faithful have light in them and see the light of delivery.

"the way of the sea", the BofM rendering has "by the way of the Red Sea".

**2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, [and] not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, [and] as [men] rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. 5 For every battle of the warrior [is] with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but [this] shall be with burning [and] fuel of fire.**

**6 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. 7 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.**

v2-7 The righteous among Israel, which have suffered in darkness under corrupt leaders and foreign oppressors (cf. 8:16-20), see the light of the Lord (v. 2) when He comes to redeem them (v. 3) from their oppressor (v. 4-5). The Lord accomplishes this by sending the Messiah (v. 6-7), in His zeal for keeping His covenants with Israel.

v2-3 Messianic deliverance themes (cp. Matt. 4:15-16). Light displacing darkness is a frequent OT symbol and John in his gospel makes considerable use of it as well.

v3 The BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

Thou hast multiplied the nation, [and]  
not increased the joy:  
they joy before thee  
according to the joy in harvest, [and]  
as [men] rejoice  
when they divide the spoil.

BofM

Thou hast multiplied the nation, and  
increased the joy--  
they joy before thee  
according to the joy in harvest, and  
as men rejoice  
when they divide the spoil.

Note the The BofM rendering omits the "not" from the KJV in the second line. The omission of the "not" is attested to by modern translations.

"multiplied the nation", cp. 26:2, 26:15, 60:2 for similar statements. The Hebrew for "multiplied" can also be translated to "enlarged" or "magnified".

"as men rejoice when they divide the spoil", an interesting comparison. The comparison of the joy at being delivered with the joy they normally experience at harvest time or when dividing loot is pejorative. But, it marks a shift of the people's minds in that they joy for material things is replaced by joy for spiritual things.

v4 The oppressor's grasp upon Israel will be broken by the deliverer. This delivery harks back to the "day of Midian", which event is detailed in Judges 7:8-23, cp. 10:24-26. Regarding the day of Midian, Nyman states: "The Book of Mormon does not have the phrase 'as in the day of Midian' at the end of this verse. This could have been an intentional omission by Nephi, as it did not apply to his people."

v5 In this verse Isaiah makes use of symbolism similar to that

used in Micah 7:8-13 as follows (JPS):

8 Do not rejoice over me,  
O my enemy!  
Though I have fallen, I rise again;  
Though I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light.  
9 I must bear the anger of the Lord,  
Since I have sinned against Him,  
Until He champions my cause  
And upholds my claim.  
He will let me out into the light;  
I will enjoy vindication by Him.  
10 When my enemy sees it,  
She shall be covered with shame,  
She who taunts me with "Where is He,  
The Lord your God?"  
My eyes shall behold her [downfall]  
Lo, she shall be for trampling  
Like mud in the streets.  
11 A day for mending your walls--  
That is a far-off day.  
12 This is rather a day when to you  
[Trampers] will come streaming  
From Assyria and the towns of Egypt--  
From [every land from] Egypt to the Euphrates,  
From sea to sea and from mountain to mountain--  
13 And your land shall become a desolation--  
Because of those who dwell in it--  
As the fruit of their misdeeds.

The trampling boots being destroyed themselves denote the invader being destroyed. Also note the similarity in the light/darkness and captivity/deliverance themes between Micah and Isaiah.

v5 "with burning and fuel of fire", the Day of the Lord is frequently referred to as a day of burning. This burning is symbolic of the purification that is to occur where all wickedness and dross is removed from the earth. Thus, the wicked among the invader will be destroyed just as the wicked among Israel. Note even the tools of oppression (i.e., the boots of the trampers) are destroyed as there will be no more oppression with the establishment of Zion.

v6-7 The text indicates the deliverer is endowed with divine authority.

v6 Structured as a single continuing sentence where the delivering son is given a great name in token of his divine authority, Davidic lineage (i.e., right to rulership), and the eternal nature of his calling.

The various appellations conjure images of the very best

fathers and kings of Israel:

Government upon shoulders	David
Wonderful counsellor	Solomon
The mighty God	Moses
Everlasting father	Abraham

But, the final title "Prince of Peace" is reserved for the final leader of Judah, as predicted by Jacob in Gen. 49:10. This Messiah will be like the greatest leaders of all of Israel, but lacking their flaws.

"Prince of Peace", the spiritual reading follows the theme of John 16:33 where physical turmoil would still be on the earth, but spiritual redemption is made available. The physical interpretation follows the theme of Rev. 21.

v7 "upon the throne of David", the messianic deliverer is to come through the lineage of David, cp. 11:1.

"The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this", up until now the Lord has left Israel without a deliverer. This strophe contrasts 3:6-7 where no deliverer can be found in Israel. That passage stresses the corrupt state of Israel is such that no deliverer could be found and the Lord's unwillingness to provide one because of their wickedness. But here, it is the "zeal", or passion or fervor, of the Lord that brings to pass his delivering Israel. The Lord is zealous for keeping His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and for that reason, purges the nation of Israel and then provides a deliverer.

**8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. 9 And all the people shall know, [even] Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, 10 The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change [them into] cedars. 11 Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; 12 The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand [is] stretched out still. 13 For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.**

v8-21 Isaiah recounts the hardness of heart among Israel which necessitates humiliation by foreign invasion. This section parallels Amos 4 closely. In Amos 4 a series of punishments are meted out in an attempt to get Israel to repent, and all of them fail. The result is Amos writes (JPS):

12 Assuredly,  
Because you are acting thus toward Me,  
Even so will I act toward you, O Israel--  
Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!  
13 Behold,  
He who formed the mountains,  
And created the wind,  
And has told man what His wish is,  
Who turns blackness into daybreak,  
And treads upon the high places of the earth--  
His name is the Lord, the God of Hosts.

Where punishment and destruction have failed to bring about a change in heart, a divine encounter results in change, cp. Exod. 19:11-15, Exod. 34:2, Num. 23:3. Amos' reference to the incarnation of the Lord is rather ambiguous and tends to make one believe it will be similar to the Mt. Sinai appearance. But Isaiah's linking this passage with his own, which has blatant references to a physical deliverer, makes the reading much more obvious. This divine encounter is the incarnation of the Lord.

The pattern of punishment with the Lord's hand still being stretched out is derivative of Lev. 26. The Lord warns Israel He will mete out a series of progressively worse punishments upon them (cf. Lev. 26:14-39) until they repent (cf. Lev. 26:40-46). Each time punishment is handed down the Lord indicates it will continue because they still refuse to repent (cf. Lev. 26:14, 18, 21, 23, 27). The same thing occurs here, the Lord stretches out His hand in punishment until they repent (v. 12-13, 17, 21, also cp. 5:25, 10:4). The curses appearing here are also generally derivative of Lev. 26 as well, cp. v. 20 with Lev. 26:29.

v8-13 The Lord curses Israel (v. 8) for their pride (v. 9-10) by setting the neighboring nations against them (v. 11-12). The Lord strikes them (v. 12) because they refuse to repent (v. 13).

v8 The BofM has "The Lord sent his word" for the KJV "The Lord sent a word".

v10 Israel cannot recognize the Lord is chastening them. They are pillaged and looted and afterward they don't think to repent. Instead, they rebuild their physical institutions. This is why the Lord's hand is still stretched out against Israel, because he strikes them and they don't repent.

Also note lofty trees represent the pride of the elite among Israel, cp. 2:13, Jacob 5:48. Also compare Mal. 1:4 where similar language appears.

v12e-f "his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still", the Lord's hand is stretched out in anger to chasten



Israel. But, sometimes the Lord's hand is stretched out to redeem and embrace, cf. Joel 2:12, D&C 133:67.

The 1st Edition BofM has "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand stretched out still." Later editions made the BofM rendering to conform to the KJV. Note the KJV has the "is" in italics to indicate it is only implicitly present in the Hebrew.

It is curious that the omission of the "is" occurs systematically through all of the BofM quotes of Isaiah. The removal of the "is" in English makes the text read as a present-tense further stretching out of His hand to punish Israel with new or more malediction. Whereas retaining the "is" tends to favor the reading of the same punishment persisting unabated.

v13 Despite the chastening, they refuse to repent, cp. Lev. 26:18, Haggai 2:17. The result is the chastening continues.

**14 Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. 15 The ancient and honourable, he [is] the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he [is] the tail. 16 For the leaders of this people cause [them] to err; and [they that are] led of them [are] destroyed. 17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one [is] an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand [is] stretched out still.**

v14-16 Because of their continued rebellion, the Lord cuts off both the political and religious leaders of Israel (v. 14-16). But, the Lord will not only punish the leaders. As Israel has been only too willing to follow their misleaders, all of Israel has gone bad, even those who are usually the most humble. So the punishment goes on (v. 17).

v14 "head and tail, branch and rush", i.e., all in society, the leaders and the followers, the nobles and the common people, cp. Deut. 28:13 for background of the symbolism.

"in one day", a Semitism for "very quickly".

v15 "the prophet that teacheth lies", cp. 28:14-15, Micah 2:6-7, Micah 3. The wicked leaders led the people among Israel into evil rather than away from it. This is a common criticism Jesus makes of the Pharisees.

**18 For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and**

they shall mount up [like] the lifting up of smoke. 19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. 20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: 21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: [and] they together [shall be] against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand [is] stretched out still.

v18-21 The wicked are consumed (v. 18) by the anger of the Lord (v. 19). Society collapses in self-destruction as brother turns on brother, and tribe on tribe (v. 19-21). Yet, the still don't repent, so the Lord keeps punishing them (v. 21).

v18 Isaiah uses the symbolism of a burnt offering to describe the complete destruction of the wicked, cp. 34:6-7, Jer. 46:10, Ezek. 34:17, Zeph. 1:8, Rev. 19:17-18.

"briars and thorns", symbols of wickedness, cf. 5:6, 7:23-24.

v19 "darkened", the JPS has "shaken", BofM has "darkened", Gileadi translates it "scorched", the NAS has "burned". The JPS translation connects this with 5:25 based upon an earthquake which occurred during king Uzziah's reign. The earthquake appears to have influenced the other prophetic writings as well, cf. Amos 1:1, Zech. 14:5.

v20-21 Isaiah presents an image of internal conflict, war, famine, and possibly cannibalism, cp. 19:2, 49:26, 1 Ne. 22:13. The cannibalistic references are probably intended to be symbolic of the internal conflicts, but there are covenant curses that do specifically reference cannibalism as a result of being besieged by invaders, cf. Lev. 26:29, Deut 28:49-57.

It is interesting to note all intra-family accounts of conflicts in the book of Genesis are due to wickedness, e.g., Cain and Able, Esau and Jacob, Jacob and his sons conflict over Dinah. The same cause is at work when Israel turns against Judah.

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