

About Isaiah the Prophet

- **A man of high social status in the kingdom of Judah**
 - Had free access to the royal court and perhaps the temple
 - Prophesied to the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah between c. 740–701 BC
 - One legend suggests that he was the father-in-law of Hezekiah
 - Married with at least two children (with symbolic names; more later)
 - Witnessed the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians and saw the southern kingdom of Judah threatened
- **Wrote his prophecies in a highly literate, symbolic style**
 - employed Hebrew poetic forms of parallelism, metaphor, and elevated language
 - Focused on the status and future of Israel as God's covenant people
 - *Introduced the figure of a Servant or Holy One of Israel—a type that Lehi and Nephi saw as the Messiah and we see as Jesus Christ*

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Interpreting Isaiah in the Book of Mormon

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About Isaiah the Book

One Possible Overview of Contents

- **Part 1: Book of Judgment (chapters 1–39)**
 - Introduction (chapter 1)
 - Judgments against Israel and Judah (chapters 2–5)
 - Isaiah's Call (chapter 6)
 - Prophecies Occasioned by Geopolitical Threats against Judah (Israel and Syria's conspiracy against Judah and the threat of Assyria, chapters 7–10)
 - The Lord Will Redeem His People (chapters 11–12)
 - Judgments against the Nations (chapters 13–23)
 - The Principles of Judgment and Promise (chapters 24–27)
 - Six Woes (five against unfaithful Israel and one against Assyria; chapters 28–33)
 - Avenging and Restoring God's People (chapters 34–35)
 - Transition from Assyrian Threat to the Prediction of Babylonian Exile (chapters 36–39)
- **Part 2: Book of Comfort (chapters 40–66)**
 - Deliverance and Restoration of Israel (chapters 40–48)
 - The Servant and Israel's Restoration (chapters 49–55)
- **Part 3: Everlasting Deliverance and Judgment (chapters 56–66)**

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Purposes for Quoting Isaiah

Victor L. Ludlow, "Isaiah, Purposes for Quoting," *BMRC*, 341

The Book of Mormon prophets Nephi, Jacob, Abdinadi, as well as the resurrected Savior, all quoted extensively from Isaiah in their teachings. From their own statements of why they quoted Isaiah, and from the Isaiah texts themselves, it seems that their purpose in quoting Isaiah was to highlight four major themes:

- 1. Repentance and the judgments of God
 - 2. God's covenants and promises to the house of Israel
 - 3. Messianic prophecies
 - 4. Key events relating to the latter-days
- 1–3 are essentially the same as the Title Page Purposes of the Book of Mormon!
- Why does Nephi quote Isaiah at this point in his narrative?
- E.g. In a new land, needs to connect them with Israel; wants to avoid the mistakes of Israel and Judah; knows of the future destruction of his seed and scattering of the Lamanites; reassure his people that God will not forget his covenants with Israel and with them; wants to teach about the Messiah

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Towards Understanding Isaiah

- Nephi's Five Keys for Understanding Isaiah (see also Welch and Welch, chart 84; *note that this is an example of the importance of exegesis!*)
 - Understand the manner of Jewish prophecy at the time of Isaiah – including poetic forms, symbolism, etc. (2 Nephi 25:1)
 - Be personally righteous – do not “do works of abomination” (2 Nephi 25:2)
 - Be filled with the spirit of prophecy – not only revelation from the spirit, but *having the testimony of Jesus* (2 Nephi 25:4; Revelation 19:10)
 - Be familiar with the regions around Jerusalem – understand some history, geography, and culture (2 Nephi 25:6)
 - Live during the days when the prophecies are fulfilled (2 Nephi 25:27)
- Know the formula quotation pattern Book of Mormon authors employed for Isaiah (see Welch and Welch, chart 98)
 - Introduction (1 Nephi 19:22–24)
 - Quotation (1 Nephi 20–21)
 - Explanation/Interpretation (1 Nephi 22)

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Interpretative Approach to Isaiah

- The Isaiah prophecies in the Book of Mormon can largely be seen as illustrating the repeated themes of **scattering** and **gathering** (both temporal *and* spiritual), which can be directly connected to the **rejection and acceptance of the Messiah**, along with the **breaking and keeping of covenants**.
- **Levels of interpretation and application**
 - *What did this mean to Isaiah's original audience, the Jews of the 700's BC?*
 - *What did it mean to Nephi and Lehi's descendants?*
 - *How does it apply in the latter-days?*

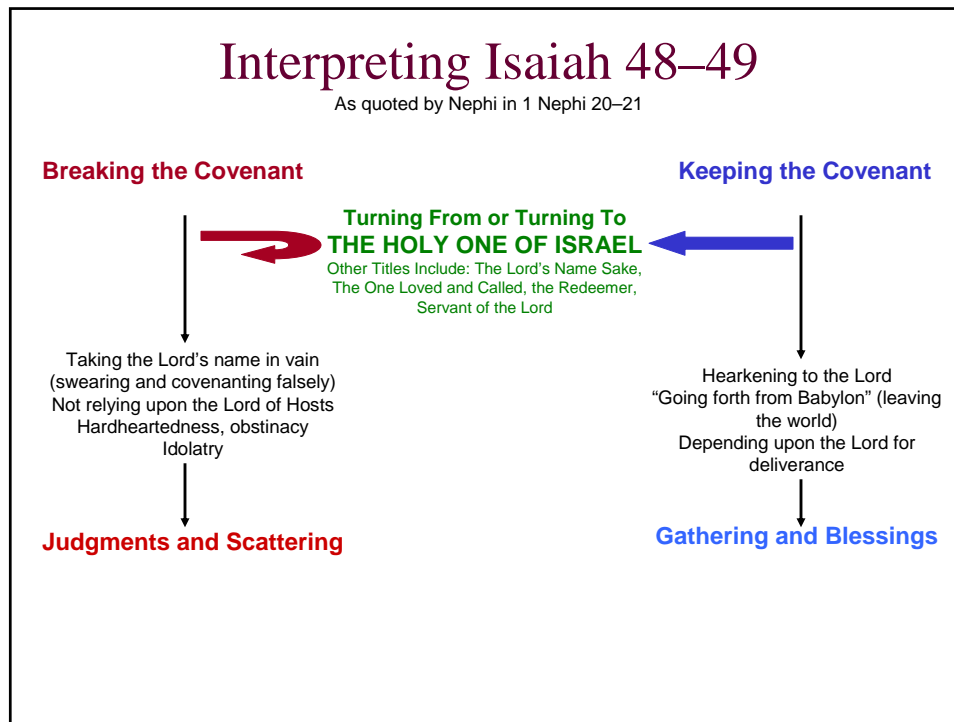
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Structure of 1 Nephi 19:1–22:28

- **Two Sets of Plates (19:1–7a, editorial comment)**
- **Setting the Stage for Isaiah: Prophecies of Christ (19:7b–21)**
 - **Clear Prophecies from the Brass Plates (19:7b–17)**
 - Scattering a Result of the Rejection of Israel's God (19:7b–14 < Zenock, Neum, Zenos)
 - Gathering Results from Turning to the Holy One of Israel (19:15–17)
 - **Nephi Writes to All Israel (19:18–21)**
- **Nephi's Quotation and Interpretation of Isaiah (19:22–22:18)**
 - Introduction to Isaiah (19:22–24, **Formula Quotation Introduction**)
 - **Symbolic Prophecies from the Brass Plates (20:1–21:26)**
 - **Isaiah 48 (poetic prophecy)**
 - God Loves Israel Despite Her Unworthiness (20:1–11)
 - God Proclaims the Redemption of Israel (20:12–22)
 - **Isaiah 49 (poetic prophecy)**
 - The Suffering Servant of the Lord (21:1–4)
 - The Servant Will Gather Jacob (21:5–12)
 - The Song of Israel's Redeemer (21:13–21)
 - The Gentiles Will Aid the Gathering of Israel (21:22–26)
 - The Lord Will Deliver His People with Power (21:24–26)
 - **Nephi interprets Isaiah (22:1–28, sermon, exposition, prophecy)**
- **Conclusion of 1 Nephi: Lehi, Nephi, and the Brass Plates as Witnesses (22:29–31)**
 - *The Brass Plates (esp. the quoted Isaiah passages) support and are the authority for Lehi and Nephi's teaching (22:29–31)*



Structure of Jacob's Discourse

- **First Day:** Teachings from Isaiah (6:1–9:54, **formula quotation**)
 - Introduction: The Scattering and Gathering of Israel (6:1–18)
 - Quotation (7:1–8:25)
 - Isaiah 50 (7:1–11): An Impenitent Nation and a Willing Servant
 - Isaiah 51 (8:1–23): God Is Able to Save Those Who Come to Him
 - Isaiah 52:1–2 (8:24–25): Let Zion Rejoice
 - Interpretation: Gathering and Scattering, Corporate and Individual (9:1–54)
 - Focuses on God's Plan of Salvation (9:3–24): **important teachings on the resurrection, redemption, and judgment**
- **Day 2:** The Plan Applied to Jacob's People (10:1–25, **sermon**)

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Isaiah in 2 Nephi 7–8

Contents emphasizing Isaiah 50–52:2

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Interpreting Isaiah 50–52:2

As quoted by Jacob in 2 Nephi 7–8

Breaking the Covenant
 Symbols: Divorce, Orphaning

Selling oneself by transgression
 Condemning the Lord and his servants
 Walking by one’s own light
 Fearing men

Judgments and Scattering
 Separated from the Lord
 Suffer desolation and destruction

**Turning from or Turning to
 THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL**
 Other Titles Include: Suffering Servant of the Lord, Arm of the Lord, Comforter

Keeping the Covenant
 Symbols: Marriage, Parent-Child

Fearing the Lord, not men
 Obeying the Voice of His Servants
 Hearken to the Lord (hear and heed/listen and obey)
 “Look to the rock from which ye are hewn”

Gathering and Blessings
 Waste places made fertile
 The Lord’s people ransomed (redeemed or bought back)
 Captives brought back
 Putting on beautiful garments (e.g., purity, the power of the priesthood)

Nephi's Discourse 2 Nephi 12–30

- Structure
 - Introduction: Witnesses of Christ (11:1–8)
 - Quotations from Isaiah (12–24)
 - Isaiah 2–14 (poetic prophecy “after the manner of the Jews”)
 - Nephi's Explanations, Interpretations, and Prophecies (25–30)
 - Includes phrases and short passages from previously quoted Isaiah material as well as new excerpts from Isaiah 22:13; 4:15; 28:10; 29:6–24; 44:5; 52:3; 53:6; 55:1; 62:10; 65:2
- Compare and contrast with Jacob's Discourse
 - Jacob's was delivered as a sermon to the People of Nephi, which Nephi recorded on the Small Plates
 - Nephi's is written as a treatise, first for his people and then for the readers of the Small Plates (see 25:1–3)
 - Treatise, much longer than a sermon, apparently written to be read
 - How do we read a longer work differently than we hear an oral one?
 - Jacob's is relatively short (5 chapters) and quotes 2 chapters of Isaiah
 - Nephi's is long (20 chapters) and quotes 14 chapters of Isaiah directly and paraphrases even more in his explanation and interpretation

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Isaiah in 2 Nephi 12–24

Possible Overview of Contents emphasizing Isaiah 2–14

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