



## 8. Nephi's First Quotation and Interpretation of Isaiah

1 Nephi 19:1–22:28

“And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning. Wherefore I spake unto them, saying: Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off; hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, and liken them unto yourselves, that ye may have hope as well . . .” (1 Nephi 19:23–24)

### “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise” (hymn 41)

Let Zion in her beauty rise;  
Her light begins to shine.  
Ere long her King will rend the skies,  
Majestic and divine,  
The gospel spreading thru the land,  
A people to prepare  
To meet the Lord and Enoch's band,  
Triumphant in the air.

Ye heralds, sound the golden trump  
To earth's remotest bound.  
Go spread the news from pole to pole  
In all the nations round:  
That Jesus in the clouds above,  
With hosts of angels too,  
Will soon appear, his Saints to save,  
His enemies subdue.

That glorious rest will then commence  
Which prophets did foretell,  
When Saints will reign with Christ on  
earth,  
And in his presence dwell  
A thousand years, oh, glorious day!  
Dear Lord, prepare my heart  
To stand with thee on Zion's mount  
And never more to part.

## 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 < Zenock, Neum, Zenos)**
  - **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)
    - Isaiah 49 (poetic prophecy)
  - **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)*

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## Clear Prophecies from the Brass Plates

### Scattering a Result of the Rejection of Israel's God (19:7b–14)

- *Together with his own prophecies from his apocalyptic vision, Nephi uses the clear prophecies of the lost prophets Zenock, Neum, and Zenos to teach his brothers about the mission of the Messiah*
- The Passion, Crucifixion, and Burial of God of Israel (19:7b–10)
  - “. . . yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, **yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up,** according to the words of **Zenock**, and **to be crucified**, according to the words of **Neum**, and **to be buried in a sepulchre**, according to the words of **Zenos** . . .” (19:10)
- Visitations By His Voice and By Destructions (19:11–12)
  - “For thus spake the prophet: **The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation,** and **others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up.**” (1 Nephi 19:11)
- Jews at Jerusalem to Be Scattered for Despising the Holy One of Israel (19:13–14)

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## Clear Prophecies from the Brass Plates

Gathering Comes from Turning to the Holy One of Israel (19:15–17)

- “Nevertheless, when that day cometh, saith the prophet, that they no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel, **then will he remember the covenants which he made to their fathers**. Yea, then will he remember the isles of the sea; yea, and **all the people who are of the house of Israel, will I gather in, saith the Lord**, according to the words of the prophet Zenos, from the four quarters of the earth.” (1 Nephi 19:15–16)
- “Yea, and **all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord, saith the prophet; every nation, kindred, tongue and people shall be blessed.**” (1 Nephi 19:17)
- Nephi’s Audience: He Writes These Things to All Israel (19:18–21)
  - **“And I, Nephi, have written these things unto my people, that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer.** Wherefore I speak unto **all the house of Israel**, it is so be that they should obtain these things.” (1 Nephi 19:18)

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## “Likening All Scripture . . .”

- The **goal**: “. . . **that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer** I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; **for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.**” (1 Nephi 19:23)
- The **problem**: “Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; **for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.**” (2 Nephi 25:1)
  - We can easily misapply or misinterpret scriptures
  - The Isaiah passages in particular can serve as “hurdles” in our reading of the Book of Mormon that require extra thought and consideration
- The **solution**: follow Nephi’s later instructions on understanding Isaiah’s prophecies in their original context
  - **Next**, see how Book of Mormon prophets likened the prophecies to their peoples
  - **Then** liken them to our situation (i.e. use exegesis to help us with our hermeneutics!)

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## The Isaiah Passages

Boyd K. Packer , “The Things of My Soul,” *Ensign* (May 1986), 59ff.

You will not read many pages into [the Book of Mormon] until you catch the cadence of that language and the narrative will be easy to understand. As a matter of fact, most teenagers readily understand the narrative of the Book of Mormon.

Then, just as you settle in to move comfortably along, you will meet a barrier. The style of the language changes to Old Testament prophecy style. *For, interspersed in the narrative, are chapters reciting the prophecies of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah . They loom as a barrier, like a roadblock or a checkpoint beyond which the casual reader, one with idle curiosity, generally will not go.*

Because you are forewarned about that barrier, you will be able to surmount it and finish reading the book. *You will follow the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah through the generations of Nephite people to that day when those prophecies are fulfilled and the Lord appears to them. . . .*

***One day you may revere these prophetic words of Isaiah in both books. The Lord had a purpose in preserving the prophecies of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, notwithstanding they become a barrier to the casual reader.***

## 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
  - **Prophecies have multiple interpretations and applications: to Judah in Isaiah’s time, to the people of the Book of Mormon** (this is why Nephi and Jacob quote Isaiah), **to the Restoration, to readers in every age** (sc. us!), and **at the Second Coming**
  - **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**

## 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 from Isaiah's *Book of Comfort* 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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## Nephi's Quotation and Interpretation of Isaiah (19:22–22:28)

- 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 (21:22–23)
    - 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)*

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## Isaiah 48: God and Israel

### God Loves Israel Despite Her Unworthiness (20:1–11)

- **Israel Broke the Covenant** (20:1–11)
  - "Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel . . . **who swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, yet they swear not in truth nor in righteousness.** Nevertheless, they call themselves of the holy city, but **they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel . . .**" (20:1–2)
    - Swearing and covenanting falsely = taking the Lord's name in vain
    - Failure to rely upon the Lord of Hosts
  - **Israel's Idolatrous History** (20:3–8)
    - Hardheartedness, obstinacy
    - Worshiping Graven Images
- **Israel Will Not Be Cast off for the Lord's "Name's Sake"** (20:9–11)
  - "Nevertheless, **for my name's sake** will I defer mine anger, and **for my praise will I refrain** from thee, that I cut thee not off." (20:9)
  - "For, behold, **I have refined thee, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.** For mine own sake, yea, for mine own sake will I do this, for **I will not suffer my name to be polluted,** and I will not give my glory unto another" (20:10–11)
    - The process of **scattering** and **gathering** is part of **calling Israel to the Messiah and to repentance,** balancing **justice** and **mercy** so that his name "will not be polluted"

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## Isaiah 48: God and Israel

### God Proclaims the Redemption of Israel (20:12–22)

- **Israel's God Can Save His People** (20:12–17)
  - He who created the heavens and earth has the power to fulfill his promises
    - "Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called, for I am he; ***I am the first, and I am also the last.*** Mine hand hath also laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens. I call unto them and they stand up together." (20:12–13)
  - The Lord loves the One he has called
    - "***The Lord hath loved him;*** yea, and he will fulfil his word which he hath declared by them . . . ***I have called him*** to declare, I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Come ye near unto me; I have not spoken in secret; from the beginning, from the time that it was declared have I spoken; and the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me. ***And thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I have sent him.***" (20:14–17)
    - In such verses prophets represent and serve as types of Christ as Christ represents the Father
- **God Will Save Repentant Israel as He Did in the Past** (20:18–22)
  - Example of sustaining the Children of Israel in the wilderness:
    - "***The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob.*** And they thirsted not; he led them through the deserts; he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also and the waters gushed out. And notwithstanding he hath done all this, and greater also, ***there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.***" (20:20–22)

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## Isaiah 49: God and the Servant

### (21:1–12)

- **The Suffering Servant of the Lord** (21:1–4)
  - ". . . the Lord hath called me from the womb . . . and said unto me: Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain; surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." (21:1–4)
    - *Multiple applications: Isaiah, Christ, Joseph Smith, the Lord's servants in every age (see Millet and McConkie, 1.157–162)*
- **The Servant Will Gather Jacob** (21:5–12)
  - "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be **my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel.** I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." (21:6)
    - *To be gathered, Israel must accept the Servant—the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah*
    - *Through the Servant, the Gentiles too can receive salvation and be gathered with the people of the Lord*

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# The Redemption of Israel

## Isaiah 49

- **The Song of Israel's Redeemer** (21:13–21)
  - "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth . . . For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (21:13a, 15–16)
  - "For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants . . ." (21:19)
    - *Thanks to the redemption brought by the Redeemer, Israel's waste places will be built up and even previously empty areas will be filled with the children of Israel . . .*
- **The Gentiles Will Aid the Gathering of Israel** (21:22–23; see Parker quotes, packet)
  - "Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders." (21:22)
- **The Lord Will Deliver His People with Power** (21:24–26)
  - ". . . *all flesh* shall know that *I, the Lord, am thy Savior and thy Redeemer*, the Mighty One of Jacob." (21:26b)

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# Interpreting Isaiah 48–49

As quoted by Nephi in 1 Nephi 20–21

## Breaking the Covenant

↓

Taking the Lord's name in vain  
(swearing and covenanting falsely)  
Not relying upon the Lord of Hosts  
Hardheartedness, obstinacy  
Idolatry

## Judgments and Scattering

## Keeping the Covenant

↓

Harkening to the Lord  
"Going forth from Babylon" (leaving the world)  
Depending upon the Lord for deliverance

## Gathering and Blessings

### Turning From or Turning To THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

Other Titles Include: The Lord's Name Sake,  
The One Loved and Called, the Redeemer,  
Servant of the Lord

## Temporal and Spiritual Applications of the Scattering and Gathering of Israel (22:1–12)

- “Wherefore, the things of which I have read are things pertaining to things both **temporal** and **spiritual** . . .” (1 Nephi 22:3)
  - **Temporal**: physical scattering and gathering of Israel from the lands of her inheritance
  - **Spiritual**: rejection and acceptance of the God of Israel (sc. The Messiah)
- The Historical process again
  - **Spiritual rebellion** precedes **physical scattering**
  - **Spiritual conversion** precedes **physical gathering**
- “The people of Israel will be gathered again to the degree that they return to Christ and become formally associated with the Saints of God. That is, **people are gathered first spiritually and second temporally, first to the Lord and his church and then to the lands of their inheritance or to the congregations of the Saints.**”
  - Read carefully Millet, “The Gathering of Israel in the Book of Mormon,” packet, 109–113

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## The Wrath of God

### *Nephi's Explanation of Scattering and Gathering*

- The Fall of the Great and Abominable Church and the Destruction of All Wicked (22:13–16a)
  - Allusion to the Great and Abominable and to the Great and Spacious Building
  - “. . . All the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that the must be burned. For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men . . .” (22:15b–16a)
- The Preservation of the Righteous (22:16b–20)
  - “. . . for **he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. He will preserve the righteous by his power**, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, **even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire.** . . .” (22:16b–17, *prophecy*)
- The Messiah Will Overthrow the Wicked and Gather the Righteous (22:21–28)
  - Final destruction of the wicked who reject the Messiah: “the time speedily shall come that **all churches . . . yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil** are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who **must be brought low in the dust.**” (22:23, *prophecy*)
  - Message of 1 Nephi: “**But, behold, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent.**” (22:28)

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## Lehi, Nephi, and the Brass Plates

### Conclusion of 1 Nephi (22:29–31)

- Why end 1 Nephi here?
  - “The things which have been written upon the plates of brass are true; and they testify that a man must be obedient to the commandments of God. **Wherefore, ye need not suppose that I and my father are the only ones that have testified, and also taught them. If ye shall be obedient to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day**” (22:30-31)
- The authoritative prophecies of **Isaiah** are seen to confirm the visions and teachings of **Lehi** and **Nephi** throughout the book