

## Woe to Judah who makes Alliance with Egypt (30:1-5)

30:1

**"Woe to the rebellious children," declares the LORD,**

**"Who execute a plan, but not Mine,**

**And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit,**

**In order to add sin to sin;**

30:2

**Who proceed down to Egypt,**

**Without consulting Me,**

**To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh,**

**And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!**

**BKC** – This oracle (Isa\_30:1-33) and the next one (Isa\_31:1-9) center on the folly of attempting to make an alliance with Egypt to ward off the Assyrian threat. At this time Egypt was waning as a world power and could be of no real assistance to Israel and Judah in their fight against the strong Assyrian Empire. But a strong faction in Judah, rather than turning to God for protection, wanted to seek aid from Egypt.

**30:1** This woe (see...Isa\_3:9) was pronounced against those in Judah who wanted to form an alliance. The prophet spoke to those people as if they were children, and obstinate children at that. Like children, they did not have the proper perspective to know what was best for them. Floundering in their desire to save themselves and their nation, they were forming plans but not God's plans. Actually their plans were sinful because they were not what God wanted them to do.

### IVPBBC - 30:2. Egypt's role.

During Hezekiah's reign the Nubian-based Egyptian Twenty-Fifth Dynasty and Pharaoh Shabaka continuously attempted to foment revolt among the Syro-Palestinian peoples against Assyria. Sennacherib's account of his 701 B.C. campaign against an Egyptian army takes him as far as Eltekeh, just about one hundred miles from Egypt's border. In Josiah's time it was Pharaoh Psammeticus I who took advantage of the growing weakness of Assyria at the end of the reign of Ashurbanipal (d. 627 B.C.). He too hoped to expand Egyptian influence but was stymied by the rising power in Babylon.

### Preacher - The Signs of Rebellion

Reaching back to the opening verse of his prophecy, Isaiah pronounces "woe" upon the rebellious children of Judah and Jerusalem. While acknowledging the responsibility of political and spiritual leaders for the direction of the nation, Isaiah does not spare the masses of the people from their share of culpability. To label them as "*rebellious children*" is sufficient to invoke the law of Moses against a rebellious son who will not accept discipline. The penalty is death. Isaiah did not equivocate. His indictment would either strike fear in the hearts of the children of Israel or provoke the anger that would mean his death. His specific charges were even more provocative.

### You Scheme in Sin

Judah had entered into a secret alliance, graphically described by the prophet as weaving a web and toasting a libation of diplomatic relationships that openly defies the counsel and the Spirit of God (Isa\_30:1). Consequently, Judah's pride in this alliance only adds sin to the sin of their rebellion. By trusting in the strength of Egypt for their protection and hovering under the shadow of Egypt for their identity, the people of Judah exposed themselves to the coming shame and humiliation of an empire in decline.

**Barnes – 30:1 To the rebellious children** - To those whom he had nourished as children, and who had rebelled against him (see the note at Isa\_1:23). **That take counsel, but not of me** - They look to Egypt, and depend on a human arm. **And that cover with a covering** - The idea here, according to our translation, is, that they seek protection or a covering from the impending calamity. Lowth renders this, 'Who ratify covenants;' supposing that the reference is to the fact that in ancient times compacts were formed by offering sacrifices, and by pouring out libations.... **But not of my Spirit** - It was not such as was suggested by his Spirit, and not such as he would approve. **That they may add sin to sin** - They add to the sin of rebellion against God that of forming an alliance. Sins do not usually stand alone. When one is committed, it is often necessary to commit others in order to carry out and complete the plan which that contemplated.

## Woe to Judah who makes Alliance with Egypt (30:1-5)

30:3 **"Therefore** the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame,  
And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.

30:4 **"For** their princes are at **Zoan**,  
And their ambassadors arrive at **Hanes**.

30:5 **"Everyone** will be ashamed **because** of a people who cannot profit them,  
**Who are not** for help or profit, **but** for shame and also for reproach."

**Barnes - 30:3 Your confusion** - Hebrew, 'For reproach.' It would either occur that the Egyptians "would" not enter into an alliance; or that if they did, they "could" not defend them, and in either case it would be the source of deep regret and shame.

**IVPBBC - 30:4. Zoan, Hanes.** Isaiah emphasizes the futility of Hezekiah's diplomatic overtures to Egypt. He says that despite having ambassadors travel to the Egyptian capital at Zoan (Tanis in the upper Delta, just twenty-nine miles south of the Mediterranean) and to Hanes (Heracleopolis Magna, forty-five miles south of Cairo on the west bank of the Nile), their mission will be in vain. Hanes was an important regional capital under both the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty ruler Shabaka as well as during the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty reign of Psammaticus I (663-609). It would have been necessary for Hezekiah to send representatives to meet with the Egyptian leaders in both of these important cities in order to initiate treaty alliances or plan strategies against Assyria.

**JFB - 30:4 - at Zoan** - are already arrived there on their errand to Pharaoh (see Isa\_19:11).

**came to Hanes** - are come there. West of the Nile, in central Egypt: Egyptian Hnes; the Greek *Heracleopolis*: perhaps the Anysis of Herodotus (2.137); according to Grotius, *Tahpanhes* contracted (Jer\_43:7-9); the seat of a reigning prince at the time, as was Zoan, hence the Jewish ambassadors go to both

**Preacher - Isaiah's word must have come just at the time when Hezekiah's delegation from Judah had reached the Egyptian cities of Zoan and Hanes (Isa\_30:4).** Bowing before these minor powers and paying tribute to their puppet kings, rather than Pharaoh himself, served as an example of the level to which God's people had stooped.

Sin has a way of compounding itself. Once a person embarks on the path of rebellion against God, one sin adds to another. Cheaters, for instance, must lie to cover their tracks and liars must cheat to avoid detection. King David is an example. After adultery with Bathsheba, he compounded his sin by scheming for the murder of Uzziah, her husband. The rebellious children of Israel did the same thing by adding "sin to sin" (Isa\_30:1). Having denied their heritage and rejected the love of God, they wove unholy alliances with a pagan power and toasted the fatal covenant with drunken libation. God disclaimed any part of the process because He knew that Egypt had neither the strength to resist Assyria nor the will to save Israel. Shame rather than salvation would be the outcome (Isa\_30:5).



## Oracle concerning the Beasts of the Negev (30:6-7)

30:6 The oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev.  
Through a land of distress and anguish,  
From where *come* lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent,  
They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys  
And their treasures on camels' humps,  
To a people who cannot profit *them*;  
30:7 Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty.  
**Therefore, I have called her "Rahab who has been exterminated."**

JFB - 30:7 - "Egypt is vanity, and to no purpose will they help" [G. V. Smith].

**strength** - *Hebrew, Rabah, a designation for Egypt* (Isa\_51:9; Psa\_87:4), implying her *haughty fierceness*; translate, "Therefore I call her *Arrogance that sitteth still*." She who boasted of the help she would give, when it came to the test, sat still (Isa\_36:6).

### Preacher - 30:6-7 You Trust in Vain

An elaborate description of the negotiating team that Hezekiah sent to Egypt shows how desperate the king had become. To woo Egypt into the protective alliance, he sent his choice princes and senior ambassadors as leaders of the delegation. On the backs of donkeys and camels in the caravan Hezekiah loaded "riches" and "treasures" from Judah and Jerusalem, a pittance compared to the wealth of Egypt. Worst of all, he gambled the lives of the delegates and the value of the tribute against the hazards of the desert and wilderness of Sinai. In addition to the violent forces of nature that gave the Sinai its reputation as a "land of trouble and anguish," wild animals such as "the lioness and lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent," threatened the safety of the caravan. Edward Young suggests "Here is one of the saddest pictures in all of Scripture" because Hezekiah's party represented a reversal of the Exodus from Egypt. Isaiah is quoting one of the celebrated texts of Israel's history that every child would know as he or she praised the God "who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the rock of flint" (Deu\_8:15). So, forgetting God, risking lives, wasting treasures, and flaunting history, Hezekiah chose to put his trust in an empire that Isaiah mocks as "Rahab-Hem-Shebeth" (Isa\_30:7).

IVPBBC – 30:6 animals of the Negev. The dangers of travel through the difficult terrain of the arid Negev are magnified by reference to wild beasts that assault the unwary. The remains of carnivores such as lions and leopards appear in excavations from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age. Poisonous snakes, including the adder and the cobra, are also known in the area. The Assyrian king Esarhaddon's annals describe a "flying serpent" that plagued his campaign (see Num\_21:8; Isa\_14:29). **caravan from the Negev.** The caravan described here is most likely that of Hezekiah's ambassadors. The route they took avoided the normal coastal highway that was blocked by Assyria during Sennacherib's reign. Instead they traveled south to Aqaba and across the Sinai to Egypt. What they carried with them may have included the sort of goods that would have been expected to induce Egypt to become involved: frankincense, resins for cosmetics and embalming, ingots of copper or iron, indigo, ivory and lapis lazuli.

**BKC** - Judah's people were so desperate for help that they were willing to risk **hardship** and go to great expense. But Isaiah called Egypt - a nation unable to help - **Rahab the Do-Nothing**. In Ugaritic literature Rahab was the name of a female sea monster associated with Leviathan (see...Isa\_27:1; cf. Job\_9:13; 26:12). Perhaps the hippo-potamus, an animal that often sits in the water of the Nile doing nothing, represents that mythical water beast. Understandably Rahab came to be a poetic synonym for Egypt (and also for a demon behind Egypt) when God overpowered the Egyptian soldiers in the sea at the Exodus (cf. Isa\_51:9; Psa\_87:4; 89:10). So **Egypt**, Isaiah wrote, was good for nothing; she could not assist Judah in any way.



30:8 Now go, write it on a tablet before them  
And inscribe it on a scroll,  
That it may serve in the time to come  
As a witness forever.

30:9 For this is a rebellious people, false sons,  
Sons who refuse to listen  
To the instruction of the LORD;

30:10 Who say to the seers, "You must not see visions";  
And to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us what is right,  
Speak to us pleasant words,  
Prophecy illusions.

30:11 "Get out of the way, turn aside from the path,  
Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

IVPBBC - 30:8. **tablet, scroll.** While the mention of both tablet and scroll may simply be parallelism, writing down a prophecy on both a clay tablet (or possibly an ostrakon) and a scroll may be a sign of the coming destruction. For instance, in the first-century pseudepigraphal *Life of Adam and Eve*, Eve instructs her son Seth to write down her "testament of the fall" on both stone and clay tablets to insure some record would survive either flood or fire. This charge to write is also found in Isa\_8:1, Jer\_30:2 and Hab\_2:2. Like the spoken word, the process of writing enacts the prophecy, and it also holds it secure for later generations to see.  
**30:10. manipulated prophets.** It is a common charge by Yahweh that the Israelites have either ignored the prophets or told them to prophesy only pleasant words and visions (see Jer\_7:25-26; Amo\_2:12). Throughout the ancient world it was believed that prophets not only proclaimed the message of deity but in the process unleashed the divine action. It is no wonder then that there would be some attempt to control a negatively disposed prophet. In Assyrian king Esarhaddon's instructions to his vassals he requires that they report any improper or negative statements that may be made by anyone, specifically naming prophets, ecstasies and dream interpreters. One can perhaps understand why people would be inclined to discourage a prophet whose very words might impose doom.

## Judgment on Rebellious Judah (30:8-17)

**BKC - 30:8-11** The people did not want to listen to God's instructions through Isaiah. So God told him to **write** down his message so that they could not claim they had never heard it. In the future, the **scroll** on which the message was written would **witness** against them. They were like **rebellious... children** (cf. Isa\_30:1), **unwilling to listen to the Lord**, to receive messages from His **prophets**. They did not want to be confronted with the truth from God, **the Holy One of Israel** (cf. Isa\_30:12 and see...1:4).

### Preacher - 30:8-11 You Insult My Word

God has good reason for instructing Isaiah to write his message on a tablet and in a book. In addition to their rebellion against God's Word, the people have tried to turn the prophet's message into a lie (Isa\_30:9). Four demands are made. **First**, they insist that the seers "*do not see.*" In a tacit confession of the truth, they do not want to see God's vision for their life and destiny. **Second**, the people tell the prophets, "*Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things.*" Luther translated this verse, "Preach soft." In other words, the people wanted the half truth of God's promise, but not the whole truth that included His judgment. **Third**, they asked that the prophets deviate from the plumb line of truth with a message that is conditioned by their bias. "Political correctness" is not new to the mind that wants to rewrite the Word of God. **Fourth**, in order to sustain their lie, the children of Israel demanded that the prophet of God quit walking the streets and appearing in the palace because his presence served as a constant reminder of the Holy One of Israel. What started as a refusal to hear the Word of God has now become a need to eliminate from their sight the convicting presence of the prophet who represents the Holy One of Israel.

30:12 **Therefore thus** says the Holy One of Israel, **Judgment on Rebellious Judah (30:8-17)**

**"Since** you have rejected this word,

**And have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them,**

30:13 **Therefore** this iniquity will be to you

**Like** a breach about to fall,

**A bulge in a high wall,**

**Whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant.**

30:14 **"And whose collapse is like** the smashing of a potter's jar;

**So ruthlessly shattered**

**That** a sherd will not be found among its pieces

**To take fire from a hearth,**

**Or to scoop water from a cistern."**

**BKC - 30:12-14** Immediately after they said they did not want to be confronted by the Holy One of Israel (Isa\_30:11) ironically Isaiah **did** confront them with more words from **the Holy One of Israel** (cf. Isa\_30:15). **Rejecting** Isaiah's **message** (Isa\_30:9-11) and **relying on oppression** (i.e., fraud, or plans to avoid God's counsel) and **deceit** (which Egypt would practice on them), they would undergo judgment.

That judgment would come suddenly - like a cracked wall that would collapse on them (Isa\_30:13). **And it would be severe** - like a pot so **shattered** that the **pieces** cannot be used for anything (Isa\_30:14).

### Preacher 30:12-17 The Price of Rebellion The Punishment of God

A high price must be paid by those who "*despise*" the Word of God and "*trust in oppression and perversity*" (Isa\_30:12). **Three sins against the Word of God are listed.** **One** is to *despise* the Word of God, or refuse to hear it. **Two** is to *oppress* the Word of God when seers do not see the truth. **Three** is to *pervert* the Word of God by speaking half-truths, pointing in the wrong direction, and stifling the presence of the prophet who symbolizes the Holy One of Israel (Isa\_30:12).

For these sins Israel will pay dearly. Isaiah likens the nation to a wall with a flaw running through its structure. Pressure from the weight of the wall will cause the flaw to open into a fissure that runs from top to bottom and results in a bulging of the wall as the weight pushes down on the widening flaw. Soon the wall will collapse under its own weight and be broken into thousands of pieces that are scattered across the floor as when an earthen jar is dropped. What was once a formidable wall is so shattered that no sizable piece can be found for any useful purpose (Isa\_30:14).

**IVPBBC - 30:13-14. basis of imagery.** Given the extensive use of **mud-brick architecture** throughout the ancient Near East, this must have been a common occurrence. Egyptian tomb paintings as models depict the process from gathering clay, water and straw to shaping the bricks in molds (see Exo\_5:7-8). As the bricks weathered, they eroded and lost stability. **If the bricks were only sun-dried and not fire-hardened in a kiln, then they were subject to crumbling under the weight of a high wall.** This would often first be manifested in cracks and bulges, and eventually the entire structure would come down in an **avalanche of masonry** (see Exo\_9:10). To guard against faulty construction and increase the life of the brick walls, Hammurabi's Code provided strict punishments for careless contractors.

## Judgment on Rebellious Judah (30:8-17)

30:15 **For thus** the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said,

"In repentance and rest you shall be saved,  
In quietness and trust is your strength."

**But you were not willing,**

30:16 And you said, "No, **for** we will flee on horses,"

**Therefore you shall flee!**

"And we will ride on swift horses,"

**Therefore** those who pursue you shall be swift.

30:17 One thousand shall flee at the threat of one man,  
You shall flee at the threat of five;

**Until** you are left as a flag on a mountain top,  
And **as** a signal on a hill.

**Preacher** Sad words continue as God calls out to the caravan heading for Egypt, "In returning and rest you shall be saved" (Isa\_30:15). Following the analogy of the Exodus, the company must turn around as an act of repentance and follow in the way of the Lord that will lead them back to the rest of the promised land. Isaiah is appealing to one of the most significant promises in Israel's history. When the children of Israel started from Egypt for the trek across the treacherous wilderness of Sinai, God promised, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Exo\_33:14). His rest stands in contrast with Rahab, the sea monster who "sits still" and is at rest. God's rest is the Sabbath peace that follows His creative action; Rahab's rest is the paralysis of power that can create nothing good, only chaos. "Return and rest" is the call of God upon every soul and society that is running from His Word.

Israel chose flight on swift horses over "quietness and confidence" in the presence of God. Isaiah has already said that they were adding sin to sin.

Now, sin multiplies as they rely upon the swift horses of Egypt for their safety. Alas, their flight will be filled with fear as the threat of one or five will put thousands on the run, and only a small remnant will remain like a lonely pole on a mountain or a solitary banner on a hill (v. 17b).

**BKC - 30:15-17** Though the Lord had called for repentance and trust so that the Judahites might have salvation and strength (Isa\_30:15) they did not want any of it. Instead they depended on military might (Isa\_30:16). But if they were to rely on horses (cf. Isa\_31:1), God said they would be forced to flee (Isa\_30:16-17), being easily alarmed by the enemy. They would stand alone like a banner on a hill as a warning to others not to count on military strength.

**Barnes - 30:15** For thus saith the Lord God - The design of this verse is to give a reason for the destruction that should come upon them. That reason was, that God had indicated to them the path of truth and safety, but they chose not to follow it, and refused to put confidence in him. In returning - In returning to God; that is, if you are converted to him. And rest - That is, by calmly reposing on God for assistance, and not seeking the alliance of Egypt (see Exo\_14:13). In quietness - In a collected, quiet state of mind. In confidence - By putting simple trust in God. Shall be your strength - You shall be safe; your enemies shall not be able to overcome and subdue you.

**But ye would not -** When Jerusalem was threatened by Sennacherib, Hezekiah did put this confidence in God, and reposed calmly and securely on his promises Isa\_36:15, 18, 21; but it is not improbable that when the city was first threatened, and Hezekiah heard of the preparations made by the Assyrians, he had joined with the party in Jerusalem who proposed an alliance with Egypt, and that this was known to Sennacherib Isa\_36:6. Probably, however, before the invasion had actually commenced he had seen the impropriety of this, either because the aid of Egypt could not be secured, or because Isaiah had warned him of this, and had been brought to put his trust entirely in Yahweh. Yet the offence had been "committed" of refusing to put implicit confidence in Yahweh, and of seeking the aid of Egypt, and for that the punishment is threatened in this chapter Isa\_30:16-17.

30:18 **Therefore** the LORD longs to be gracious to you,  
 And **therefore** He waits on high to have compassion on you.  
**For the LORD is a God of justice;**  
 How blessed are all those who long for Him.

**Preacher - 30:18 The Patience of God** While Israel is fleeing toward futility, God is waiting to show His grace. How typical of our humanity and His divinity! In the pivotal verse for this chapter, we see the mood swing from sin and judgment to grace and mercy. God's attributes jump out at us from the text. He is patient, gracious, merciful, and just. "And therefore, He will be exalted." For those who trust in Him and are willing to wait, God has blessings that cannot be counted. Our problem, of course, is our unwillingness to wait. Like Type A personalities who are driven by the "tyranny of the urgent," we join with the children of Israel in devising our own schemes, controlling our own destiny, and running from reality rather than waiting upon the Lord.

30:19 **O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.**

30:20 **Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher.**

30:21 **And your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.**

30:22 **And you will defile your graven images, overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing; and say to them, "Be gone!"**

**BKC - 30:18-22** Though the people had turned from the Lord, He longed to be gracious and compassionate to them (Isa\_30:18; cf. Isa\_30:19) for they were in a covenant relationship with Him. He is also the God of justice, giving blessings to those who depend on Him. In the Millennium Israel will again be faithful to the Lord. And when she calls on Him (not on some other nation) for help, He will answer. Though she experienced difficulties (e.g., having only bread to eat and water to drink in times of calamity), eventually God will bless her. The Israelites will readily listen to their spiritual guides (teachers) such as the prophets and priests (in contrast with rejecting them, Isa\_30:10); no longer will the teachers need to hide for safety. The people will be sensitive to God's Word, as if He were saying, This is the way, walk in it. They will be conscious of God's leading at all times. When they heed His instructions they will then get rid of their idols (cf. Isa\_31:7; Hos\_14:3; Mic\_5:13-14), things that are defiled and morally dirty.

**IVPBBC – 30:22 defiling idols.** There could be no more defiling substance than menstrual blood (Lev\_15:19-23) and, for the people, no more defiling object than an idol (Deu\_4:15-19). Here then, the idols, usually among the most precious objects in the culture, will be treated as the most disgusting piece of trash.

**Preacher - 30:22 You Will Rebuke Idols**

Because the children of Israel had been guilty of mixing their obedience to God with sacrifices to idols, their worship needed to be purified. Isaiah links learning of the Word of God with throwing away idols. Like two stars in the galaxy on a collision course, either the worship of God or the worship of idols must go. God is not unfair. When He commanded, "You shall have no other Gods before Me," He set down the ground rules for His worship. Anything less than full trust in the sovereign Lord is a form of blasphemy against His nature.

- 30:23 **Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture.**
- 30:24 **Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.**
- 30:25 **And on every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.**
- 30:26 **And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.**

**BKC - 30:23-26** Isaiah then described what times will be like when the people live according to God's Word and are obedient to Him. In the Millennium God will send... rain, and crops will be plentiful (cf. Deu\_28:1-14). Even the animals will have plenty to eat (Isa\_30:23-24). **The day of great slaughter** may refer to the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev\_16:16; 19:17-21). After Israel's and God's enemies are defeated, Israel will enjoy great peace and an abundance of **water** in the land (Isa\_30:25).

Also light will be increased, for **the moon will be like the sun** and the sun **will be seven times brighter** than normal. Perhaps this is figurative language but it is difficult to know for sure. At that time the Lord will heal His people of **the wounds** (cf. Isa\_1:5) **He inflicted**, that is, He will restore them to the place of blessing.

**IVPBBC – 30:24 fodder and mash spread with fork and shovel.** Because of the people's return to covenant obedience, even their draft animals will share in the abundance provided by God. Fodder for animals normally consisted of the remains of the chaff left by the threshing process. A common term for **fodder** means "small pieces of straw," which might be mixed with barley. Here, however, the stock are fed chickpeas that had been specially prepared for them using a wooden shovel and winnowing fork. Both of these implements helped separate the grain from the chaff and were used to create heaps.

**JFB - clean** - rather, *salted* provender [Gesenius]. The Arab proverb is, "Sweet provender is as bread to camels - salted provender as confectionery." The very cattle shall share the coming felicity. Or else, *well-fermented maslin*, that is, provender formed of a mixture of various substances: grain, beans, vetches, hay, and salt.

**winnowed** - not as it is usually given to cattle before it is separated from the chaff; the grain shall be so abundant that it shall be given winnowed.

## The Sun

Jesus said there would be signs in the sun. What signs are we to look for in our sun?

The prophet Isaiah wrote of the times in which God would bring His earthly people back into their land and heal the breach between Him and them: "...the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days" (Isa. 30:26).

The prophet Joel, referring to the same sign, prophesied, "The sun shall be turned into darkness...before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31).

Our Lord, commenting on the specific signs in the sun, further amplified the prophecy in Matthew 24:29, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened..."

The Apostle, John was transported into the Tribulation period by the Spirit, and when he saw the fulfillment of the prophecies by Isaiah, Joel, and Jesus, relating to the sun, he wrote, "...the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun... And men were scorched with great heat..." (Rev. 16:8-9).

Our solar system, just one of millions in the Milky Way galaxy, is approximately seven billion miles across. It consists of our sun (a medium-sized star) with nine planets, the largest of which is Jupiter. Our sun, by the process of atomic fusion is an energy producing instrument. It was made by the Creator for a specific job, which it has been performing since the fourth day of creation. When producers of energy can no longer export the same amount they generate, then "something must give." In the case of stars, they either blow up (supernova) or they suffer an atomic collapse (nova). Novas and supernovas are occurring all the time, with approximately 30 observed each year in our galaxy alone.

These calamities are brought to pass by entropy, which is the degradation of the matter and energy in the universe to an ultimate of inert uniformity. According to this law, stars like our sun were composed of solid hydrogen in the beginning. In the fusion process which changes hydrogen to extreme heat and sunlight, hydrogen is converted into iron and other metals.

When the inner core of metal builds to the point where the energy produced cannot escape in an even flow, huge atomic explosions covering millions of square miles occur, hurling atomic matter and gases millions of miles outward. Such activity precedes the death of a star. It is thought by some scientists that the critical stage is reached when 50 percent of a star's hydrogen is consumed. Approximately one-half of our sun's supply has now been consumed and increasing sunspot activity is taken by some astronomers as a sign that our sun could nova at any time.

Stars much larger than our sun supernova. It is the consensus of astronomers that our sun will nova at some time in the future. Admittedly, there is wide disagreement upon the approximate time, from a decade to four and a half billion years. A nova stage is reached when the heat factor builds to a point where atoms are stripped of their shells. Like a runaway atomic generator, the remaining heavy hydrogen is consumed within a period of seven to fourteen days. Subsequently the entire mass, originally 900,000 miles across, would be compressed into a ball no more than 15 miles in diameter. The gravity would be so intense that no light could escape. During the runaway period, our sun could become seven times hotter than normal. This may be one of the "signs in the sun" that will precede the second coming of Jesus Christ. The four scriptures referring this sign could be given to any number of astronomers, and we are confident that without exception they would all affirm that they describe a nova.

In *God, the Atom, and the Universe*, we read:

"...Just before the sun explodes, the inner portion of the zone near the sun's center starts to break back down into the helium nuclei again (known as alpha particles). It is the generation of these alpha particles from the iron that signals the start of the end for the sun. Once the manufacture of these begin, the star is doomed to collapse..."

We need to consider these warnings of end-time conditions in the light of the following information from an article entitled, "Is Our Sun About to Explode?"

"Now that the sun's hydrogen which provides the fuel for its nuclear chain reactions has been almost half consumed, its equilibrium may be drastically tipped much sooner than anyone suspected. Judging from the sun's recent dramatic eruptions and corresponding changes in terrestrial weather – record breaking rainfalls, floods, summer hailstorms, a drop in global temperature, etc. – we may be facing an imminent decline in the energy being produced by the sun... Dr. George Barnow, professor of physics at the University of Colorado... discovered... as its supply of hydrogen reaches the critical state of depletion or (as some astronomers now fear, half depletion), the sun will act up dramatically, with an increase in flares, magnetic storms, and huge sun spots which are out of phase with its 11-year cycle. Under these conditions the sun will grow larger, hotter, and brighter..."

## The Moon

Jesus said there would also be signs in the moon. Again, God does not leave room for doubt concerning what these signs will be:

Isaiah prophesied, "...the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun..." (Isa. 30:26).

Joel said, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood..." (Joel 2:31).

Jesus said, "...the sun [shall] be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light..." (Matt. 24:29).

John saw "...a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood" (Rev. 6:12).

The picture of solar and lunar activity during the Great Tribulation prior to the return of Jesus Christ is as follows:

The sun will enter a nova stage, becoming very hot and bright for a period of one to two weeks. Since the moon reflects the light of the sun, it is scientifically accurate that it will be as hot and bright as the sun normally is. There will be no relief from the heat, even at midnight. As the light from the sun begins to wane with the exhaustion of its remaining hydrogen supply, solar winds and atomic gases will fill the solar system, changing the color of the moon to an eerie red. As the atoms are stripped of their outer shells and all space between the electrons, protons, and neutrons is removed, the compact mass will allow no light to escape. The sun will become dark and the moon will reflect no light. All life on earth will hang in the balance. Without sudden Divine intervention within a few hours, earth will become a dead planet.

The biblical way of escape is the return of Jesus Christ, who Himself promised in Matthew 24:27, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

As our solar system is cast into utter darkness, suddenly a great light will appear in outer space, and everyone in the world will see it. It is difficult to imagine the elation of those who will be left alive at that time, as they see Jesus coming with the armies of Heaven. At that moment, "every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of God" (Phil. 2:10-11).

# N. W. Hutchings

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Copyright © Cecilia Perh 2012  
www.etword.org

## Judgment on the Nations (Assyria) (30:27-33)

**30:27**

IVPBBC – 30:28  
sieve of destruction.

The two types of sieves used by Israelite farmers gave them different results.

**30:28** The *kebara* (Amo\_9:9)

had large holes that caught stones and other large objects as the worker shifted it back and forth. The

**30:29** sieve in this passage, the

*napa*, had smaller holes and was meant to separate out the smaller items from the

**30:30** grain through a

swift up-and-down motion. This makes an excellent metaphor for God's act of judgment.

**Behold**, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place;

Burning is His anger, and dense is *His* smoke;

His lips are filled with indignation,

And His tongue is **like** a consuming fire;

And His breath is **like** an overflowing torrent,

Which reaches to the neck,

To shake the nations back and forth in **a sieve**,

And to *put* in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.

You will have songs **as in the night when** you keep the festival;

And gladness of heart **as when** one marches to *the sound of the flute*

To go to the mountain of the LORD, to the **Rock of Israel**.

And the **LORD** will cause **His** voice of authority to be heard.

And the descending of **His** arm to be seen in fierce anger,

And *in* the flame of a consuming fire,

In cloudburst, downpour, and hailstones.

**Barnes - 30:28 And his breath** – The word רוח *rûach* properly means “wind,” air in motion; then a breathing, an exhalation, a breath; then the soul, spirit, etc. The idea here seems to be that of excited, and rapid, and agitated breathing, as when one is in anger (compare Jdg\_8:3; Zec\_6:8). **Shall reach to the midst of the neck** - Isaiah Isa\_8:8, in describing the invasion of Sennacherib, and comparing it to an overflowing torrent, says it would ‘reach even to the neck;’ that is, it would overflow the land, and even approach the head, the capital, but that that would be spared. By the use of a similar figure, and perhaps referring to that, he here says, that the judgment of God would overflow the army of the Assyrians, but that it would approach only to the neck, the head would still be spared; the commander and sovereign would not be destroyed. In accordance with this prediction, the angel in one night, as with an overflowing flood, cut off the army, and yet spared the sovereign, Sennacherib, who escaped with his life Isa\_37:36-37... **To sift the nations** - Doubtless many nations were laid under requisition to furnish an army so large as that of Sennacherib, as the kingdom of Assyria was made up of a number of tributary people and provinces.... **With the sieve of vanity** - That is, of emptiness or perdition; he would so scatter them that nothing would be left. **A bridle in the jaws of the people** - The idea is, that he had all these nations as much under his control as a man has a horse with a bridle in his mouth.... **Causing them to err** - That shall cause them to wander; that is, he would turn them from the path in which they had designed to go. They had purposed to go to Jerusalem, but he would lead them back to their own land, discomfited and disheartened (see Isa\_37:29).

**BKC - 30:27-30** Isaiah now spoke again of the present situation, prophesying that the Assyrian army (Isa\_30:31), which was surrounding Jerusalem, would be defeated (Isa\_37:36). This occurred in 701 B.C. God in His anger would rush against His enemies. Like dense clouds... a fire, and a torrent (cf. Isa\_30:30) His wrath would overtake the enemy. He shakes the nations in a sieve, like a farmer shaking grain to clear it of small pebbles (cf. Amo\_9:9). This defeat of Assyria would cause Judah to rejoice much as they did in their three annual festivals (Exo\_23:14-17) when they went to the temple on Mount Zion, the mountain of the Lord (cf. Isa\_11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 65:25; 66:20), who is the nation's Rock (cf. Isa\_17:10; 26:4; 44:8; cf. ...Psa\_18:2), its source of security.



## Judgment on the Nations (Assyria) (30:27-33)

30:31 **For** at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified,  
**When** He strikes with the rod.

30:32 And every blow of the rod of punishment,  
Which the LORD will lay on him,  
Will be with *the music of tambourines and lyres*;  
And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them.

30:33 **For Topheth** has long been ready,  
**Indeed**, it has been prepared for the king.  
He has made it deep and large,  
A pyre of fire with plenty of wood;  
The breath of the LORD, **like** a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.

**BKC - 30:31-33** Merely by a command (**voice**, Isa\_30:30-31) of **anger** (cf. Isa\_30:27-28) God would **shatter Assyria with His scepter and rod**. This would cause Judah to rejoice (cf. Isa\_30:29) with music from **tambourines and harps** (cf. Isa\_24:8). The Assyrian army would be destroyed like a pile of **wood** or a sacrifice in **Topheth**, an area in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem where children were sometimes sacrificed to the false Ammonite god Molech (2Ki\_23:10; Jer\_7:31; cf. Jer\_7:32; 19:6, 11-14). This fire was **for the king**, perhaps Hezekiah, as if he were to use it in destroying his enemy. By **God's breath** (cf. Isa\_30:28) He would figuratively kindle the fire by which He would consume the bodies of the Assyrian soldiers. His breath would be like **sulfur**, which burns with great intensity (cf. Gen\_19:24; Job\_18:15; Psa\_11:6; Eze\_38:22; Rev\_9:17-18). This speaks of the eternal torment of the wicked in "the lake of fire" (KJV; Rev\_19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

**JFB - 30:33 - Tophet** - literally, "A place of abomination"; the valley of the sons of Hinnom, southeast of Jerusalem, where Israel offered human sacrifices to Moloch by fire; hence a place of burning (2Ki\_23:10; Jer\_7:31). Latterly Gehinnom or Gehenna, that is, valley of Hinnom, was the receptacle of the refuse of the city, to consume which fires were constantly burning. Hence it came to express hell, the place of torment. In the former sense it was a fit place to symbolize the funeral pyre of the Assyrian army (not that it actually perished there); the Hebrews did not burn, but buried their dead, but the heathen Assyrians are to be burnt as a mark of ignominy. In the latter sense Tophet is the receptacle "prepared for the devil (antitype to the king, Isa\_14:12-15) and his angels," and unbelieving men (Mat\_5:22; 25:41; Mar\_9:43, 44).

IVPBBC – 30:33 Topheth.  
This instance is the only case in the Hebrew Bible where this word is used as a noun, meaning "crematory" or "pyre." God's wrath is to literally burn up the Assyrian king in much the same way that sacrifices were made in the cult site in the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem to the god Molech (2Ki\_23:10). In fact, the Assyrian king Sin-Shar-Ishkun died in the flames of his palace when the city of Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C.

**burning sulfur.** Finely ground sulfur can increase the intensity and brightness of a fire. It may be this property that has made it a symbol of God's wrath, as in the case of Sodom. In this image of Assyria's funeral pyre it magnifies the power of God to punish the enemy nation. Mixed with salt, sulfur could also rob the soil of fertility, again a sign of God's extreme displeasure.

## Woe to Those who Rely on Egypt & Not on Yahweh (31:1-3)

**McGee - 31:1** This is the fifth woe. It is pronounced on those who go down to

**31:1** Egypt for help. This has a message for you and me. Woe to you and woe to me when we turn away from God and turn to some materialistic or human help. Don't misunderstand me - He doesn't intend that you launch out into space and hang there. God expects you to be reasonable. But

**31:2** in the final analysis God wants top priority as far as giving help is concerned. My friend, where do you go for help? To your banker? To your preacher? Every now and then I receive a letter from someone who

**31:3** asks me what he should do in a given situation. Well, I don't know what to do with many problems that arise in my own life! Although it is nice to ask others for advice, in the final analysis we must go to God for help. The psalmist wrote: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Psa 20:7).

Materialistic philosophy says that it is smart to trust in the stock market or your investments, that it is smart to look to "Egypt." Most of us have some "Egypt" upon which we depend for help. The real source of Israel's difficulty was that they did not look to God, nor did they seek Him. Since they did not trust Him, they turned frantically to some outside, physical display of power.

**Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help,**

**And rely on horses,**

**And trust in chariots because they are many,**

**And in horsemen because they are very strong,**

**But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!**

**Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster,**

**And does not retract His words,**

**But will arise against the house of evildoers,**

**And against the help of the workers of iniquity.**

**Now the Egyptians are men, and not God,**

**And their horses are flesh and not spirit;**

**So the LORD will stretch out His hand,**

**And he who helps will stumble**

**And he who is helped will fall,**

**And all of them will come to an end together.**

**Preacher - The Foolishness of Human Wisdom** - From a human standpoint, Hezekiah's decision to send a delegation down to Egypt to get help against Assyria appears to be wise. Egypt and Assyria were the superpowers of the ancient East. As nuclear weapons created the superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, so horses and chariots made Egypt and Assyria the superpowers of their day. Judah had neither the size nor wealth to equip its army with horses and chariots. Ironically, Judah's location in the hills and mountains nullified the threat of invasion by troops mounted on horses and riding in chariots. The battle between Egypt and Assyria would be fought elsewhere, but if Egypt lost, Hezekiah feared an attack against Jerusalem by the Assyrian infantry. In fear of such an attack, Hezekiah sought an alliance with Egypt.

On the surface, Hezekiah's tactic looks wise. Why not protect your pawns in the deadly chess game of the Middle East? Isaiah's answer is pointed. Hezekiah did not "look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!" (Isa 31:1). Instead, he put his trust in the Egyptians and their horses without consulting God. Each of us can identify with Hezekiah. When we submit to our fears and refuse to trust God, we studiously avoid His counsel.

**JFB - 31:1 and stay on horses, and trust in chariots** - In their level and fertile plains horses could easily be used and fed (Exo 14:9; 1Ki 10:28). In hilly Palestine horses were not so easily had or available. The Jews were therefore the more eager to get Egyptian chariots as allies against the Assyrian cavalry. In Assyrian sculptures chariots are represented drawn by three horses, and with three men in them (see Isa 36:9; Psa 20:7; Dan 9:13).

**Preacher - 31:2-3 The Superiority of Divine Wisdom** - Isaiah counters the alleged human wisdom of Hezekiah by saying of God, "Yet, He also is wise." Always before in Scripture, wisdom is identified as a human virtue given by God.

So for Isaiah to speak of the wisdom of God in a comparative sense is unusual. The distinction between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man offered by Isaiah, however, quickly dispels the notion that the two can be compared. God's wisdom is superlative because it is transcendent.

Three characteristics distinguish the wisdom of God. First, he "will bring disaster" (Isa 31:2). Other translations read, "He will bring evil. Only the wisdom of God can sort out the difference between "evil" and "disaster." As the Holy One of Israel, God cannot be the source of moral evil in the universe, but He can utilize forces of nature and the events of history to exercise judgment and punish sin. His wisdom, then, is the ability to discriminate between moral evil and natural disaster as instruments of His will. Human wisdom fails this test of discrimination. Whenever we humans take judgment into our own hands, we run the risk of our own sin motivating the punishment. For this reason, God says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Rom 12:19). Only the wisdom of God can "bring disaster" without evil intent.

**Second**, Isaiah characterizes the distinct wisdom of God by the assurance that He "will not call back His words" (Isa 31:2). Human wisdom requires revision as learning continues and insights develop. Humility is the mark of a wise man or woman. God's wisdom, however, needs no revision. His truth stands firm and forever. After He speaks, He "will not call back His words." While we do not worship His Word, we know that what He says will stand to the end with His promise, "These words are faithful and true" (Rev 22:6) along with the warning, "If anyone adds to these things ... and if anyone takes away from the words ... God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev 22:18-19).

**Third**, God's wisdom is distinguished from human wisdom by His even-handedness in rising "against the house of evildoers, and against the help of those who work iniquity" (Isa 31:2). Both Judah and Egypt will feel the wrath of God. Judah will be punished because of King Hezekiah's sin of seeking Egypt's help, and Egypt will be punished for giving the help. At the same time, the punishment will fit the sin. Discretionary judgment is a virtue of the wisdom of God that is lacking in human wisdom. Without the perspective of human history - past, present, and future - against the backdrop of eternity, human wisdom can never be fully fair in exercising judgment. The bias of a limited perspective and human motivation will invariably creep into the punishment. God and God alone can exercise wrath against His people and their enemies with the wisdom of His eternal purpose.

Isaiah goes on to tell us why human wisdom is faulty. "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit" (Isa 31:3). Hidden in the words are the questions, "Will you trust in the living God or in dying men?" and "Will you trust in the strength of horses or in the power of the Spirit of God?" With just a stretch of the Lord's hand in human events, both men and horses, those who help and those who are helped - "They all will perish together" (Isa 31:3).



31:4

**For thus says the LORD to me,**  
**"As the lion or the young lion growls over his prey,**  
**Against which a band of shepherds is called out,**  
**Will not be terrified at their voice, nor disturbed at their noise,**  
**So will the LORD of hosts come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill."**

31:5

Preacher - 31:4-9 The Mystery of God's Wisdom – Isaiah takes the superlative nature of God's wisdom one more

**Like flying birds so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem.**

**He will protect and deliver it;**

**He will pass over and rescue it.**

step into the mystery of His ways, which even the wisest of humans cannot understand. **Two proofs** are given in the context of the forthcoming judgment upon Judah and Assyria. The **first proof** is the mystery of God being a tenacious lion and a hovering mother bird over Judah at the same time. Although God will permit Assyria to come to the gates of Jerusalem, He will then take on the role of a roaring young lion ready to devour a lamb. Nothing the Assyrian shepherds can do will turn Him from His purpose. With the tenacity of a young lion, God will "fight for Mount Zion and for its hill" (Isa 31:4).

Instantly, the image of God changes from a devouring lion to a hovering bird. Strength gives way to compassion as God again shows His love for the children of Israel. Like a mother bird, He will defend Jerusalem against the Assyrians, deliver the city from their hands, and preserve His people by passing over them when death strikes their enemies. Memories of the Passover in Egypt are refreshed in the minds of Isaiah's hearers. As in Egypt, when the Angel of Death passed over the Israelites who had smeared the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, God reinforces His promise of their preservation in the unforgettable picture of the hovering mother bird. With the promise of the Passover fresh in mind, Isaiah pleads with the children of Israel to return to the Father against whom they have "deeply revolted" and "throw away" the silver and gold idols that they have made as the symbols of their insolence.

A **second proof** of the mystery of God's unfathomable wisdom is the promise that Assyria will fall by a sword that is not a human weapon. God calls in the supernatural to put the Assyrians to flight, enslave their crack troops, send them home in shameful retreat, and strike fear into the hearts of their princes at the mere sight of His banner (Isa 31:8-9). To this day, history does not tell us why the Assyrians withdrew their siege against Jerusalem and retreated in disarray. Of all the explanations, the consistency between Isaiah's prophecy and reporting gives his account the most credibility. "Then the angel of the LORD went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand . . . so Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh" (Isa 37:36).

Behind the mystery of His will is the assurance of His wisdom. Jerusalem, the city where His fire burns both on the altar hearth of His worship and in the "furnace" of Tophet for His wrath, is special to His purpose, but not exempt from His wrath. Human wisdom cannot fathom the mystery.

Barnes - 31:4 - For thus hath the Lord spoken - The design of this verse and the following is to assure the Jews of the certain protection of Yahweh, and thus to induce them to put their trust in him rather than to seek the alliance with Egypt. To do this the prophet makes use of two striking illustrations, the first of which is, that Yahweh would be no more alarmed at the number and power of their enemies than a fierce lion would be that was intent on his prey, and could not be frightened from it by any number of men that should come against him. The "point" of this comparison is, that as the lion that "was intent on his purpose" could not be frightened from it by numbers, so it would be with Yahweh, who "was equally intent on his purpose" - the defense of the city of Jerusalem. It does not mean, of course, that the purpose of God and of the lion resembled each other, but merely that there was similar "intensity of purpose," and similar adherence to it notwithstanding all opposition. The figure is one that denotes the highest vigilance, firmness, steadiness, and a determination on the part of Yahweh that Jerusalem should not fall into the hands of the Assyrians.

**Like as the lion** - The divine nature and purposes are often represented in the Scriptures by metaphors, allegories, and comparisons taken from animals, and especially from the lion (see Deu 33:20; Job 10:16; Psa 7:2; Hos 11:10).

**And the young lion** - The vigorous, strong, fierce lion. The use of the two here, gives intensity and strength to the comparison. It is observable that the lion is seldom mentioned alone in the Scriptures.

**Roaring on his prey** - Roaring as he seizes on his prey. This is the moment of the greatest intensity of purpose in the lion, and it is therefore used by Isaiah to denote the intense purpose of Yahweh to defend Jerusalem, and not to be deterred by any number of enemies.

**When a multitude of shepherds is called forth** - When the neighborhood is alarmed, and all the inhabitants turn out to destroy him....

**He will not be afraid** - He will be so intent on his prey that he will not heed their shouting.

**Nor abase himself** - That is, he will not be frightened, or disheartened.

**So shall the Lord of hosts** - That is, with the same intensity of purpose; with the same fixedness of design. He will be as little dismayed and diverted from his purpose by the number, the designs, and the war shout of the Assyrian armies.

**Isaiah 31:5 - As birds flying** - This is another comparison indicating substantially the same thing as the former, that Yahweh would protect Jerusalem. The idea here is, that He would do it in the same manner as birds defend their young by hovering over them, securing them under their wings, and leaping forward, if they are suddenly attacked, to defend them. Our Saviour has used a similar figure to indicate his readiness to have defended and saved the same city Mat 23:27, and it is possible that he may have had this passage in his eye. The phrase 'birds flying,' may denote the "rapidity" with which birds fly to defend their young, and hence, the rapidity with which God would come to defend Jerusalem; or it may refer to the fact that birds, when their young are attacked, fly, or flutter around them to defend them; they will not leave them.

**And passing over** - פוּסַחַּ *pašoach*. Lowth renders this, 'Leaping forward.' This word, which is usually applied in some of its forms to the Passover Exo 12:13, 23, 27; Num 9:4; Jos 5:11; 2Ch 30:18, properly means, as a verb, "to pass over," and hence, "to preserve or spare." The idea in the passage is, that Yahweh would protect Jerusalem, as a bird defends its young.



## Destruction of the Assyrian (31:6-9)

- 31:6 Return to Him from whom you have deeply defected, O sons of Israel.
- 31:7 For in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which your hands have made as a sin.
- 31:8 And the Assyrian will fall by a sword not of man,  
And a sword not of man will devour him.  
So he will not escape the sword,  
And his young men will become forced laborers.
- 31:9 "And his rock will pass away because of panic,  
And his princes will be terrified at the standard,"  
Declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

**IVPBBC - 31:8. fate of Assyria.** The ultimate fate of Assyria is its annihilation as a nation by a coalition of states headed by the Chaldeans of Babylon and the Medes. The Babylonian Chronicle describes how Nineveh falls to an allied army led by Nabopolassar of Babylon and the Median ruler Cyaxares in 612. The final battle at Carchemish in 605 demonstrated the ability of the Babylonian leader Nebuchadnezzar to totally demoralize the formerly invincible Assyrian shock troops and their Egyptian allies. Thus the hand of Yahweh and the loss of strong Assyrian leadership after the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 spelled elimination of that people's influence from the ancient Near East.

**JFB - 31:6** The power and love of Jehovah, just mentioned, are the strongest incentives for returning to Him (Eze\_16:62, 63; Hos\_6:1).

**ye ... Israel** - The change of person marks that when they return to the Lord, He will address them in more direct terms of communion in the second person; so long as they were *revolters*, God speaks of them, as more at a distance, in the third person, rather than to them.

**31:9** - Rather, "shall pass beyond his strongholds"; he Shall not stop to take refuge in it through fear (Jdg\_20:47; Jer\_48:28) [Gesenius].

**ensign** - the banner of Jehovah protecting the Jews [Maurer].

**fire ... furnace** - "light" and "fire," namely, of Jehovah's altar at Jerusalem (Isa\_29:1). Perhaps "furnace," as distinguished from "fire," may mean that His dwelling-place (His hearth) was at Jerusalem (compare Isa\_4:5); or else the fiery furnace awaiting all the enemies who should attack Jerusalem.





**Behold, a king will reign righteously,**

**And princes will rule justly.** Micah 4:1-5; Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-9

**Reign of a Righteous King (32:1-8)**

**IVPBBC - 32:1-5. visions of better times.** These verses form a reversal of the conditions faced by Isaiah in his call narrative in Isa\_6:9-10. What changes Israel's fortunes is the rise of a righteous king who enforces the law and maintains order. Statements such as these are part of the wisdom tradition of the ancient Near East that includes works from Egypt and Mesopotamia on the "just king." Among them is the Egyptian *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, who describes a righteous king as one who is "father to the orphan" and "mother to the motherless." Similarly, the eighth-century Egyptian sage Ankh-sheshonq states that "blessed is a city with a just ruler."

**JFB - king** - not Hezekiah, who was already on the throne, whereas a future time is contemplated. If he be meant at all, it can only be as a type of Messiah the King, to whom alone the language is fully applicable (Hos\_3:5; Zec\_9:9; see on Isa\_11:3-5). The kingdom shall be transferred from the world kings, who have exercised their power against God, instead of for God, to the rightful King of kings (Eze\_21:27; Dan\_7:13, 14).

**princes** - subordinate; referring to all in authority under Christ in the coming kingdom on earth, for example, the apostles, etc. (Luk\_22:30; 1Co\_6:2; 2Ti\_2:12; Rev\_2:26, 27; 3:21).

### Preacher - 32:1-8 The Reign of Wisdom

The fall of Assyria under the supernatural sword of God's intervention prepares the way for the advent of the Kingdom of Righteousness. Rising in comparison with a nation in rebellion against the love and will of God, the Kingdom of Righteousness is governed by wisdom, empowered by the Spirit, and characterized by peace.

#### The Governance of Wisdom

Joy springs into Isaiah's words whenever he shifts from punishment to promise. "Woe" gives way to "behold" as he announces the coming of the Kingdom of Righteousness. In contrast to the governance of foolish kings, cynical princes, deaf prophets, and blind seers, the prophet sees the evidence of wisdom at every level of society.

#### The King Reigns in Righteousness

Isaiah establishes a principle of truth that applies to every nation: The leader sets the tone for the quality of governance...so the quality of a kingdom is set by the character of the king. Not by accident, Isaiah notes that a righteous kingdom needs a righteous king. Character, then, becomes the primary qualification for leadership. In his earlier denunciations of the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the prophet noted that character no longer counted. Drunkenness, lies, and trickery were standard operations for the leaders who misled the people. As a consequence, rebellion replaced righteousness and oppression replaced justice at every level of government. Added meaning is given to the Scripture, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pro\_14:34).

#### The Princes Rule with Justice

Another important principle of wisdom is established when Isaiah reports that the princes rule with justice: Righteousness precedes justice in the equation of good governance. It is false to assume that a leader can do justice without being righteous. Sooner or later, there will be moral decisions that test the caliber of the leader's soul and expose the flaw. Conversely, if the leader is right with God, he or she will respect the rights of others. Another principle of wisdom is established for us: Righteousness not only precedes justice, but righteousness guarantees justice. The king who reigns in righteousness, then, has princes who rule in justice. In the clearest terms, Isaiah has laid the stone of justice upon the cornerstone of righteousness for the building of the nation and the guidance of the people.



32:2 And each will be **like** a refuge from the wind,  
 And a shelter from the storm,  
**Like** streams of water in a dry country,  
**Like** the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.

32:3 **Then** the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,  
 And the ears of those who hear will listen.

32:4 And the mind of the **hasty** will discern the truth,  
 And the tongue of the **stammerers** will hasten to speak clearly.

#### Preacher - The Masses are Protected

Government's first responsibility is the health and safety of its people. This is the structure of good government built upon righteousness and justice. We are not surprised, then, to learn that "a man," or every individual person in the Kingdom of Righteousness, will find a "hiding place" from the wind of adversity, "a cover" from the tempest of catastrophe, "rivers of water" for the times of sickness, and "the shadow of a great rock" in the moments of malaise. If government limited its functions to the health and safety of the people, its agenda would be full. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, government must return to these basics. Whether it is the health issue of AIDS, or the safety issue of crime in the streets, people need protection. Yet, without the moral foundation of righteousness and justice, can health and safety be assured? Isaiah would answer, no.

#### The People are Enlightened

After health and safety, good government has the responsibility for the welfare of its people. Education is considered the leading edge of welfare. At the fundamental level is literacy and at the highest level is wisdom. Isaiah may well have literacy in mind when he foresees that "the eyes of those who see will not be dim, and the ears of those who hear will listen" (Isa\_32:3). We know from an earlier oracle (Isa\_30:11-12) that he made literate leaders, especially prophets and seers, responsible for reading the words of a sealed book. When they could not read, the illiterate people could not read. In the Kingdom of Righteousness, however, the opposite is true. The literate will have both open eyes and a listening ear for the word of truth so the illiterate can be taught to read and learn the way. Also, the rash who rush to judgment will become patient to understand knowledge and "the tongue of the stammerers will be ready to speak plainly" (Isa\_32:4). To see clearly, listen perceptively, understand thoroughly, and speak plainly the word of truth - these are qualities of a wise people.

JFB - 32:4 rash - rather, "the hasty"; contrast "shall not make haste" (Isa\_28:16); the reckless who will not take time to weigh religious truth aright. Or else, the well-instructed [Horsley].

**stammers** - those who speak confusedly on divine things (compare Exo\_4:10-12; Jer\_1:6; Mat\_10:19, 20). Or, rather, those drunken scorners who in stammering style imitated Isaiah's warnings to mock them [Maurer] (Isa\_28:7-11, 13, 14, 22; 29:20)...

## Reign of a Righteous King (32:1-8)

- 32:5 No longer will the fool be called noble,  
Or the **rogue** be spoken of **as generous**.
- 32:6 **For** a fool speaks nonsense,  
And his heart inclines toward wickedness,  
To practice ungodliness and to speak error against the LORD,  
To keep the hungry person unsatisfied  
And to withhold drink from the thirsty.
- 32:7 **As** for a rogue, his weapons are evil;  
He devises wicked schemes  
To destroy the afflicted with slander,  
**Even though** the needy one speaks what is right.
- 32:8 **But** the noble man devises noble plans;  
And by noble plans he stands.

JFB - 32:5 churl - rather, "fraudulent" [Gesenius].  
**bountiful** - religiously. The atheistic churl, who envies the believer his hope "full of immortality," shall no longer be held as a patriot struggling for the emancipation of mankind from superstition [Horsley].

### Preacher - The Foolish are Exposed

All of the values are tipped in a kingdom that is not founded on righteousness, ruled by justice, and guided by wisdom. A fool who rejects God and His teaching is called "*generous*" and the miser is said to be "*bountiful*" (Isa\_32:5). But when righteousness, justice, and wisdom rule the kingdom, the ruse is lifted. The fool will be exposed as a person who speaks foolishly, works iniquity, practices unGodliness, and utters errors against the Lord (Isa\_32:6). Just as righteousness is a pervasive influence upon thinking, speaking, and doing, so foolishness travels like a microbe in the bloodstream to every part of the personality. And the consequences are evil. With wicked intent, the fool keeps the hungry unsatisfied and the thirsty unfulfilled (Isa\_32:6). By the fool's evil schemes and wicked plans, the poor are destroyed and the needy oppressed. Along with the fool, the miser will be exposed. Pretending to be generous, the miser is motivated by self-interest. But, in the Kingdom of Righteousness, the generous person will be known by generous plans and generous deeds that need no defense.

A secular nation has been described as a society in which all of the values have been reversed. Imagining the nation as a large department store filled with merchandise, a secular society is like a prankster who sneaks into the store in the middle of the night and changes all of the price tags. Cheap things are now valuable and valuable things are now cheap. Topsy-turvy values are a sure indicator that righteousness no longer reigns and justice no longer rules.



## Women of Ease Urged to Wail for Forsaken Land (32:9-14)

- 32:9** Rise up you women who are at ease,  
And hear my voice;  
Give ear to my word,  
You complacent daughters.
- 32:10** Within a year and a few days,  
You will be troubled, O complacent daughters;  
For the vintage is ended,  
And the fruit gathering will not come.
- 32:11** Tremble, you women who are at ease;  
Be troubled, you complacent daughters;  
Strip, undress, and put sackcloth on your waist,
- 32:12** Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,
- 32:13** For the land of my people in which thorns and briars shall come up;  
Yea, for all the joyful houses, and for the jubilant city.
- 32:14** Because the palace has been abandoned, the populated city forsaken.  
Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever,  
A delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks;
- JFB - 32:9-20** - Address to the women of Jerusalem who troubled themselves little about the political signs of the times, but lived a life of self-indulgence (Isa\_3:16-23); the failure of food through the devastations of the enemy is here foretold, being what was most likely to affect them as mothers of families, heretofore accustomed to every luxury. Vitringa understands "women - daughters" as the cities and villages of Judea (Eze\_16:1-63). See Amo\_6:1.
- JFB - 32:10** - Many days and years — rather, "In little more than a year" [Maurer]; literally, "days upon a year" (so Isa\_29:1).  
**vintage shall fail** - through the arrival of the Assyrian invader. As the wheat harvest is omitted, Isaiah must look for the invasion in the summer or autumn of 714 B.C., when the wheat would have been secured already, and the later fruit "gathering," and vintage would be still in danger.
- Pro 28:12, 28; 2Th 2:1-12**
- JFB - 32:14** – forts - rather, "Ophel" (that is, the mound), the term applied specially to the declivity on the east of Zion, surrounded with its own wall (2Ch\_27:3; 33:14; 2Ki\_5:24), and furnished with "towers" (or watchtowers), perhaps referred to here (Neh\_3:26, 27).

### Preacher - 32:9-15 The Spirit of Wisdom

Isaiah's challenge, "Rise up ... Hear my voice ... Give ear to my speech," is a compliment to the power they wield. His warning is that their ease will turn to trembling and their complacency will give way to trouble when the Lord brings judgment upon Judah. Perhaps only they will remain when the men of the nation are marched into exile. With the people who remain, they will mourn the loss of "pleasant fields," the "fruitful vine," "happy homes," festive "palaces," the "bustling city," and protective "forts and towers" along the city walls (Isa\_32:12-14). The implication is that the women of Judah took these blessings for granted, but if they arose, they could make a difference. Rather than criticizing Isaiah for chauvinism, he deserves to be complimented for his confidence in the latent power of the women of Judah.

One thing is certain. Isaiah saw that the Kingdom of Righteousness could not come by any human power, male or female. Rather, foreseeing Pentecost, he waits "until the Spirit is poured on us from on high" (Isa\_32:15)...Just as God showed Isaiah that the supernatural sword of the Lord would put the Assyrians into retreat from the walls of Jerusalem, so He gives His prophet a perspective of the only power that can bring righteousness and justice to the nation. "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high" leaves no doubt. Supernatural power is essential to the transformation of a nation steeped in rebellion, foolishness, and complacency.



Mark 13:3-23; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-4;  
Zec 4:1-14; Rev 11:1-14, 15-19; 19:11-21

## The Spirit Outpoured & Blessings Galore (32:15-20)

32:15

Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,  
And the wilderness becomes a fertile field  
And the fertile field is considered as a forest.

32:16

Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,  
And righteousness will abide in the fertile field.

32:17

And the work of righteousness will be peace,  
And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.

32:18

Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation,  
And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places;

32:19

And it will hail when the forest comes down,  
And the city will be utterly laid low.

32:20

How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters,  
Who let out freely the ox and the donkey.

JFB - 32:15 - This can only partially apply to the spiritual revival in Hezekiah's time; its full accomplishment belongs to the Christian dispensation, first at Pentecost (Joe\_2:28; Act\_2:17), perfectly in coming times (Psa\_104:30; Eze\_36:26; 39:29; Zec\_12:10), when the Spirit shall be poured on Israel, and through it on the Gentiles (Mic\_5:7).

wilderness ... fruitful field ... forest - when Judea, so long waste, shall be populous and fruitful, and the land of the enemies of God shall be desolate. Or, "the field, now fruitful, shall be but as a barren forest in comparison with what it shall be then" (Isa\_29:17). The barren shall become fruitful by regeneration; those already regenerate shall bring forth fruits in such abundance that their former life shall seem but as a wilderness where no fruits were.

### Preacher - 32:16-20 The Peace of Wisdom

Make no mistake. The outpouring of the Spirit is necessary for the peace that God promises in the Kingdom of Righteousness. The women of Judah and Jerusalem took their "ease" in the false sense of peace in their nation and their homes. But with the outpouring of the Spirit, true peace will come. Justice will be present but righteousness will lead the way... We may not fully understand the pervasive power and positive effect of righteousness. Isaiah began with the simple statement "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness" (Isa\_32:1). The concept expanded with revolutionary effect into every level of society and every group in the nation - affirming some, exposing others, and challenging still others. But now we see righteousness coming to its final effect - peace in heart and peace in the nation.

God promises "My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation" (Isa\_32:18). How distant from that promise modern Israel still seems. Rather than peace, the nation is an armed camp beset on every side by hostile neighbors. Israelis do not have "secure dwellings" or "quiet resting places" (Isa\_32:18). Yet, the promise is still good for Israel and for us. The outpouring of His Spirit not only transforms our lives, clears our vision, and empowers our witness, but He also gives us peace in the midst of the noxious hail or devastating storm (Isa\_32:19). For all of us, Isaiah's closing beatitude is the word of wisdom, "Blessed are you who sow beside all waters, who send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey" (Isa\_32:20). By sowing beside all waters, we tap the source of His life, and by freely sending out the feet of the ox and the donkey, we show our confidence in His promise. If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the water of His Spirit and the freedom of His promise are steps toward maturity.

JFB - 32:19 - Literally, "But it shall hail with coming down of the forest, and in lowness shall the city (Nineveh) be brought low; that is, humbled." The "hail" is Jehovah's wrathful visitation (Isa\_30:30; 28:17). The "forest" is the Assyrian host, dense as the trees of a forest (Isa\_10:18, 19, 33, 34; Zec\_11:2).

