



UNIT 3

O HEAVENS AND EARTH

Isaiah 1:2-4

Underlying Isaiah's vision of end-time promises and curses is an ancient covenant God first initiated with the house of Israel on Mount Sinai and which he has extended throughout the ages from our ancient ancestors to our present time.



SECTION 1: THE ANCIENT COVENANT

Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God...that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day....

~ Jehovah (Deuteronomy 29:1, 11-13)

Isaiah invokes the heavens and the earth in the introduction of his vision. He calls upon them to hear and bear witness of the rebellion of the house of Israel using similar words spoken by Moses more than 500 years before him. In doing so, he brings to the mind of the Israelites the covenant their ancestral fathers made to God before they entered their lands of inheritance. This hopefully brings to our minds the same covenants. If you are the house of Israel, their ancestors are your ancestors, and their covenant is also yours.

#1—CHIASMUS IN OVERVIEW

Chiasmus or chiasm is a poetic form of parallelism—or reverse parallelism—often used in ancient writing, not only among the Hebrew culture, but throughout ancient Mesopotamia. This pattern of writing is commonly found in the Old and New Testaments. The early authors of the Book of Mormon also used this form of writing. To learn even the basic elements of chiasms can greatly enhance your study of ancient scripture.

WHAT IS CHIASMUS?

The internet has a profusion of explanations on chiasmus. A simple internet search will produce several sources of information. William Ramey explained it this way:



An important ancient technique of organizing material was by reverse parallelism. Today, this structural form is called chiasmus (pronunciation: ki-AZ-mus). The term chiasmus (also sometimes spelled as chiasm), is derived from a Greek verb that means to mark with two lines crossing like an 'X' (chi, the 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet). Chiasmus is also known as antimetabole, epanodos, inverted parallelism, reverse parallelism, syntactical inversion, thought inversion, and turn around.¹

In our modern culture and literature, we often think of things linearly or sequentially. We use bullet points or outlines in consecutive order, first this and then that, as if we were telling a sequential story. It is often

1. Ramey W. [Chiasmus] Introduction. In TheBeginning.org. <https://www.inthebeginning.org/chiasmus>. Published April 6, 2014. Accessed June 8, 2019.

difficult for us to understand the reverse parallel pattern used by ancient writers because it does not follow that sequential formula. Ancient writers did not write linearly. They thought and wrote concentrically.

One of the wonderful, complex and favoured word patterns used in literature is called the chiasm, or chiasmic structure.... In Hebrew it is called an atbash (אתבש) structure because the aleph is mirrored by the tav (first and last letters of the aleph-bet) and the bet is mirrored by the shin (second and second last letters of the aleph-bet).... The Bible is littered with chiasms, but one which has always interested me is the fact that Torah is, in itself, a chiasm.²

There are many sources on the internet and elsewhere that can explain chiasmus much better than I. One of my favorite websites for understanding and viewing chiasmic patterns throughout the Old and New Testaments is the Chiasmus Exchange. This website is a conglomeration of user-added chiasms. Not all of the chiasms on this exchange website are legitimate, but they provide opportunities to expand ideas from other individuals.

EXAMPLES OF CHIASMS

Chiasmic patterns follow a very basic pattern. For ease of reference, I like using colors, underlines, and an A/B/A' pattern, where A and A' [A prime] are the parallel comparisons and B is the climax or center. The following is an example of an A/B/C/B'/A' from the second chapter in Isaiah:

A The **word** that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

B And it shall come to pass in the last days — when the **mountain of the Lord's house** shall be established in the top of the mountains

C and shall be **exalted above the hills**, and all nations shall flow unto it —

B' many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the **mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob**, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths;

A' for out of Zion shall go forth the **law**, and the **word** of the Lord from Jerusalem.



2. MacRae Howie JH. Chiasm in Torah. Ancient Hebrew Research Center. http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/guests_leviticus.html. Accessed June 8, 2019.

Below is another example, this time out of the Book of Mormon. This is a little longer (A-E-A'). You can probably divide this up in other ways, but this is what I see. Nephi warns us of our present spiritual state of being in a chiasmus he embeds in 2 Nephi 28:21-25:

- A** And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: **All is well in Zion;**
- B** yea, **Zion prospereth, all is well**—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.
- C** And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them **there is no hell**; and he saith unto them: **I am no devil**, for there is none—
- D** and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he **grasps them with his awful chains**,
- E** from whence **there is no deliverance**.
- D'** Yea, they are **grasped with death, and hell**;
- C'** and **death, and hell, and the devil**, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.
- B'** Therefore, wo be unto him that is **at ease in Zion!**
- A'** Wo be unto him that crieth: **All is well!**



NOTE: Please note that there are specific rules and regulations that qualify a chiasmus as “official” in the eyes of scholars. I do not know what all those rules or regulations are. Those chiasmus patterns I have found may not follow official guidelines, but they do give greater value or understanding to passage. Please also keep in mind that the ancient prophets wrote in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, and not in English, so we should be cautious in linking English words to chiasmic patterns.



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. How do you feel understanding chiasms can help you better understand the scriptures?
2. Test what you know about the chiasmus. Where have you seen chiasmus in your reading?
3. Find four examples of chiasmus in the scriptures. What deeper understanding did you glean from your study?

NOTES

#2—BREAKING THE COVENANT

The covenant Jehovah made with the house of Israel is found in Deuteronomy chapters 29-30. There is a simple chiasmic pattern in this covenant highlighting the covenant curse encircled by the covenant promise. The chiasmus can be parsed into much greater complex patterns that can give more depth to the meaning and focus, but for this illustration a simple A-B-A' chiasmus demonstrates the promise-curse-promise pattern. However, within the A and A' sets there is an A-B-C/A-B-C pattern, a different form in which a chiasmus can present.

A See, I have **set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil**; in that I command thee this day to **love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments**, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall **bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it**

B But if thine heart turn away, so that **thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them**; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that **ye shall not prolong your days** upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

A' I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have **set before you life and death, blessing and cursing**; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; That thou mayest **love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him**; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest **dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto thy fathers**, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What was the covenant promise the Lord made with the house of Israel?
2. Is that our covenant or does that only belong to our ancestors?
3. What are your responsibilities regarding the Sinai covenant?

NOTES

A PROPHECY AND A FOREWARNING

Before Moses' death, he was commanded by the Lord to write a "song" for the Israelites. This song was to be taught to their children and put in their mouths "that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 31:19). As Moses then called the tribes of Israel together to declare this song of the Lord. He foresaw the state of Israel in the last days and proclaimed, "I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands" (Deuteronomy 31:29).

The word-link "latter days" connects this passage to the last days, or in other words, to our day. Moses' use of the word "latter day" in the twilight of his life confirms that he truly intended to imply our time. He had already recorded his vision from beginning to end and had used that term before. Concerning Melchizedek, Moses wrote, "And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world" (Genesis 14:34, see also JST Genesis 14:34).

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Genesis 14:34
- JST Genesis 14:34
- Deuteronomy 29-30
- Deuteronomy 31:16-20
- Isaiah 3:14-15
- Isaiah 24:5-6
- Isaiah 33:14-15
- Isaiah 44-45
- Isaiah 55:1-7
- 1 Nephi 4:14
- Malachi 4:5-6
- Joseph Smith History 1:37-39
- D&C 1:38-39

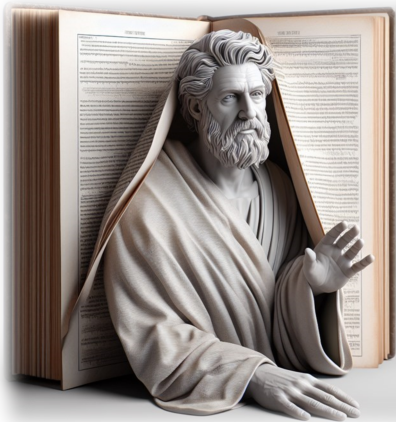
QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What did the Israelites do anciently to provoke the Lord to anger?
2. What does Isaiah and others predict we as the future covenant people of God would do to provoke the Lord?
3. Ancient Israel broke their covenant with God. Have we as a people kept or broken that same covenant?
4. If we broke it, how did we do so, and how can we return to the Lord?

NOTES

#3—BINDING IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

The Lord gives power to some of his earthly servants to seal or bind things in heaven and on earth. The Lord said to the apostle Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).



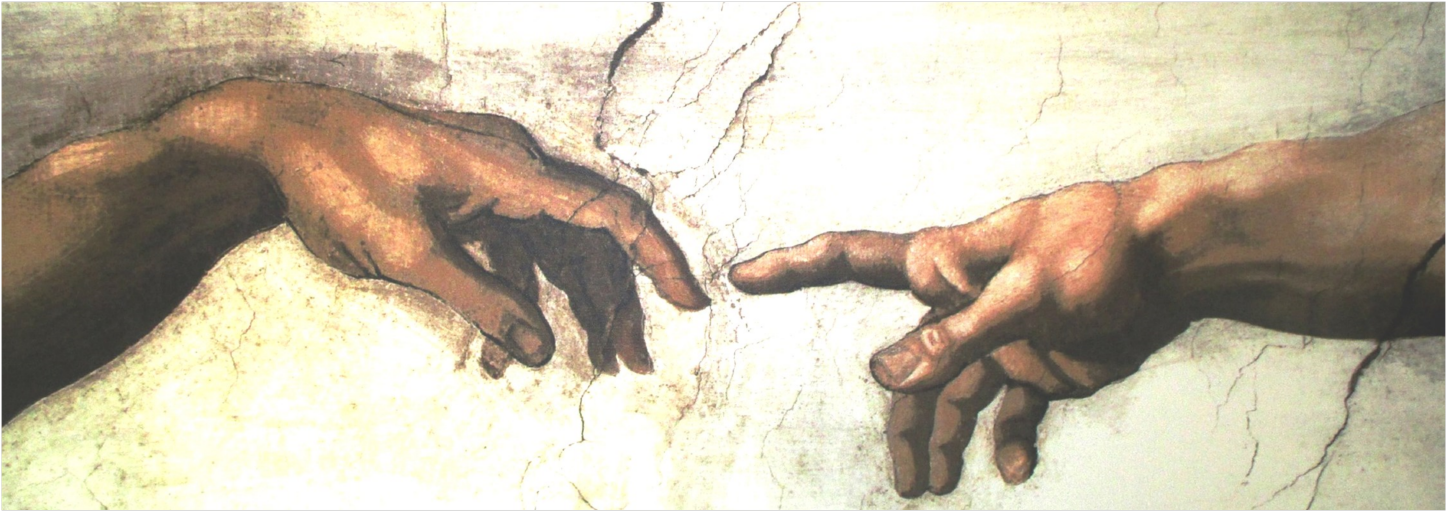
He also calls upon inspired men and women to write the words which he speaks to inspire and uplift, but also to record and judge. “I command all men, both in the east, and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them: for out of the books which shall be written, I will judge the world every man according to their works, according to that which is written” (2 Nephi 12 29:11).

Joseph Smith expanded on this concept when he wrote, “It is granted that whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven: or in other words, taking a different view of the translation; whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven; and whatsoever you do not record on earth, shall not be recorded in heaven” (D&C 128:8).

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- 1 Kings 17
- Isaiah 8:16
- Isaiah 55:10-11
- Isaiah 61:1-3
- 2 Nephi 29:10-13
- 2 Nephi 33:12-15
- Matthew 16:18-19
- Matthew 21:223-27
- John 17
- Helaman 10:2-11:18
- D&C 1:8-9
- D&C 1:38
- D&C 128:8
- D&C 132:45-50





QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Are there any consistent theme between those to whom the Lord has given the sealing power?
2. Why does the Lord give this power to mankind, and to whom does he give it?
3. Do you believe Isaiah held the power to seal both in heaven and on earth?
4. If so, how does Isaiah connect the ancient covenant to modern Israel (to us)?

NOTES

SECTION 2: BECOMING SONS OF GOD

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name....

~ John (John 1:12)

Within the very first verses of Isaiah’s story he pointedly turns the focus toward us. The Lord laments that though he has favored and nourished his children, they still rebel against him. Though the King James’ version uses the word “children” in Isaiah 1:2, the Hebrew text uses the word “sons” (בָּנִים | bā-nēm’). In Isaiah’s writings, sons is often translated in English as “children.” In Hebrew, it can have a broad meaning to include daughters in conjunction with sons. However, in ancient scripture, “son” is a term often used to denote a covenant standing before the Lord. The Son of God—Jesus Christ—is the most faithful of all God’s covenant children (see Abraham 3:21) .

#1—BECOMING SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD

Though, Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son, there are also other sons of God. A son of God is a covenant child of God. It has a deeper meaning than we are traditionally taught in our Sunday school classes. It is true, we are all sons and daughters of divine heavenly parents. But when the scriptures say, “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12), we must question why all are not sons or daughters of God. This must have more meaning than our divine heritage, referring to a more divine or greater ascending role of sonhood and covenant-making with God.

It is further explained that these sons are given power to become sons of God as they believe on his name. Are women left out of this promise? Absolutely not! They have the same opportunity as men, but are also as ac-

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Abraham 3:11-28
- Isaiah 1:2-4



countable as men. Sons are often used because Isaiah is invoking covenant terminology familiar in his day. And as the Christ “was born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13), so also are the sons and daughters of men raised unto and born of God spiritually (see John 3:5-6).

To truly understand Isaiah’s symbolic intent regarding “sons,” we must consider two things:

1. *Isaiah’s words are meant for a future generation. His vision was about the future.*
2. *All the prophecies of Isaiah have multiple fulfillment, first as prophetic fulfillment from Isaiah’s time to the present, and second as a prophecy of the last-days or end-days, occurring in our present time.*

In other words, Isaiah uses historical precedent to predict future events that combine into one grand tapestry foretelling what will happen in our day as the Lord prepares to come a second time.

- Isaiah 1:21-27
- Isaiah 30:1-15
- Isaiah 49:18-26
- Isaiah 63:7-10
- 2 Nephi 26:7-13
- 3 Nephi 21:20-22
- John 1:12-13
- John 3:1-17
- Romans 8:13-14
- D&C 84:33-42

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. How has God “nourished and brought up” covenant sons and daughters in our day?
2. Who are the sons and daughters of God in our day?
3. In what ways has the Lord made the covenants available to us today?

NOTES

SECTION 3: REBELLING FROM GOD

But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

~ Jehovah (Isaiah 43:22-24)

George Santayana, a philosopher, said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” How true that statement is! Isaiah uses historical precedent to predict future end-time events. There are several reasons why he does this, most particularly as a way of showing a type or shadow of things to come. Additionally, he points out events that once happened that will happen again.

The children of Israel, God’s covenant sons and daughters, rebelled anciently against the Lord. In our modern days the covenant children are following a similar pattern. “And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief hath brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the book of Mormon, and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say but to do according to that which I have written that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom, otherwise their remaineth a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion, for shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay” (D&C 84:54-59).

#1—THE POETIC PENTAMETER

Throughout the writings of Isaiah, there is a consistent poetic pentameter that connects or links various words and ideas he conveys. This pentameter most commonly uses a dualistic form that compares or contrasts one thought with another. Below is an example of this dualistic pentameter from Isaiah 1:2-4. With each stanza, [blue](#) is used to represent one idea and [red](#) the other. See how he goes back and forth with this pentameter rhythm.

Hear, O [heavens](#),

and [give ear](#), O [earth](#);

for the Lord hath spoken;

See how he connects heaven and earth together with a similar invocation: “hear” and “give ear.” You can see how these two items are linked in a poetic pattern. He continues this pattern throughout his book. There are some sections that are written in prose without any pentameter, such as Isaiah 36-39. But most of his writing uses this comparative pentameter.

*I have nourished and brought up children,
and they have rebelled against me.*

Here, Isaiah uses a negative contrast rather than a comparison to show how he “nourished” and raised up “children”—or sons—yet they “rebelled” against him. The poetic pentameter is used to create a flow of ideas and can be negative or positive, comparing or contrasting, emphasizing or discriminating.

*The ox knoweth his owner,
and the ass his master's crib;
but Israel doth not know,
my people doth not consider.*

In verse 3 above, he uses the “ox” and “ass” as contrasts. One animal is kosher, and the other not. But this verse also links them to his “people,” who are the house of “Israel.” Notice how the ox and ass “know,” but Israel does not. He emphasizes this difference in saying that the dumb animals know their master and their home, but the children, who should know their own Master, do not.

*Ah sinful nation,
a people laden with iniquity,
a seed of evildoers,
children that are corrupters;
they have forsaken the Lord,
they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,
they are gone away backward.*

This verse, Isaiah 1:4, uses a common theme of “sin,” “iniquity,” “evildoers,” and “corrupters” to show how Israel has “forsaken” the Lord, “provoked [him] to anger,” and “gone away backward,” or apostatized. Notice how he links “nation” and “people” with “seed” and “children.” If you look at the previous verse, “people” were also linked with “Israel.”

Using this poetic pentameter helps us understand some of Isaiah’s meaning and how he links one concept to another either through comparisons or contrasts. The next two sections include two ways in which we can use this poetic pentameter to deepen our understanding of Isaiah’s intended meaning.

#2—ONES AND TWOS

Using the idea of a poetic pentameter, see how Isaiah contrasts the “ox” and “ass” with his “people” or “Israel.”

*The ox knoweth his owner,
and the ass his master's crib;
but Israel doth not know,
my people doth not consider.*

The obvious contrast comes quickly to view. The reference to an “ox” or bull, and an “ass” are symbolic in suggesting that these animals, clean and unclean, know to whom they belong and where to find provender, but the Lord’s own children cannot or do not know their own God.

Yet the symbolic meaning goes deeper. The ox is a kosher animal according to the Law of Moses. What would that symbolize in Isaiah’s writings? The use of animals throughout Isaiah’s writings usually represents people or types of people. In Isaiah’s writings, the ox is a clean animal representing a covenant person or a descendant of the house of Israel. In contrast, the ass is an unclean animal representing a non-covenant person or someone who is not of the lineage of Israel. Notice also how Isaiah only references one bull or ox, and not several. What symbolic meaning does that have?

Likewise, Isaiah references the ass or he-ass (חמור | ḥā-mōr’) in a singular sense. What does the singularity of this animal represent? How does that compare to a “nation” or “people” who have rebelled against God? It is interesting that this Hebrew word ass is used by Zechariah predicting the Lord’s triumphal arrival into Jerusalem. “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass [חמור | ḥā-mōr’], and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9).



SCRIPTURE REVIEW

IDENTIFY THE POETIC PENTAMETER

- Isaiah 1:16-20
- Isaiah 6
- Isaiah 11:1-10
- Isaiah 35
- Isaiah 52:1-2
- Isaiah 61:1-3



OTHER ANIMALS USED SYMBOLICALLY BY ISAIAH

In addition to the ox and ass, Isaiah uses animals to symbolize people and other ideas throughout his writings. Here are an example of kosher and non-kosher animals that he uses to describe covenant and non-covenant individuals.

KOSHER ANIMALS	NON-KOSHER ANIMALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beasts: usually bulls or cattle• Birds: specifically doves• Bulls/Bullocks/Oxen/Cows• Goats• Lambs• Rams/Sheep• Roes/Roebucks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asses• Bears• Beasts: usually wild animals• Birds: Owls, cranes, cormorants, vultures, etc.• Camels/Dromedaries• Dragons (probably a jackal or sea serpent)

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Identify the poetic pentameter in the scriptures above. What specific links do you see Isaiah draw through poetic pentameter?
2. How do these links help you understand Isaiah's meaning for those verses?
3. Does it change or amplify your understanding of the verses?
4. What are the different ways he uses comparisons and contrasts to explain his meaning?

NOTES

SYMBOLS OF ANIMALS

Isaiah uses animals to symbolize people and other ideas throughout his writings. Here are an example of kosher and non-kosher animals that he uses to describe covenant and non-covenant individuals. Below are only a few of the kosher and non-kosher animals represented in Isaiah's writings

KOSHER ANIMALS (COVENANT SYMBOLISM)

LAMBS

Lambs carry a deep symbolic meaning in the scriptures. Lambs were used as sacrificial animals in the ancient temples either as a burnt offering (a male lamb or young sheep without blemish), a peace offering, or a sin offering (a female lamb/sheep just old enough to butt without blemish). Sin offerings were performed for sins committed ignorantly or unintentionally.

Though lambs are young and playful, they also have a characteristic of submissiveness and meekness. As with all sacrificial animals, the lamb represents Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. This animal carries more iconic symbol of the Savior than other sacrificial animals. After baptizing the Savior, and "looking upon Jesus as he walked, [John] said, Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36).

The lamb can have a couple symbolic meanings in Isaiah depending on the context. These kosher animals carry a symbol of a covenant individual of the Lord. Isaiah uses four Hebrew words translated into English as "lamb." Each use may carry different symbolic meaning.

RAMS

Rams were used as sacrificial animals in the ancient temples. The Hebrew word **אַיִל** | *ä'-ēl* means *ram* and carries a connotation of strength or might. The word can also be translated as a strong tree, such as *an oak*. Symbolically, a ram can represent a mighty or strong man, whether literally or figuratively.



Rams were one of the animals used in ancient Israel as a burnt offering, a peace offering, or a trespass (guilt) offering. When presenting a trespass offering, only a ram was accepted. The trespass offering differed from the sin offering. Where one offered a sin offering for committing a transgression, the trespass offering related to the restitution and consequences of that sin. These were sins against God or that which belongs to him, such as sins against a firstborn, tithes, offerings given incorrectly, or gifts of inferior quality or value.

Rams may symbolize individuals who are of strong or mighty spiritual caliber, yet who are unrighteously offered upon the altars of rebellious Israel. Juxtaposed to those righteous disciples are those who are mighty and powerful, but rebellious. The ram and oak can symbolize those mighty covenant men and women who are unfaithful to their covenant with God. These are the individuals who in the last-day calamities will fall.

SHEEP

Sheep have a long-standing symbolic presence throughout the scriptures depicting the disciples of a leader. These may be disciples of Christ or some other shepherd. The Lord taught that ultimately there are only two churches or shepherds to follow. “And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are you? Behold, I say unto you, that the Devil is your shepherd” (Alma 5:39).

Sheep do not lead. They follow. Their characteristics are timidity, submissiveness, and gentleness. Rams or shepherds represent leaders. Sheep represent those who follow. The Hebrew word for sheep (צֹן | tsōn) derives from a root word that means *to migrate*. Aptly, sheep amble about, concerned only about their daily sustenance. In many ways they appear to be oblivious about their surroundings.

Sheep are vulnerable to wolves, lions, bears, and other predators or dangers. They rely upon the shepherds to lead and protect them. Even the Savior is represented as a sheep in reference to being led by the Father to his death, willing and submissive.

In Isaiah’s writing, there are two Hebrew words that are translated into English as “sheep.” One of these directly symbolizes Jesus Christ. Isaiah describes that event through his iconic imagery. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a **sheep** before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

All other references to sheep come from the Hebrew word צֹן | tsōn. This word comes from an unused Hebrew root word meaning *to wander*. These sheep symbolize those disciples of Christ who wander in their own ways. “All we like **sheep** have gone astray,” Isaiah says. “We have turned every one to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

BULLS

The bull or ox has deep symbolic significance in the ancient Hebrew culture. There are several words in Hebrew that translated into “bull,” “bullock,” or “ox.” Bullocks are young bulls. These animals were prescribed as one of the animals used in sacrificial offerings among the Israelites. They were specifically used in three types of offerings, the burnt offering, the peace offering, and the sin offering.

In the burnt and peace offerings, the children of Israel were instructed to bring animals from their herd (male and without blemish for burnt offerings) as sacrifice. The Hebrew word בָּקָר | bā-kār’ was the animal used in these sacrifices. This word technically means *cattle*. It can refer to a bull, steer, cow, bullock, heifer, or calf. Context determines the meaning of the word.

In sin offerings, the bull, particularly a young bullock, was offered. פָּר | pār is the Hebrew word primarily used for this sacrifice. This sacrifice called for a specific animal out of the herd. It had to be a young bull. This animal was used either for 1) the sins of a priest for either leading people astray or personal sins, or 2) for the nation when it strayed from the commandments.

Symbolically, these animals are clean or kosher and represent covenant individuals. These are people (whether righteous or not) who have made covenants with the Lord. As we see the story of Isaiah unfold, he uses these animals symbolically to embed underlying meaning in his message.



NONKOSHER ANIMALS (NON-COVENANT SYMBOLISM)

BIRDS

All of the mention of birds in Isaiah are found in Isaiah 34, with exception of a few occurrences, and each carries its own symbolic meaning. Some of those meanings are clear and some are not.

There are four Hebrew words that are translated into English as “owl” in Isaiah’s writings. Each refers to a separate animal and has subtly different contexts, yet all symbolize non-covenant individuals living in post-apocalyptic times. Some references may also symbolize dark entities or influences that occupy those desolated lands. Some of the translations of owl may be mistranslations, meaning Isaiah was describing some other animal besides an owl.

There are several other birds mentioned by Isaiah. Like the owls, some of these references to birds may be mistranslations referring to other non-avian animals. Whether they are birds or other animals, it does not significantly change what the interpretation may mean.

Owl (Heron), Cormorant (Pelican), and Bittern: The variety of birds mentioned here may represent the diversity of non-covenant individuals. Based on the context of this verse, these are people who will occupy the desolate and mournful lands that remain after the destruction of Idumea. Among other animals mentioned by Isaiah, “the **cormorant** and the **bittern** shall possess it; the **owl** also and the raven shall dwell in it; and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness” (Isaiah 34:11). It does not suggest an inheritance from the Lord, but a mournful place of refuge for wandering or outcast individuals.

Crane and Swallow: Both birds are only referenced once each by Isaiah. They are used in the same verse depicting the mourning and discontent of Hezekiah as he lay on his deathbed. “Like a **crane** or **swallow**, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward; O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me” (Isaiah 38:14). In this context, these birds are used symbolically to represent the mourning and lamentation of Hezekiah as he suffers from his illness. Isaiah uses the chattering or chirping of these birds as his symbolism rather than the birds themselves.

SERPENTS

The symbolism of a serpent or snake can be complex to discern because it can convey different meanings depending upon context. Serpents are symbolically subtle and crafty. In the scriptures, this idea originates from the story of our first ancestors in the Garden of Eden. Serpents have also been linked to wisdom, whether for righteous or nefarious purposes. The Lord told his disciples to be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

The serpent is first seen in scripture as a tempter to Adam and Eve and has been associated with subtle deceit since that time. It is a representation of evil and deception and can even represent Satan. God cursed the serpent (שָׂרָפָה | nā-ḥāsh) above all other animals and told the wily creature it must eat “dust” the remainder of its days (see Genesis 3:14).

Some common characteristics of snakes are their venomous bites and their forked or double tongues. Symbolically, these characteristics suggest injury, deceit, and lies. We see this more prominently as we read about specific snakes listed below. In a broad sense, the serpent can represent the great adversary that blasphemes God with his deception and lies, the antichrist.

As mentioned above, the serpent not only represents the adversary, but it can also represent the Lord’s servant,



particularly in regards to the “fiery” serpents (|רָפָסִים sā-rāf).

Many generations after Adam and Eve were tempted by the cunning serpent, the Israelites were plagued by poisonous serpents as they wandered in the desert. Many were bit and died from the venom. As inspired by God, Moses placed a bronze fiery serpent (a seraph) on a staff in the middle of the camp and told the house of Israel that whomever looked upon the staff would be healed. That staff represented the Savior and his healing powers, both physically and spiritually.

Why did Satan use the form of a serpent to deceive Adam and Eve? More than likely, the original symbolism of the snake may have represented the Savior. How clever of the that wily devil to distort from the beginning the symbol of the only one who could truly heal a broken people!

Throughout Isaiah’s writings he includes other serpents by specific names. They all carry a similar connotation of cunningness, subtlety, or wisdom, particularly with nefarious intent. They are clever and wily. The use of these serpents could have a couple symbolic references. Just as a serpent represents vile and malicious individuals, so also are the fruits of those people evil.

LIONS

Most of the occurrences of lion within Isaiah’s writings symbolize the presence of an aggressor afflicting or challenging the house of Israel. Most of these references are associated with the Assyrian army as it acts as the left arm of God afflicting rebellious Israel. There are four Hebrew words that are translated into English as “lion.”

There are two distinct narratives regarding lions. One is the violent aggressor that is used by the Lord to humble rebellious Israel. Isaiah tells a story of how the Lord will use the Assyrian tyrant as a force to humble the Lord’s people and the world. He uses many different words to symbolize this aggressor, one of which is the Lion.

Some of the symbolism comes from the sound of the lion’s roar, fierce and powerful. As an enemy force come upon the unsuspecting house of Israel, Isaiah reports the intense noise that comes with the invasion, “they shall roar like **young lions**; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry away safe, and none shall deliver” (Isaiah 5:28-29).

Isaiah describes a time when Assyria will also fall and the people of the earth will return to God. Then there will be a new harmony upon the earth. During that transition, the Lord will begin his gathering. He will gather the poor and needy, the simple and honest of the world. “And a highway shall be there; for a way shall be cast up, and it shall be called the way of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over upon it; but it shall be cast up for those who are clean, and the wayfaring men, though they are accounted fools, shall not err therein. No **lion** shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there” (Isaiah 35:9).

Then Isaiah describes one of the most iconic imageries of millennial peace as he depicts the lion peaceably sitting with the lamb. This comes from Isaiah 11 and 65 where Isaiah depicts a future where there is peace between all people and nations. “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the **young lion** and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the **lion** shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den.



#3—THE REBELLION OF ISRAEL

Isaiah says, “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward” (Isaiah 1:4).

Avraham Gileadi interpreted this passage as a generational decline in spiritual devotion.

A regression occurs from his people’s simply going ‘astray’ to their burdening themselves with ‘sin,’ which, over time, ends in outright ‘wrongdoing.’ That occurs collectively and generationally. The ‘offspring of wrongdoers’ turn into ‘perverse children,’ meaning that the rising generation has by now become thoroughly corrupt. Forsaking’ Jehovah and ‘spurning’ him finally become conscious and deliberate acts.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Isaiah 1:2-4
- Isaiah 43:22-28
- Isaiah 58:1-2
- Isaiah 59:9-15
- Isaiah 61:1-3, 10-11
- 3 Nephi 16:6-16
- D&C 84:54-59

Notice how Isaiah uses word-links within the poetic pentameter to compare the “nation” to his “people” and the house of Israel (see verse 3) and then to the “seed” and “children” (or sons, meaning covenant sons).

Additionally, he links through each line of the stanza a process of rebelling from God until they have apostatized. They were “sinful” and “laden with iniquity,” and then became outright “evildoers” and “corrupters.”

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. As covenant sons and daughters of God, how have we rebelled against him?
2. Isaiah predicts the covenant people will apostatize from God, or in his words, “go away backward.” Have we apostatized from God?
3. If so, how did that happen? If not, how do we prevent it?
4. Though the nation and people of God may have forsaken him, how can we individually return to the Lord and avoid condemnation?

NOTES

TO TURN AWAY FROM THE LORD

Isaiah uses the word אָחֹר | ä-hōr' in Isaiah 1:4, translated as "backward," and again in Isaiah 50:6, translated as "back." אָחֹר | ä-hōr' means *the back* or *backside* of a person or thing. Or it can mean *backward*. However, in a metaphorical sense, it can also be translated as *west* or *westward*. In Hebrew culture, the top of the map faces east, not north like maps today. And in their culture, God resides in and comes from the east. To face westward is to look away from God. It is another way of saying they have apostatized or turned their back on God.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Isaiah 1:4
- Isaiah 42:17
- Isaiah 50:6
- Isaiah 59:14

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. All of the scriptures in this section use the Hebrew word אָחֹר | ä-hōr' as described above. What symbolic patterns do you see in these scriptures?
2. How can these verses be applied to you?

NOTES



