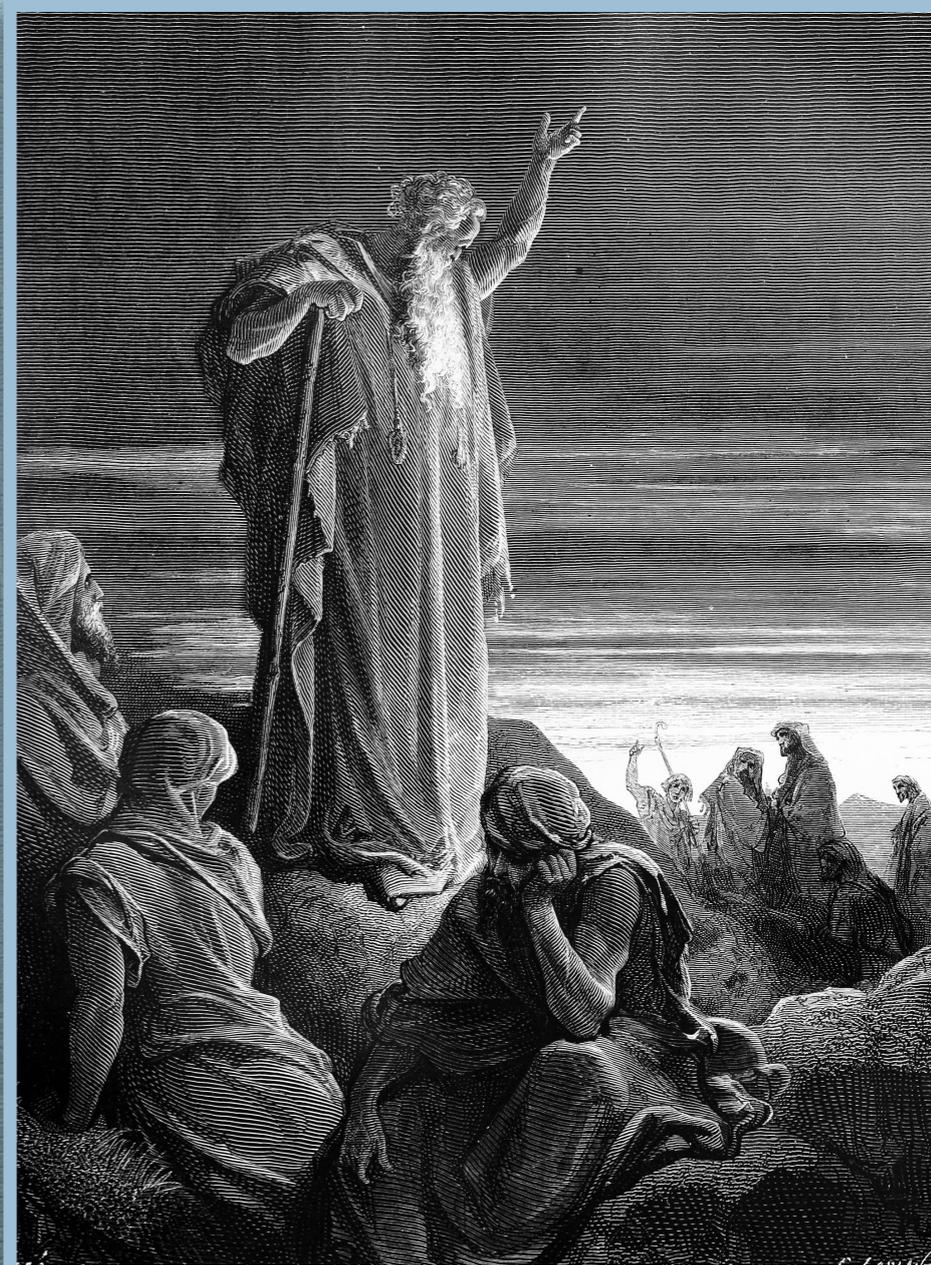


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Isaiah 26:1–10



# Lessons from the Old Testament

First Quarter 1892—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel

*Lesson 1—The Kingdom of Christ*

*Isaiah 11:1–10*

- ◆ Bible
- ◆ *SDA BC Isaiah*—Edwin R. Thiele
- ◆ *Isaiah the Gospel Prophet*—M. L. Andreasen
- ◆ *Prophets and Kings*—Ellen G. White

# Lessons From the Book of Isaiah

## Introduction

ISAIAH, whose name signifies "Jehovah is salvation," is one of the four so-called major prophets. He lived in Jerusalem, and was closely connected with the court, probably court preacher. He was of royal blood, and tradition makes him the cousin of King Uzziah. His father, Amoz, of whom we know nothing beyond his name, should not be confused with the prophet Amos, to whom he was not related.

Very little is known of Isaiah's early life. The schools of the prophets were in existence in his day, and he may have attended them, but of this nothing certain is known. That he had a good education, whether he received it in the prophetic schools or in Jerusalem, is testified to abundantly by his writings, which show not only a profound grasp of spiritual values, but also reveal a literary culture that places him in the very front rank of Old Testament writers. He was married and had two sons, to whom he gave symbolic names: Shear-jashub, "a remnant shall return" (Isa. 7:3); and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "hastening to the spoil! hurrying to the prey!" Isa. 8:2, 3.

Isaiah was a prophet of righteousness, of holiness, of justice. He was a prophet of faith, of courage, of consecration. His was a ministry of great earnestness and boldness coupled with deep spirituality and profound reverence. His hatred of sin was deep, intense, uncompromising; his conception of God, lofty, reverential, awesome. Injustice, covetousness, pride, hypocrisy, he denounced

Isaiah lived in a time that called for courage as well as conviction, for action as well as faith. He was not only prophet, but statesman. Four definite invasions of the land by Assyria took place during Isaiah's active ministry: the first by Tiglath-Pileser III, in 734-732 B. C.; the second by Shalmaneser IV and Sargon II, in 725-720, at which time Samaria fell; the third by Sargon, in 712-710; and the fourth by Sennacherib, in 701. In each of these political crises Isaiah bore a prominent part, and his sound advice, unflinching courage, clear vision, and abounding faith proved no small factor in saving Judah, at least for a century more, from the fate that overtook the northern kingdom — Israel.

Around 720 BCE, Israel was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The records of Assyrian king Sargon II indicate that he deported 27,290 Israelites to Mesopotamia.



Daniel Ventura

Ruins of royal palace in Samaria, capital of Israel

Different writers speak of the lofty and majestic calmness, the energy and liveliness, of the style of Isaiah. He is called an expert in the use of images, of epigrams and metaphors. His descriptions are vivid with a wonderful variety of style. His Hebrew is of the purest and best, his vocabulary larger than that of any other book of the Bible.

*Historical Setting.* The book of Isaiah is definitely dated, and the period from which it comes is well known in Near Eastern history. Isaiah was called to his prophetic office prior to the time he was accorded the vision of divine glory recorded in ch. 6, and carried on his ministry during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isa. 1:1). Uzziah died about the year 739 and Hezekiah died in 686, succeeded by his son Manasseh. The **kings of Assyria** during this period were as follows: **Tiglath-pileser III** (745–727), **Shalmaneser V** (727–722), Sargon II (722–705), **Sennacherib** (705–681), and **Esarhaddon** (681–669). These kings were the most powerful rulers Assyria ever produced. Thus Isaiah did his work during the height of Assyrian supremacy, when it appeared that Assyria might soon gain complete control of the Eastern world. Tiglath-pileser III began a series of campaigns against the surrounding nations, as a result of which more and more of the Near East was brought under Assyrian control. Assyria came to be regarded as the great terror of the world, and no country appeared strong enough to withstand her might. (*SDA BC*)

Although the records of **Shalmaneser V** are very incomplete, it is known that his major campaign was against the nation of Israel. He besieged Samaria for three years, 725 to 723 inclusive, when the city was taken (723 / 722) and the nation of Israel disappeared forever. (Ibid.)

**Sargon II** may have been in command of the army that took Samaria in 723/722. He began to reign in 722/721 and became, perhaps, the greatest military monarch of Assyrian history. He engaged in a series of campaigns against the northeast, Babylonia, the northwest, and the Mediterranean coastlands. In 720 he put down uprisings in the northwest and west, and in 715 he subdued certain Arab tribes and received tribute from various obscure Egyptian rulers. In 711 he sent his tartan to put down an uprising in Ashdod (cf. Isa. 20:1). In 709 Sargon became king of Babylon. (Ibid.)

# 2 Kings 18:17

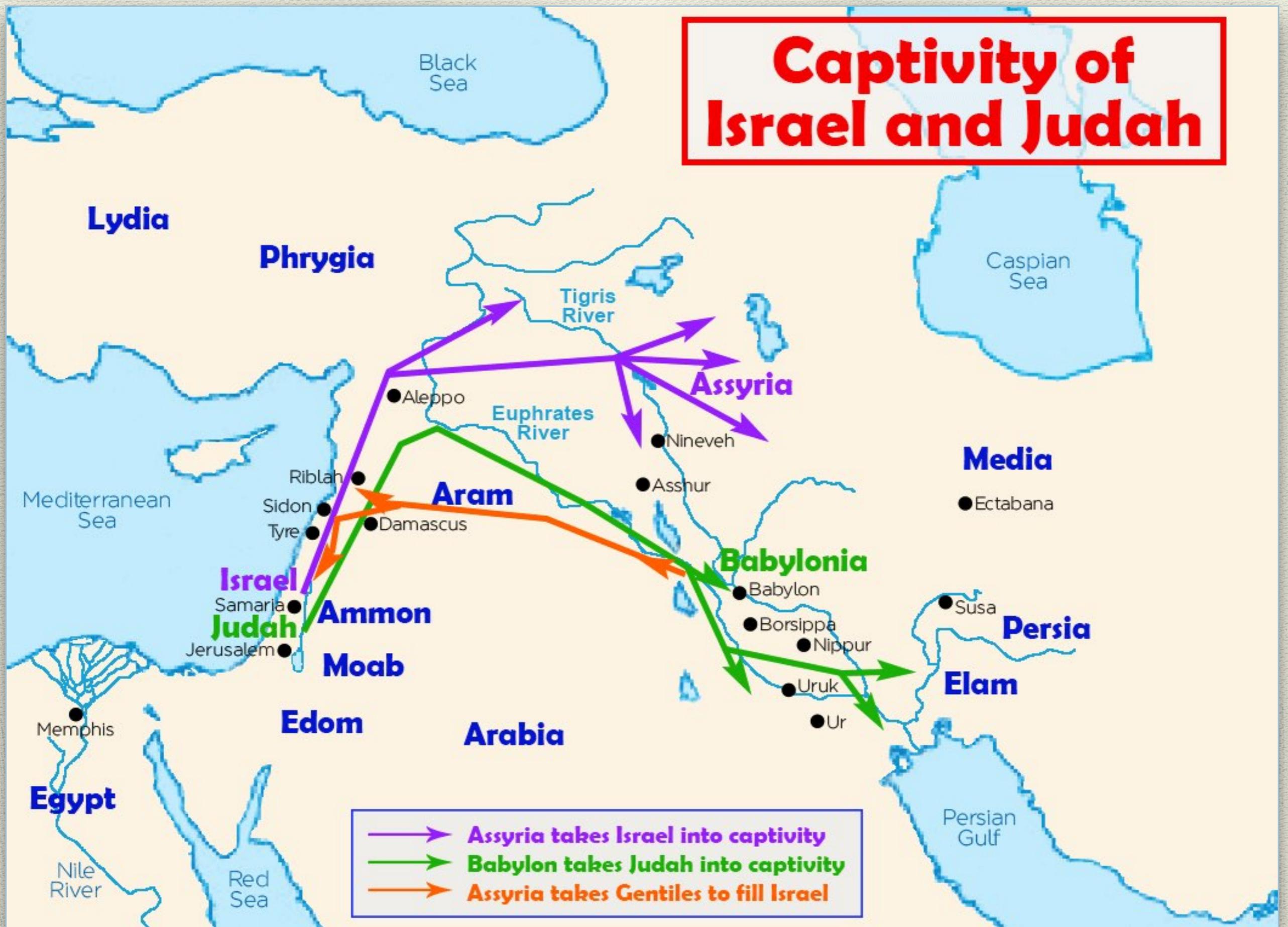
- ◆ *Tartan*—This is the title of the chief general of the Assyrian armies. (*SDA BC*)
- ◆ *Rabsaris*. This was the title of a high officer of the Assyrian court, probably the “chief eunuch.” (*Ibid.*)
- ◆ *Rab-shakeh*. The Rabshakeh was another important Assyrian official, the chief cupbearer. (*Ibid.*)

**Sennacherib** began his reign in 705, and in 703 brought about the defeat of Merodach-baladan of Babylon. In 701 he embarked upon his famous “third campaign,” which took him against Phoenicia, Philistia, and Judah. Practically all Asiatic countries in the Mediterranean area, including Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were subdued and forced to pay tribute. The campaign, however, was not an unqualified success, owing to the fact that Jerusalem was not taken. Sennacherib evidently returned to the west in another campaign not mentioned in Assyrian records, in which he again threatened Jerusalem, but was forced to return to Assyria after the annihilation of his army by an angel of the Lord (Isa. 37:36, 37). (*SDA BC*)

*Theme.* Isaiah lived in a troubled world. For both Judah and Israel it was an era of peril and crisis. The people of God had fallen deeply into ways of sin. Under Azariah (Uzziah) in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel both nations had grown strong and prosperous. But material prosperity brought spiritual decline. The people forsook God and His ways of righteousness. Social and moral conditions were much the same in both nations. Everywhere there was miscarriage of justice, for magistrates judged for reward and rulers were primarily interested in pleasure and personal gain. Greed, avarice, and vice were the order of the day. As the rich became richer the poor became poorer, many sank into the depths of poverty and were reduced to the status of slaves. The social and moral conditions of the times are graphically depicted by Isaiah and his contemporaries, Micah, Amos, and Hosea. Many of the people forsook the worship of Jehovah and followed the heathen gods. Others clung to the outward forms of religion but knew nothing of its true meaning and power. (Ibid.)

Isaiah is appropriately called the Messianic prophet. No other seems to have had so clear a picture of the holiness and greatness of God, of the person and mission of Christ, and of God's glorious purpose for His church. Isaiah is rightly regarded as the king of Israel's celebrated prophets, and his writings the masterpiece of all prophetic writings. (Ibid.)

# Captivity of Israel and Judah



Oppression, corruption, and injustice were the order of the day. The rich "sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes." Amos 2:6. Moral conditions were worse than ever. Prosperity as well as adversity had failed to bring God's people to their senses. The Lord could do nothing to save them. Destruction was determined. "I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish," said the Lord. Amos 3:15. They "that lie upon beds of ivory, . . . and eat the lambs out of the flock; . . . that drink wine in bowls, . . . but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph: . . . now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed." "Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Amos 6:4-7; 4:12.

The situation was not much better in Judah. There was outward prosperity, as in Israel; but prosperity led to the same result. God had "marvelously helped" Uzziah, and "as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." 2 Chron. 26:15, 5. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense." Verse 16. This was against the Lord's plain command, and the king was smitten with that dread disease, leprosy. Being thus shut off from contact with the people, he associated with him on the throne Jotham,

It was during this time that Isaiah began his prophetic ministry. He knew the conditions in northern Israel, and the messages that had been sent through Amos and Hosea. He saw that the same conditions prevailed in Judah that had brought the northern kingdom to the brink of ruin, and he well knew that Judah could not escape the fate that threatened Israel unless there was deep repentance and a genuine revival of godliness. To him the case seemed almost hopeless. What could he, a young man, do? The rich were grinding "the faces of the poor," they were joining "house to house" and "field to field," drinking and carousing; the women were interested only in finery and apparel; the whole land was "full of idols." Isa. 3: 15; 5: 8, 11, 12; 3: 16-24; 2: 8. The king, Jotham, though good compared to some others, was a weakling, under the influence of his harem; and even the judges were corrupt. Isa. 3: 12; 10: 1, 2. Uzziah had been a restraining influence, but he was now a leper, and apparently unrepentant, as the leprosy still clung to him. And furthermore, it was reported that he could not live long. What would then happen?

It was "in the year that King Uzziah died" (Isa. 6:1) that Isaiah had his first vision. It was a time of great discouragement and dark forebodings. Isaiah shrank from the task before him, for it seemed so utterly hopeless. Judah was fast following in the footsteps of Israel, and who could stop them? If Hosea and Amos had not been able to hold Israel in check, how could anything be done to save Judah? Probably also a presentiment of his rejection by king and people came to Isaiah, and he would most certainly know that his messages would not be accepted by the priests any more than were those of Amos. Amos 7:10-13. What Judah needed was a prophet that would stir the conscience of the people and rouse them from their lethargy, preparing them for the crisis before them. And Isaiah was very doubtful that he was the man. In fact, he felt that he was not. He was "undone." Isa. 6:5.

- ◆ “Perilous Times,” EGW, *RH* April 25, 1872, p. 146
- ◆ “Those among Sabbath-keepers who have been unwilling to make any sacrifice, but have yielded to the influence of the world, are to be tested and proved. The perils of the last days are upon us, and a trial is before the young which they have not anticipated. They are to be brought into most distressing perplexity. The genuineness of their faith will be proved. They profess to be looking for the coming of the Son of Man, yet some of them have been a miserable example to unbelievers. They have not been willing to give up the **world**, but have united with them, have attended picnics, and other gatherings of pleasure, flattering themselves that they were engaging in innocent amusement. Yet I was shown that it was **just such indulgences that separate them from God, and make them children of the world**. God owns not the pleasure or amusement-seeker as his **follower**. **He has given us no such example. Those only who are self-denying, and who live a life of sobriety, humility and holiness, are true followers** of Jesus; and such cannot engage in, and enjoy, the frivolous, empty conversation of the lovers of the world” (par. 3).
- ◆ “Isa. 3 was presented before me. I was shown that this prophecy has its application to these last days; and the reproofs are given to the daughters of Zion who have thought only of appearance and display. Read verse 25: ‘Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.’ I was shown that this scripture **will be strictly fulfilled**. Young men and women professing to be Christians, yet having no Christian experience, and having borne no burdens, and felt no individual responsibility, are to be proved. They will be brought low in the dust, and long for an experience in the things of God which they failed to obtain” (par. 4).



# Isaiah 11:1–10

*A Branch.* The preceding chapter presents a picture of judgment involving both Assyria and Judah. The beautiful and flourishing “trees” of Judah would be cut down because of iniquity. The picture resembles that of Dan. 4:10–26, where Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom are likened to a stately tree cut down by divine judgment, leaving only the stump of the tree. The Lord had great plans for the Hebrew nation when it was first established. It was His purpose that it should be a messenger of light and truth to the world, and that its beneficent influence should continue to grow until it embraced the earth and brought life and peace to all men. But because of disobedience the nation was to be humbled and taken captive. (*SDA BC*)

Nevertheless, through the seed of David a King would arise and accomplish what David and his successors on the throne of Judah had thus far failed to accomplish. When the nation had been cut down, and only a stump, as it were, remained, there would spring forth from the seemingly lifeless roots a Branch that would grow and flourish (see Isa. 4:2; 53:2; Rev. 5:5; 22:16). It would become a “tree” of righteousness, and ultimately fill the entire earth, giving peace and gladness to all mankind. The picture thus given is one of the coming golden age of joy and splendor, when all the earth will rejoice in righteousness and the enemies of right and peace will be utterly and eternally laid low. To this scene Isaiah returns again and again (see chs. 35:6–10; 65:17–25; 66:22, 23). The picture of Jesus as the righteous Branch is also found in Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:15–17; Zech. 3:8; 6:12, 13. For the dual nature of the promise made to David, see on Deut. 18:15. (*SDA BC*)

*The Gentiles.* This is a prophecy of Christ and of the giving of the gospel to all the world. In every part of the earth the Messiah will be held up before men and women as the means of salvation from sin. Messengers of Christ will stand before men and women as His representatives, pointing to Him as the ensign to guide the peoples of earth in the way of light and blessing. (SDA BC)

*11. The second time.* That is, in contrast with the first time, the original deliverance from Egypt. The Hebrews always looked back with joy upon their release from the bondage of Egypt and their entry into the Promised Land. Now there was to be another deliverance, from Babylonian captivity. God designed that when the Jews returned from captivity, having learned the lessons He intended them to learn, they would quickly measure up to His glorious plan for them as a nation. Thus the world would soon be prepared for the coming of Messiah and the proclamation of the gospel. But again Israel failed, and the deliverance here promised will be accomplished at the end of the world, when God sets His hand to deliver His people from this evil world and to lead them into the heavenly Canaan. (*SDA BC*)

*12. Israel ... Judah.* Insofar as the literal nations of Israel and Judah were concerned, the literal fulfillment of the promise here made came with the restoration from Babylonian captivity. However, their failure to live up to the glorious privileges vouchsafed to them upon return from captivity made their rejection as a nation inevitable. Therefore, in principle, this promise is to be fulfilled to spiritual Israel, the church. Accordingly, these words point to the great work of deliverance from sin now going on in every part of the world. Everywhere men and women are acting as ensigns, or beacons, for heaven, guiding men and women into the way of light and truth. The work now being witnessed is in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, and is an earnest of greater things yet to come.

*(SDA BC)*

*12. Four corners.* The Dead Sea scroll 1QIs<sup>a</sup> lacks the word “four.” (SDA BC)

Isaiah 11:1-9. While He is God, He is also man, for He shall come from "the stem of Jesse." Verse 1. A sevenfold measure of the spirit shall rest upon Him. Verse 2. This will enable Him to judge motives, and not be guided merely by what He sees or hears. Verse 3. He will at last exterminate all the wicked from the earth. Verse 4. Then shall begin that blessed reign of righteousness when even the animal creation shall be at peace and the little child shall be safe. Verses 6-8. There shall be none left to hurt or destroy, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. Verse 9.

Isaiah 10:20-23. It will, however, only be a "remnant" that will have part in this. Literal Israel may be as many as the sands of the sea, but only a remnant among them shall return.

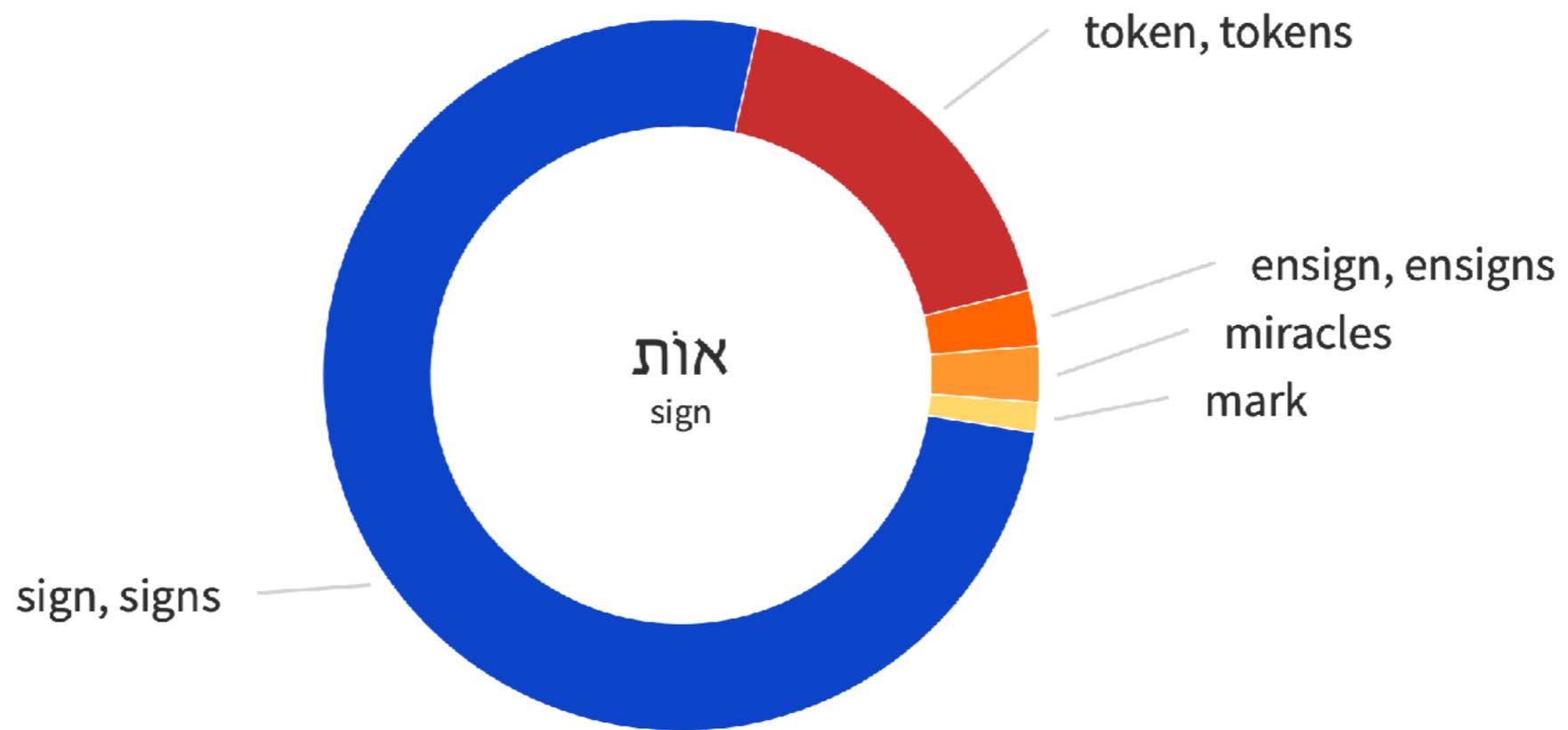
Isaiah 11:10-16. This remnant shall not come from any one country, but from the four corners of the earth. Verses 11, 12. This, however, will not cause any national feeling. One shall not vex another, and there shall be no envy. Verse 13. They shall stand together as they attack their common enemies. Verse 14. God will open the way for them as in olden times He parted the Red Sea. Verses 15, 16.

# Ensign

- ◆ Isaiah 11:10, 12—*nēs*— generally means a rallying point or standard which drew people together for some common action or for the communication of important information. (*TWOT*)
- ◆ In the wilderness, Moses lifted up among the people a bronze serpent set upon a pole (*nēs*) (Num 21:8–9).
- ◆ Psalm 74:4—ensigns, signs—*'ôt* and *'ôt*

*’ôṭ* is the general word for “sign,” and it covers the entire range of the English term. It includes what amounts to a “standard” (Num 2:2) and also such important concepts as the rainbow “sign” to Noah (Gen 9:12–13, 17). *’ôṭ* first occurs in Gen 1:14, where it refers to the lights in the heavens serving as “signs” to distinguish the seasons.

The Lord set a “mark” on Cain (Gen. 4:15). The rainbow is a sign (token) of the covenant of God (Gen. 9:12), and circumcision is a “sign” (Gen. 17:11). The Sabbath is a “sign” (Ex. 31:13). These are all *’ôṭ*. Most of the eighty occurrences of *’ôṭ* refers to “miraculous signs.” All the plagues on the Egyptians are called “signs.” The word *’ôṭ* is used in Isaiah’s prophecy to Ahaz (7:14). The sun’s shadow on the sundial was a “sign” to King Hezekiah (II Kgs. 20:8–11; Isa. 38:7), and God showed Gideon a “sign” by igniting the offered food (Jud. 6:17).



’*ô*t

An ensign is a banner or a standard. Christ is spoken of in Isaiah 11:10, 12 as an ensign, or a rallying point. In verse 12, Christ sets up an ensign to rally his people.

The enemies also have their banner—Psalm 74:4.

And the remnant have a banner: “God has placed in our hands a banner upon which is inscribed: ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ Revelation 14:12. This is a distinct, separating message, a message that is to give no uncertain sound. It is to lead the people away from the broken cisterns that contain no water, to the unfailing Fountain of the water of life” (7T 150.2).

Christ is our example. The determination of antichrist to carry out the rebellion he began in heaven will continue to work in the children of disobedience. Their envy and hatred against those who obey the fourth commandment will wax more and more bitter. But the people of God are not to hide their **banner**. They are not to ignore the commandments of God and, in order to have an easy time, go with the multitude to do evil. (9T 230.2)

Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign [ 'ô $t$ ] between me and you throughout your generations; (Exodus 31:13)

Ps. 74 was possibly composed after the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It depicts the misery of the Jews, with particular emphasis upon the destruction of the Temple. The psalm should be compared with its companion, Ps. 79, which places emphasis upon the slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (*SDA BC*)



# Old Testament Prophecies of Jesus, based on AA pp. 222.1– 227.2

Genesis 3:15

Genesis 22:18

Galatians 3:16

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18

Genesis 49:10

Isaiah 11:1, 2

Isaiah 55:3–5

Isaiah 61:1–3

Isaiah 42:1–4

Isaiah 50:6

Isaiah 53

Isaiah 7:14

Jeremiah 23:5–6

Jeremiah 33:15–17

Micah 5:1–2

Psalms 22:6–8

Psalms 22:17–18

Psalms 69:8, 9, 20, 21

Psalms 16:9–10

Zechariah 13:6

- ◆ Daniel 8:14—And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.
- ◆ The scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and the central pillar of the advent faith was the declaration: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Daniel 8:14. (GC 409.1)
- ◆ Cleansed—*tsadaq*—The services in the wilderness tabernacle and in the Temple consisted of two main divisions, the daily and the yearly. Christ’s daily ministration as our high priest was typified in the daily services. The annual Day of Atonement typified a work that Christ would undertake in heaven. For a detailed discussion GC 418–432. The prophecy of Dan. 8:14 announces the time for the beginning of this special work—the investigative judgment.
- ◆ At what time—2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Revelation 22:12
- ◆ Isaiah 11:4, 5—righteousness—*tsadaq*—adherence to what is right
- ◆ Faithfulness—*’ěmûnâh*—steadfastness, firmness, as a peg driven in a hole

X – That the sanctuary of the new covenant is the tabernacle of God in heaven, of which Paul speaks in Hebrews 8 and onward, and of which our Lord, as great high priest, is minister; that this sanctuary is the antitype of the Mosaic tabernacle, and that the priestly work of our Lord, connected therewith, is the antitype of the work of the Jewish priests of the former dispensation (Heb. 8:1–5, etc.); that this, and not the earth, is the sanctuary to be cleansed at the end of the two thousand and three hundred days, what is termed its cleansing being in this case, as in the type, simply the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, to finish the round of service connected therewith, by making the atonement and removing from the sanctuary the sins which had been transferred to it by means of the ministration in the first apartment (Lev. 16; Heb. 9:22, 23); and that this work in the antitype, **beginning in 1844**, consists in actually blotting out the sins of believers (Acts 3:19), and occupies a brief but indefinite space of time, at the conclusion of which the work of mercy for the world will be finished, and the second advent of Christ will take place. (1889 Fundamental Principle)

- ◆ When the work of investigation shall be ended, when the cases of those who in all ages have professed to be followers of Christ have been examined and decided, then, and not till then, probation will close, and the door of mercy will be shut. Thus in the one short sentence, “They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut,” we are carried down through the Saviour’s final ministration, to the time when the great work for man’s salvation shall be completed. (GC 428.2)
- ◆ Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. **Soon—none know how soon**—it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour’s admonition: “Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.” Mark 13:33. “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” Revelation 3:3. (GC 490.1; also GC88)