
ISAIAH 28-29

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INTRODUCTION

After his collection of “burdens” against the nations around Judah and Judah itself, Isaiah next inserted a style of writing that would be particularly popular in the years just before and after the Savior’s mortal ministry and have its best representation in the Bible in John’s revelation. An apocalyptic vision of the final destiny of the earth and of mankind is a powerful expression of God’s ultimate triumph and the inheritance of the obedient and faithful.

Though different in tone than 13-23, chapters 24-27 are a continuation of that section, the culmination of judgments on individual nations into a collective judgment on the whole world.

Then Isaiah turned his voice back to Israel and Judah, teaching them not to trust in the arm of flesh in its many forms but instead to seek the Lord and his justice.

Chapters 28-35 are made up of five sections, each beginning with the Hebrew *hōy*, translated “Woe” in the KJV, though it is more of a greeting or attention-getting call (see 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; and 33:1). While earlier chapters were mostly during the time of king Ahaz—as well as 28-29—most of the materials in chapters 30-35 were likely recorded during the time of Hezekiah, culminating in the historical section in 36-39.

Chapter 28 leaves the apocalyptic for the short-term condemnation of Israel’s sins. Addressing the northern kingdom’s leaders, Isaiah likens them to drunks and fading flowers, and warns them of a coming destruction. Then he turns his attention to Judah with a similar message.

Chapter 29 continues the thoughts of 28. After sadly promising Judah’s destruction as well, Isaiah offers some wonderful promises of mercy and blessings, through sacred scripture hid up in the ground.

OUTLINE

Isaiah can be broken into eight sections:

1. Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (1-12)
2. Judgment on Other Nations (13-23)
3. Redemption of Israel (24-27)
4. Trust in God, Not Nations (28-35)
5. Historical Recitation (36-39)
6. The Return from Captivity (40-48)
7. The Suffering Servant (49-55)
8. Future Blessings (56-66)

This is an outline for chapters 24-35, of which this lesson is a part:

1. Redemption of Israel: Isaiah’s Apocalypse (24-27)
 - a. The earth is devastated (24)
 - b. First song of thanks (25)
 - c. Second song of thanks (26:1-19)
 - d. Chastisements and final blessings (26:20 – 27:13)
2. Trust in God, Not Nations (28-35)
 - a. Drunken leaders and a farmer (28)
 - b. A voice from the dust (29)
 - c. Egyptian supporters (30)
 - d. God protects his people (31-32)
 - e. The Second Coming (33)
 - f. A cry for justice (34-35)

DRUNKEN LEADERS AND A FARMER (28)

Isaiah expresses judgment on Ephraim, the northern kingdom of Israel, which was captured by Assyria during Hezekiah's reign. Then he reminds Judah that they are ripe for the same judgment. Their treaties with Egypt are instead a pact with Sheol and will bring disaster in the end. The prophet ends with a comparison of the Lord's wisdom to the workings of a farmer who knows how to plow and sow to get the greatest yield.

DESTRUCTION OF EPHRAIM (28:1-8)

28:1 **Woe.** Hebrew *hōy*, this is a call of greeting or an invitation to come. It occurs six times in chapters 28-33 and may be a call to come to trial.

28:1 **crown of pride.** This phrase likely has two meanings. First, the city of Samaria, the capital of Ephraim, was a beautiful city on a hill, as a crown to the kingdom of Israel. The leaders of the country also wore crowns in their great pride.

28:1 **the drunkards of Ephraim.** Ephraim was the leading tribe of the northern kingdom of Israel. That kingdom was destroyed in Isaiah's lifetime; in this chapter, he prophesied of that destruction. Today we think highly of Ephraim for its role in establishing the Church in the latter days, but here Ephraim is a drunkard (verses 1, 3); a fading flower (verses 1, 4); a table full of vomit (verse 8).

28:1 **a fading flower.** While the metaphor is clear enough—we've all seen a cut flower fading away until it is dead—this phrase likely refers to a garland of flowers worn by the drunken leaders as a symbol of their celebration. They rejoice in their strength and power, but like the flower, it will fade away and leave them lifeless and unable to recover.

28:1 **the fat valleys.** Israel had great agricultural lands, productive and rich, allowing them to produce great crops. The drunken celebrants sat looking over the worldly wealth, adding to their rejoicing.

28:2 **a mighty and strong one.** The nation used by the Lord to humble Israel was Assyria, who came on them like a storm or flood, overwhelming them and casting them down.

28:3 **the crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim.** Repeated from verse 1 for emphasis, this completes the idea that the mighty and strong one will cast down with his hand and tread over with his feet, representing total destruction.

28:4 **the hasty fruit.** Often, the early fruit of the season is the best fruit, the flavor enhanced by the long wait of winter until we can enjoy that first wonderful taste of the season. So the "hasty fruit" may not sound like some kind of judgment, which is the theme of these verses. But it's not the fruit Isaiah draws our attention to, rather the way it is quickly devoured. In other words, the glory of Samaria will be quickly eaten up by the attacking Assyrians.

28:5 **In that day.** For two verses, the prophet looks away momentarily from judgment to a day of triumph, providing "hope as a surprise" (Motyer, 230).

28:5 **a crown of glory.** Keeping the metaphor but shifting gears, Isaiah speaks of those who remove the "crown of pride" in the last days and worship the Lord in humility will receive and even greater wreath of victory, one of glory and beauty that is placed there by the Lord himself.

28:6 **a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment.** "Judgment" in the KJV can have many meanings. This verse is probably better translated, 'And for a spirit of justice to him that renders judgments.' In other words, judgments will be equitable and fair.

28:7 **wine/strong drink.** Returning to the drunken concept of verses 1 and 3, the leaders are portrayed as someone who are not just physically inebriated but spiritually impaired, including the (idolatrous) priest and the (false) prophet, causing them to stumble and not see clearly.

28:8 **tables are full of vomit.** The drunken leaders have thrown up on the tables that were covered with the foods of their feast. Now it is only filthiness, brought about by their own excessive indulgence, stupidity, and sin.

LINE UPON LINE (28:9-13)

2 Nephi 28:30 captures the meaning of these verses in Nephi's inspired *targum*: "For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have."

28:9 ***weaned from the milk***. The Lord asked, who can he teach that will understand (implying that it is not the drunken leaders from the previous verses)? The answer is someone proverbially 'weaned' from the basics and ready to learn important eternal truths.

28:10 ***precept upon precept; line upon line***. Knowledge is gained a step at a time, with past learning allowing greater knowledge to follow. The Lord will reveal to us what we can take in, then reveal more as we show our willingness to obey what we were previously taught. The metaphor of "line upon line" refers to the use of a measuring line in building, where a string is set to mark the tops of the stones, that they'll all be straight. As each row is completed, the string is moved up, line upon line, to build the whole wall.

Many believe that these verses are the prophet recalling the words of the people mocking his ministry. If so, then verse 10 may echo the words of his accusers. In Hebrew, the repetition is *šāw lāšāw, šāw lāšāw, qāw lāqāw, qāw lāqāw*, giving the feeling of 'blah, blah, blah, blah' (indeed, the French Bible even writes it "Blablabla blablabla"). Not that Isaiah's words were not true principles about eternal and personal progression, but the mockers repeat Isaiah's prophetic and poetic words in a tone of disdain.

28:11 ***with stammering lips***. The Lord will send messengers to the people to teach them who might appear weak or uneducated from a worldly perspective. So their mocking of Isaiah made him look like one with stammering lips.

28:12 ***This is the rest***. The messenger cries out to the people where they can find rest and repose from the trials of the world, but they choose not to listen. The theme of where to find rest is developed starting in verse. 16.

28:13 ***fall backward***. Those who don't listen to the Lord's messengers, like Isaiah preaching to them line upon line, will end up falling down, being broken, captured, and taken away, as was Ephraim to Assyria.

OVERFLOWING SCOURGE (28:14-22)

Having castigated the northern kingdom of Israel thoroughly, Isaiah then turned to the southern kingdom of Judah, lest they believe that the Lord was somehow overlooking their sins. In these words, he speaks of an "overflowing scourge" that will come upon the people. The scourge is the result of their rejection of the Lord and reliance on worldly powers.

28:14 ***in Jerusalem***. Perhaps Isaiah's listeners in Judah grew smug as he railed on Ephraim. But he gets their attention back, calling the leaders of Judah "scornful men" which could be translated "scoffers" (NIV and NASB).

28:15 ***We have made a covenant with death, and with hell***. These are not the words of the people but Isaiah's judgment of their actions. Judah made a covenant with Egypt against Assyria, hoping Egypt would save them. But the Lord says it will end in death, with their souls going down to hell or *she'ol*, the resting place of the dead.

28:15 ***the overflowing scourge***. A "scourge" is a whip; "overflowing" can also mean 'overwhelming.' The people are saying that the punishment inflicted by the Assyrians on other nations will pass them by because of their "covenant with death," meaning their treaty with Egypt, which they have achieved with their lies and craftiness. The Lord used a similar term, "desolating scourge," to portray events in the last days (D&C 5:19).

28:16 ***I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone***. Continuing the building metaphor of verse 10, the Savior is the "sure foundation," the "tried stone" that can withstand the pressure and against which other stones can be measured, and the "precious corner stone" that makes it possible to build a great building.

28:16 ***he that believeth shall not make haste***. Peter quoted this verse but with a different ending: "... and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6) as did Paul: "... and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 9:33). The difference between "make haste" in the KJV and

“ashamed” in Hebrew is only the first letter; the Septuagint (LXX) for this verse reads “be ashamed,” which is probably what Peter and Paul were quoting.

28:17 ***I lay to the line.*** Or, “I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level” (NASB). Still using construction metaphors, Isaiah compares justice and righteousness, the prophet’s two favorite attributes, to the exactness of building. The “line” here is the same as verse 10, *qāw*.

28:17 ***hail/waters.*** Hail and floods are under the Lord’s control, so he uses them to exact his judgments and they represent his power and sovereignty.

28:18 ***ye shall be trodden down.*** Just the opposite of their expectations, the scourge of Assyria will come in and tread them down when their covenant with Egypt fails.

28:19 ***morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night.*** The overflowing scourge will continue day after day, 24x7.

28:19 ***it shall be a vexation only to understand.*** Or, “Nothing but fear will make you understand what you hear” (NJB). No one believes Isaiah’s words until they see them actually happening and fear grips their hearts.

28:20 ***the bed is shorter.*** The imagery returns to that of verse 12 where rest was offered but refused. Just as a short bed is uncomfortable and a blanket that is too small makes it hard to stay warm, both making rest difficult, so the wicked Jewish leaders will find themselves unable to find rest from the Assyrian attack.

28:21 ***Perazin/Gibeon.*** Both of these are examples of victories in Israel’s past that are attributed to the Lord, the first with David (2 Samuel 5:17-21) and the second with Joshua (Joshua 10; though it could also be Davidic with 2 Samuel 5:22-25). Thus will the Lord provide victory at the end for his people.

28:22 ***be ye not mockers.*** Don’t mock the covenants of God or the “chains” (NIV) of your sinfulness will be made even stronger.

28:22 ***a consumption.*** A completion or full destruction.

28:22 ***upon the whole earth.*** Not the entire planet but the whole land (Hebrew *ʾāreṣ*) of Israel and Judah.

PARABLE OF THE FARMER (28:23-29)

These verses are a parable of how God works with various people, treating each according to his own wisdom in the way that will bring the best harvest.

28:23 ***Give ye ear, and hear my voice.*** Or, “Listen closely to my words, be attentive, understand what I am saying” (NJB). The Lord really wants the people to pay attention to his next words.

28:24 ***Doth the plowman plow all day.*** The farmer performs different activities at different times—sometimes plowing to prepare the ground, sometimes planting the seeds, finally harvesting. If he spent all his time plowing, the seeds would get planted and never grow.

28:25 ***fitches/cumin/wheat/barley/rie.*** We might call these today (respectively) dill (or caraway or black cummin), cummin, wheat, barley, and spelt. Each type of seed has to be planted a certain way at a certain time in the right place in the garden in order to maximize the harvest.

28:26 ***God doth instruct him to discretion.*** God has taught the farmer these principles of successful horticulture: “the Creator opening his book of creation and revealing his truth” (Motyer, 235), but thereby revealing himself and the wisdom he uses in the garden of Israel as he cares for each of them in just the appropriate way.

28:27 ***fitches are not threshed.*** Just as each plant is cared for differently, each is harvested differently to protect the final useful result, according to verses 27-28.

28:29 ***wonderful in counsel.*** Similar to 9:6 where the Lord is called “Wonderful Counselor.” The Lord gives marvelous advice.

28:29 ***excellent in working.*** Or, “magnificent in wisdom” (NIV).

A VOICE FROM THE DUST (29)

Most non-LDS scholars see this as the corollary to chapter 28 on Ephraim but this time directed at Jerusalem, most likely referencing the 701 B.C. invasion of Jerusalem by Sennacherib of Assyria. But the Latter-day Saints have a completely unique understanding of this chapter, based on 2 Nephi 27 and events in early Church history.

When the Prophet did the work on the Joseph Smith Translation two to three years after the Book of Mormon was published, he used 2 Nephi 27 in the Book of Mormon to update most of Isaiah 29, apparently copying the 1830 Book of Mormon text nearly word for word into that chapter of Isaiah. However, the question arises if 2 Nephi 27 is an expanded version of Isaiah 29 or rather a commentary by Nephi. One argument is that if Joseph Smith included it in the JST, it must have been part of the original text of Isaiah 29 and later lost. However, the JST changes reflect many purposes, only one of which is restoration of ancient text. Isaiah 29 in the JST could also be a modern application of the text, an inspired commentary, or an expansion based on Joseph Smith's personal experiences and revelations (or more), none of which speak to what Isaiah actually wrote in 700 B.C.

To the point that it is a commentary by Nephi, 2 Nephi 27 comes right in the middle of Nephi's extensive commentary on the Isaiah chapters he just quoted (2-12 of Isaiah). The first verse of 2 Nephi 27 is clearly commentary by Nephi, then in verse 2 he picks up with Isaiah 29:6. He quotes/paraphrases Isaiah 29 for the rest of the chapter, though inserting large portions of additional material not in Isaiah 29 today and making important changes even in his quotations. It should be noted that Nephi had special revelation, as the first leader and prophet of the Nephite people in the New World, that taught him about his descendants and their records (see 1 Nephi 13). I believe he applied this to Isaiah 29, providing insights and expansions on what the prophet wrote that were designed to have meaning in our day, especially to Joseph Smith and his early supporters. In other words, it is my view that most of the changes in 2 Nephi 27 were put there by Nephi, and do not reflect brass plates material.

See the Appendix for a comparison of the two texts.

JERUSALEM BROUGHT DOWN (29:1-10)

29:1 **Ariel**. A clear reference to Jerusalem, but only found here in this chapter in that sense (it is a person's name in Ezra 8:16). It means either 'lion of God' (think of Aslan in C. S. Lewis' *Narnia* books) or (more likely, in context) 'hearth of God,' referring to the altar of the temple. The word is never used in the Book of Mormon; Nephi instead uses "Zion" (see, for example, 2 Nephi 27:3 compared to Isaiah 29:7).

Though in Hebrew, Ariel has no gender (unusual), in the JST the subsequent references to the city are changed to "her," perhaps alluding to the relationship between the Lord and Israel, his bride.

29:1 **let them kill sacrifices**. The "woe" of this verse is ignored as people go on "year to year" worshiping (vainly, for most, based on what Isaiah says) the Lord through temple or pagan rituals.

29:2 **it shall be unto me as Ariel**. Or, "Jerusalem will become as her name Ariel means—an altar covered with blood" (NLT). This paraphrase/translation captures the meaning and reason for using the term—the altar that is Ariel represents the promise of Jerusalem (being near the Lord) and the condemnation (they treat lightly or reject the covenant relationship).

29:3 **And I will camp against thee**. The JST adds, "the Lord" after "I" to indicate who is speaking. Though the Assyrian army was the vehicle of this fulfillment, it was the Lord's will that it happen.

29:4 **speak out of the ground**. The dead went into the ground, down to *She'ol*. In this case, they will speak out from that location, as spirits from the dead that testify of what has happened.

29:4 **one that hath a familiar spirit**. Or, "like the voice of a ghost" (RSV). "Familiar" doesn't mean something you know but rather like in the story of the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 29:7), it means the spirit of one deceased.

29:5 **it shall be at an instant suddenly**. This refers to the Lord's destruction of the Assyrian army as it

laid siege to Jerusalem (Isaiah 36-37), which happened in one night, very suddenly.

29:6 **thunder/earthquake/storm/tempest/fire.** Symbols of the Lord's power and judgment as the creator of the world. Though none of these elements are mentioned with Assyria's destruction, they nonetheless represent the Lord's power to use them.

29:7 **as a dream of a night vision.** A dream can seem so real when we are having it but when we awake, it quickly vanishes, often not even staying in our memory. Even if we remember, we realize it was all in our mind and none of it was real. So shall it be with those who fight against Zion—and thus God. Their efforts will be in vain and come to naught.

29:9 **Stay yourselves, and wonder.** Or, "Be delayed and wait" (NASB), though also "Be stunned and amazed" (NIV). Both meanings apply, giving the sense of stopping in amazement to see that is happening.

29:9 **they are drunken/they stagger.** The BoM/JST turns this address to the wicked, changing it to the second person "ye."

29:10 **deep sleep.** The Lord pours out the fatigue that causes the deep sleep, but it is the choice of the wicked that causes them to close their eyes and reject the prophets, which in turn causes the Lord to cover them or take them away (BoM/JST).

29:10 **your eyes: the prophets/your rulers, the seers.** Or, "He has sealed your eyes (the prophets); he has covered your heads (the seers)" (NIV). The NIV gets it right: prophets and seers should be in parentheses, as they explain the metaphors of eyes and rulers (which is better translated "heads" as in NASB).

MARVELOUS WORK AND A WONDER (29:11-14)

Between verses 10 and 11 of Isaiah 29, 2 Nephi 27 and the JST add nearly two columns of new information (9 very long verses, 2 Nephi 27:6-14). The new information will be referenced from the Book of Mormon version which is easily accessed.

2 Nephi 27:6 **the words of a book.** At first glance, we might not be able to determine what this book is. But verse 7 gives a strong clue: it is a book that is sealed,

contains a revelation from God that covers the entire history of the world. No other book meets that description better than The Book of Mormon, which contained a sealed portion that included great revelations from the brother of Jared (Ether 3:21-27).

2 Nephi 27:9 **delivered unto a man.** The man is, of course, Joseph Smith who received the book in 1827, who in turn "deliver[ed] the words of the book" to the world and then specifically "unto another."

2 Nephi 27:10 **kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord.** The sealed portion was promised to come forth in a day of righteousness, but not at the beginning, which we have already been told is a day of wickedness. When they are given to man, they will be read upon the housetops (verse 11, which in Nephi's day made more sense, since housetops were much like patios are today—places to eat and spend time in nice weather).

2 Nephi 27:12 **three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God.** Shortly after Joseph Smith translated this text in the summer of 1829, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer asked Joseph to inquire of the Lord if they might be these three witnesses. D&C 17 records the Lord's response to the question of these three men. The concept had already been mentioned in Ether 5:2-4 a short time earlier in the translation process, and even earlier in D&C 5. For more information, see *Book of Mormon Institute Manual*, 99 and 409.

2 Nephi 27:13 **none other/save it be a few.** While D&C 5 and Ether 5 had both mentioned three witnesses, this is the first text to hint that more might be able to see the plates. This was fulfilled in the experience of the Eight Witnesses who saw the plates and touched them, though without angelic appearance, as did the Three, and in the witness of a few others who saw them.

29:11 **the vision of all.** Or, "The entire vision" (NASB).

29:11 **a book that is sealed.** Non-LDS scholars associate this text with a story in Jeremiah, where that prophet (while in prison, incidentally) buys some land from his cousin (Jeremiah 32:9-14). Anciently, legal documents were handled by creating two copies, one of which was left "open" for all to see, while the second was sealed and hidden away, either

in a jar (such as some of the Dead Sea Scrolls) or buried in the ground. If there was any question about the first legal document—suspicion of it having been altered, for example—then the second sealed one could be opened to either testify of the truth of the first, or correct any errors.

So likewise the Book of Mormon comes forth as a sealed book in our day. 1 Nephi 13:40 (also the Title Page) speak of the Book of Mormon's role in testifying of the truth of the Bible. In Joseph Smith's day, most people believed in the truthfulness of the Bible. Though many still believe in the Bible today, most people in our day—even many Christians and Jews—have rejected it as a book of truth, saying the stories are just fictional illustrations of principles, that prophecy and miracles really don't happen, that the people in the Bible are not real, etc. The Book of Mormon comes forth out of the ground as the sealed copy to testify of the things that are true and correct the things that have been altered, lost, or corrupted.

2 Nephi 27:15 ***show them unto the learned***. When Joseph Smith first translated this passage in 2 Nephi, it was about a year and a half since Martin Harris had the experience described in these verses. Oliver Cowdery related that the angel Moroni had told Joseph about this before he even began the work on the translation (*Book of Mormon Institute Manual*, 99). Still, coming on this detailed prophesy of the experience so long after the event must have been gratifying to Joseph Smith—the Lord knew what was going to happen and that the work would still go forth, something the young Prophet makes clear in his writings that he did not know in the summer of 1828.

2 Nephi 27:16 ***the glory of the world and to get gain***. This reflects on Charles Anthon's desires in the transaction—his own personal aggrandizement, scholarly reputation, etc. The interesting point, of course, is that not Anthon nor anyone else could actually read the book; it could only be done by the power of God, which is how Joseph Smith did it. So it would have brought Anthon no reward.

2 Nephi 27:20 ***I am able to do mine own work***. God doesn't need scholars to do his work, especially ones who reject his commandments and are motivated by their own gain. Instead, he used the humble servants, such as Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, and Oliver Cowdery, to bring forth the Book of Mormon to the world.

2 Nephi 27:22 ***seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me***. This intriguing passage sheds light on the answer to the question of why Moroni took up the plates again after the translation. Joseph's personal history recorded only a short passage about the fate of the plates:

"But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight" (*History of the Church*, 1:18-19; JS-H 1:60).

This verse continues the thought of 29:11, but now the book is *again* sealed up and hidden. It was opened, read, and served its purpose in testifying of the truth of the original book and restoring lost or changed information. Now it is sealed and preserved again against another day when the words of the book will be called into question (this time by Church members?) and perhaps the rest of the sealed book will be revealed.

29:13 ***this people draw near me***. This verse was quoted by Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove (JS-H 1:19). The wording there is different and is not reflected in JST or Book of Mormon changes. Interestingly, the NIV uses language very close to JS-H: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

29:14 ***a marvellous work and a wonder***. This is the famous phrase that is often used to describe the Lord's work in our day and is often quoted in the early sections of the Doctrine and Covenants (4:1; 6:1; 11:1; 12:1; 14:1; 18:44). It has some interesting translations in other versions:

- "wonderously marvelous" (NASB)
- "wonder upon wonder" (NIV)
- "surprising and wondrous fashion" (NAB)
- "bafflement upon bafflement" (TNK)
- "prodigies and wonders" (NJB)
- "shocking and amazing" (NRSV)

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION (29:15-24)

These verses describe the results of the arrival of the sealed book and the marvelous work the Lord does. It could potentially be broken into three transformations: 15-16 (the subversion of reason); 17-21 (renewal of the world); and 22-24 (Jacob exalted).

29:15 ***Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?*** The wicked think that no one knows of their sins and secrets. But they cannot hide from God.

29:16 ***turning of things upside down.*** The Book of Mormon and JST show that the people saying this are the same ones who are seeking to hide their deeds from others in verse 15. In other words, the wicked will charge the righteous with “turning of things upside down,” which is what we see in our society today where good people are accused of being bigoted or prejudiced because they hold firm to their belief in eternal right and wrong. The BoM/JST conclude this thought saying that the Lord will show them what is real because he knows their works. The creation cannot say to the creator ‘you did not make me’ or ‘you just don’t get it.’

29:17 ***Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field.*** Sounds like a good thing at first, until you remember that Lebanon is famed for its mighty forests. Ripping out all the trees to create farmland represents a dramatic change. This is a metaphor for the Lord transforming all things, in response to the charge from the wicked that the righteous are turning things upside down.

29:18 ***the deaf hear the words of the book.*** Continuing the theme of transformation, the Lord promises the deaf to hear and the blind to see the book. How shall a deaf person hear the words of the book? Or a blind person see out of obscurity to read it? Today, we can easily imagine that, with Braille for the blind, recorded books, and other technology. In that day, it would be miraculous.

29:19 ***meek also shall increase their joy.*** The humble are not blessed, in the eyes of the world. Yet in the Lord’s ‘upside down’ economy, they and the poor have great joy.

29:20 ***the terrible one is brought to nought.*** In a reversal of the way things appear to work in the world, those who do wrong will not prosper but will lose everything, be consumed, or cut off. The JST/BoM add here that it will happen “as the Lord liveth.”

29:21 ***make a man an offender for a word.*** Or, “Those who incriminate others by their words, those who lay traps for the arbitrator at the gate and groundlessly deprive the upright of fair judgment” (NJB). These are three complete abuses of the Jewish legal system of the day, but also something we can relate to in our litigious society.

29:22 ***Jacob shall not now be ashamed.*** The final transformation relates to the house of Israel overcoming its humble position and returning to favor with the Lord.

29:23 ***they shall sanctify my name.*** To make the Lord’s name holy is to declare that he lives and that we are committed to him. The great change in Jacob is that they will no longer disdain or ignore the Lord but humbly recognize him for who he is.

29:23 ***shall fear the God of Israel.*** Ironical that Israel has feared the nations around them and their gods but not always feared the God that brought them out of Egypt and covenanted with them as a chosen people. In this transformation, they will fear his judgments, which always brings repentance and change of heart.

29:24 ***come to understanding.*** This is the clear and simple purpose of the Lord’s latter-day work. The Book of Mormon and other modern revelations play a huge role in this goal, helping even those of us who murmur to learn doctrine.

APPENDIX

The text below shows the original KJV text of Isaiah 29 (on the left in the table using KJV verse numbers), with the JST changes folded in; additions are marked with **bold** and deletions are indicated by ~~crossed-out text~~. Where there is corresponding Book of Mormon text, on the right is 2 Nephi 27. The changes in that text compared to the base text KJV passages, are also marked with **bold**.

Isaiah 29	2 Nephi 27
2 Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: for thus hath the Lord said unto me , and it shall be unto me as Ariel.	
3 And That I the Lord will camp against thee her round about, and will lay siege against thee her with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee her .	
4 And thou she shalt be brought down, and shalt shall speak out of the ground, and thy her speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy her voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy her speech shall whisper out of the dust.	
5 Moreover the multitude of thy her strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones <i>shall be</i> as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.	
6 Thou shalt For they shall be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.	2 And when that day shall come they shall be visited of the Lord of Hosts, with thunder and with earthquake, and with a great noise, and with storm, and with tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire.
7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.	3 And all the nations that fight against Zion , and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision;...
8 Yea , it shall be unto them even be as when an unto a hungry <i>man</i> who dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when like unto a thirsty man who dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, <i>he is</i> faint, and his soul hath appetite: yea, even so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.	... yea , it shall be unto them , even as unto a hungry man which dreameth, and behold he eateth but he awaketh and his soul is empty; or like unto a thirsty man which dreameth, and behold he drinketh but he awaketh and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; yea, even so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.
9 For behold, all ye that do iniquity , stay yourselves, and wonder; for ye shall cry ye out, and cry: they are yea, ye shall be drunken, but not with wine; they ye shall stagger, but not with strong drink.	4 For behold, all ye that doeth iniquity , stay yourselves and wonder, for ye shall cry out, and cry; yea, ye shall be drunken but not with wine, ye shall stagger but not with strong drink.
10 For behold , the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep. and hath For behold, ye have closed your eyes, and ye have rejected the prophets and your rulers, and the seers hath he covered because of your iniquities .	5 For behold , the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep. For behold, ye have closed your eyes, and ye have rejected the prophets; and your rulers, and the seers hath he covered because of your iniquity .
And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered.	6 And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered.
And behold, the book shall be sealed, and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world, to the ending thereof.	7 And behold the book shall be sealed; and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof.
Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore, the book shall be kept from them.	8 Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore the book shall be kept from them.
But the book shall be delivered unto a man, and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those which have slumbered in the dust. And he shall deliver these words unto another.	9 But the book shall be delivered unto a man, and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those who have slumbered in the dust, and he shall deliver these words unto another;
But the words which are sealed¹ by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they	10 But the words which are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book. For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the

¹ Evidently the Prophet's eye skipped a line, jumping from one instance of "sealed by the power of God" to another, thereby leaving out a whole phrase that is in the Book of Mormon version.

may come forth. For behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.	revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.
And the day cometh that the words of the book which were ² sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be, even unto the end of the earth.	11 And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be even unto the end of the earth.
Wherefore, at that day, when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it, save it be that three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God. And they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.	12 Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.
And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few, according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men. For the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead.	13 And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men; for the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead.
Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book, and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word. And wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God.	14 Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book; and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word; and wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!
11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book, Take these words which are not sealed, and deliver them to one another that is he may shew them unto the learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: And the learned shall say, Bring hither the book, and I will read them.	15 But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book: Take these words which are not sealed and deliver them to another, that he may show them unto the learned, saying: Read this, I pray thee. And the learned shall say: Bring hither the book, and I will read them.
And now, because of the glory of the world, and to get gain will he say this, and not for the glory of God.	16 And now, because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God.
And he saith the man shall say, I cannot bring the book; for it is sealed.	17 And the man shall say: I cannot bring the book, for it is sealed.
Then shall the learned say, I cannot read it.	18 Then shall the learned say: I cannot read it.
12 And Wherefore, it shall come to pass that the Lord God will deliver again the book is delivered and the words thereof to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith the man that is not learned shall say, I am not learned.	19 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that the Lord God will deliver again the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned; and the man that is not learned shall say: I am not learned.
Then shall the Lord God say unto him, The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work. Wherefore, thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee.	20 Then shall the Lord God say unto him: The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee.
Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time. For I will shew unto the children of men, that I am able to do mine own work.	21 Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time; for I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work.
Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee and obtained the witnesses	22 Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee, and obtained the witnesses

² The word *were* is actually written twice in the JST manuscript (OM, 807).

which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom, to reveal all things unto the children of men.	which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men.
For behold, I am God, and I am a God of miracles. And I will shew unto the world that I am the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.	23 For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.
13 Wherefore And again, it shall come to pass that the Lord said, shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him,	24 And again it shall come to pass that the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him:
Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept precepts of men.	25 Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men—
14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even yea , a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent <i>men</i> shall be hid.	26 Therefore, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, yea , a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid.
15 And wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? 16 And they also say, surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. But behold, I will shew unto them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I know all their works. For shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? Or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?	27 And wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord! And their works are in the dark; and they say: Who seeth us, and who knoweth us? And they also say: Surely, your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. But behold, I will show unto them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I know all their works. For shall the work say of him that made it, he made me not? Or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, he had no understanding?
17 But behold, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will shew unto the children of men that it <i>is</i> # not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.	28 But behold, saith the Lord of Hosts: I will show unto the children of men that it is yet a very little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field; and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.
18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.	29 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.
19 And the meek also shall increase, and <i>their</i> joy shall be in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.	30 And the meek also shall increase, and their joy shall be in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
20 For assuredly as the Lord liveth, they shall see that the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:	31 For assuredly as the Lord liveth they shall see that the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off;
21 And they that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.	32 And they that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught.
22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.	33 Therefore, thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.
23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.	34 But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.
24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.	35 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

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| AT – Author’s translation | NAB – New American Bible |
| JPS – Jewish Publication Society (also called Tanakh) | NASB – New American Standard Bible |
| JST – Joseph Smith Translation | NIV – New International Version |
| KJV – King James Version | NJB – New Jerusalem Bible |
| LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) | NLT – New Living Translation |
| MT – Masoretic Text (Hebrew) | RSV – Revised Standard Version |
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