
“LET THE METAPHORS
SPEAK TO YOU”

An LDS Commentary on Isaiah

ANN N. MADSEN

Dedicated to those who live in the time about which Isaiah prophesied

Isaiah 31

Isaiah 31 begins with another warning not to rely on Egypt or make alliances with her but to seek help from Jehovah for he will help them fight the wicked.

In these times, countries secured their safety by making alliances with their neighbors. Judah was considering a treaty with her southern neighbor Egypt. Isaiah cautions the prevailing thought that Egyptians were larger than life. By this time, the early dynasties of Egypt were already famous for their advanced culture: the pyramids and amazing temples they had reared. Isaiah says clearly, in 31:3, “but the Egyptians are men and not God. Their horses are flesh and not spirit.” This summarizes the fact that their power was limited when compared to the power of the LORD, which is described as inevitable: “when the LORD stretches out his hand, he who helps will stumble; he who is helped will fall. Both will perish together.”

31:5. He continues his persuasive discourse explaining that the LORD Almighty is like “a great lion, growling over his prey, and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor.” Then, to add to the metaphors already illustrating his point, he says in 31:5, “like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it. He will *pass over it* (note the same usage as *Passover* as the children of Israel left Egypt) and will rescue it.” It is interesting to note that the path of many migrating birds passes directly over Israel, so this metaphor would have been meaningful to those who looked to the skies during the times when large birds migrated.

31:6. He pleads with the Israelites to return, “*shuv*,” which is also the Hebrew word for “repent.” The covenant path is a path that President Nelson implores us to stay on or return to.

31:8–9. “Assyria will fall by a *sword* that is not of man, *sword*, not of mortals, will devour them. They will flee before the *sword*.” Notice the use of the word “sword” three times. It is certain that Assyria will fall by a supernatural sword wielded by the LORD.

The chapter ends with Jehovah declaring that their stronghold “will fall because of terror at the sight of their battle standards; their commanders will panic.” The LORD finishes this prophecy by describing himself as the one “whose fire is in Zion, whose furnace is Jerusalem” (see Isaiah 29:1; Ariel means “altar hearth of God”).

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