

ISAIAH 21

Introduction

This chapter contains many revelations received by Isaiah about various lands in the area of Arabia: The Burden of the Desert of the Sea: Babylon's Fall, Elam and Media used by Assyria in this fall, The Burden of Dumah, The Burden of Arabia, A Revelation about Kedar (A place name, but also a name symbolic of all the Arabic tribes generally).

The Arabic tribes and places discussed in this chapter had much to do with Babylon. In the years before King Nebuchadnezzar became King of Babylon, his father (Nabopolassar), delivered Babylon from three centuries of vassalage to Assyria by uniting the Medes, Persians, Scythians and Cimmerians in his campaigns. The Arabic tribes were known for their archers, especially Elam. Elam was known as the "Destroyer of Babylon".

At this time however, the Elamites and the Medes are subject to Assyria. They may have been forced to be part of a contingent in the Assyrian army. The Assyrian King Sennacherib was often known as "The King of Arabians and Assyrians".

Kedar does not seem to have been geographically destroyed until near the time that Babylon was destroyed. (see Jeremiah 49:28)

Isaiah 21 Map



ISAIAH 21

Verses 1-15 Poetry
Verses 16 & 17 Prose

Verse 1 **The Burden of the Desert of the Sea** *(Babylon):*

As whirlwinds in the South pass through,
So *(they)* come from the desert, from a terrible land.

Verse 2 **A grievous vision is declared unto me,**

The treacherous dealer,
Dealeth treacherously.

(and) The spoiler,
Spoileth.

Go up, O Elam,
Besiege, O Media *(you Medes)*.

All the sighing thereof have I made to cease:
(All the sighing that Babylon has caused I will bring to an end.)

Verse 3 (Therefore) My loins are filled with pain,
Pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that
travaileth.

I was bowed down at the hearing of it,
I was dismayed at the seeing of it.

Verse 4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me,
The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me:

(Verses 3 and 4 describe Isaiah's turmoil about the visions he is seeing – All the destruction Assyria will cause – He feels for it, he feels for the betrayals and he sees the destruction of Assyria sweeping through these lands like a tornado.)

Verse 5 Prepare the table,
Watch in the watchtower,

Eat,
Drink,

(and) Arise, ye princes! *(Mobilize, you commanders!)*
Anoint the shield! *(Oil the armor!)*

(Here we see one of the ways Assyria is deceptive, they have a habit of attacking during a festival or holiday time – Isaiah is saying that they need to be careful of this – Get ready even on feast days or holidays for attacks)

Verse 6

For thus hath the Lord said unto me:

Go, set a watchman, (A righteous/trusted watchman)
Let him declare what he seeth.

Verse 7

(And)

(Let him watch for) chariot(s) with a couple of horsemen,
(Let him watch for) chariot(s) of asses and chariot(s) of camels.

(and)

He (must) hearken diligently,
He (must watch) with much heed!

Verse 8

(And)

He cried, a lion: (MT reads "lion", 1QIsa reads "the look out")

(and)

My Lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime,
My Lord, I am set in my ward whole nights.

Verse 9

(And behold)

Here (they) come:

Chariot(s) of men,
With a couple of horsemen! (with teams of horses!)

(and)

He (the Lord) answered and said:

She has fallen!
Babylon has fallen!

(and)

All the graven images of her gods he hath broken,
He hath broken (her graven images) to the ground!

Verse 10

(and)

O, my threshing,
(My threshed and winnowed ones – To you who know me)
The corn of my floor.
(To those who are of my fold.)

(See Image Below)

Verse 11

That which I have heard of the Lord of Hosts, of the God of
Israel, have I declared unto you,
The Burden of Dumah, he calleth to me out of Seir.

(Dumah – 4th Son of Ishmael – Became the tribe of Arabia – Some think Isaiah here means "Edom" – Dumah may be a representative name of Arabia generally - Mount Seir - name for a mountainous region stretching between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, demarcating the southeastern border of Edom with Judah)

Watchman, what of the night?

(Watchman, what remains of the night?)

Watchman, what of the night?

(Watchman, how much of the night is left?)

Verse 12

The watchman (Righteous Watchman, Prophet) said:

The morning cometh,

(Morning comes, though it is still night.)

(and)

The night cometh.

(If you would ascertain it, do so by repenting and coming back.)

(Isaiah says that the night of destruction will not pass soon and those who want to live through it, and experience any semblance of morning, must repent and come back to the Lord even in the midst of the darkness.)

Verse 13

The Burden upon Arabia:

In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge,

O, ye travelling companies of Dedanim.

(Dedanim - A wandering Arabian tribe that lived in the Southeast of Edom)

Verse 14

(To) the inhabitants of the land of Tema:

Bring water to him that (is) thirsty,

(Meet) with bread him that (flees).

(Tema had a large, beautiful oasis used by travelers between Babylonia and Egypt – the Lord is saying that these desert people know how to live in dry lands and should help the refugees of Babylon).

Verse 15

(For)

They fled (flee) from the swords (destruction):

From the drawn sword,

(and)

From the bent bow,

(and)

From the grievousness of war.

Verse 16

For the Lord said unto me, within a year, according to the years of an hireling:

Verse 17

(and)

A All the glory of Kedar shall fail,

(And)

B The residue of the number of archers.

B The mighty men of the children of Kedar,

A All the glory of Kedar shall be diminished, for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it.

(See Jeremiah 49:28, Malachi 1: 3)



The Threshing Floor

Find out what happens in this step in the harvesting process—and how it relates to the Lord's harvest.



"I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thresh the nations by the power of my Spirit."
Doctrine and Covenants 35:13

THRESHING

Threshing is the process by which the grain husks, or chaff, are loosened. It is done after the fields have been harvested and usually involves crushing the grain stalks on a flat surface, or threshing floor. Threshing is necessary before the final process of winnowing, which separates the husks from the edible grain before the grain is ground and stored.

BIBLE FACTS

- The harvested and cut grain, such as wheat or barley, was spread to dry on flat, open surfaces, or threshing floors (see 1 Chronicles 21:20–23).

- The dried stalks were either beaten with flails or crushed by an ox or a donkey dragging a heavy board in which sharp stones were embedded (see Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9).
- The Lord often used the image of threshing as a metaphor for the judgments that He or His people would mete out on other nations or the world, either anciently or before His Second Coming (see Isaiah 28:27–28; Isaiah 41:15; Jeremiah 51:33; Micah 4:13; Habakkuk 3:12; Luke 3:17).

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

Threshing:

Is powerful. Just as threshing involves a strong physical act (crushing), the Lord sends forth His humble servants to “thresh the nations by the power of [His] Spirit” (D&C 35:13). Of course, the Spirit’s power isn’t violent in the same way threshing is, but its effects can be similarly impressive. Although it is still, small, and peaceful, the Spirit can penetrate to people’s hearts and help bring about great things, such as the conversion of souls and the breaking down of barriers to the Lord’s work.

Is a means of dividing. The Spirit divides the righteous from the wicked, the Lord’s people from the world, and Satan’s lies from God’s truth. Those who hear the Lord’s voice through His servants, who have not hardened their hearts, and who choose to repent are counted among the righteous. The wicked experience the Lord’s judgments against them.

Precedes the final separation. Threshing is a necessary step before the final winnowing. Throughout history, the Lord has at times sent His judgments against wicked people. At His Second Coming, He will separate the wicked from the righteous in preparation for His millennial reign. Before this separation, His servants and His people help prepare the world for the judgment to come by bearing witness through the power of the Spirit. ■