

The Writings of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon

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BYU

Isaiah Passages in the Book of Mormon

Of all the prophetic writings available on the Brass Plates of Laban, Isaiah is the major resource used throughout the Book of Mormon. About one-third of Isaiah's sixty-six chapters are found in the Book of Mormon. Two large blocks of Isaiah chapters (2-14 and 48-54) are scattered among four books (1 Nephi, 2 Nephi, Mosiah, and 3 Nephi). In addition, Isaiah 29 is quoted in 2 Nephi. The following chart shows where these twenty-one Isaiah chapters are found in the Book of Mormon:

Isaiah 2-14	in	2 Nephi 12-24	for	13 chapters
Isaiah 29	in	2 Nephi 27	for	1 chapter
Isaiah 48-49	in	1 Nephi 20-21	for	2 chapters
Isaiah 50-51	in	2 Nephi 7-8	for	2 chapters
Isaiah 52	in	3 Nephi 20	for	1 chapter
Isaiah 53	in	Mosiah 14	for	1 chapter
Isaiah 54	in	3 Nephi 22	for	1 chapter

Additional Isaiah verses, mostly from the same chapters cited in the chart above (see italics below), are scattered throughout the Book of Mormon:

Isa 5:26 in 2 Ne 29:2*

Isa 11:5-9 in 2 Ne 30:11-15

Isa 22:13 in 2 Ne 28:7-8*

Isa 28:10,13 in 2 Ne 28:30*

Isa 29:5 in 2 Ne 26:18*

Isa 29:15a in 2 Ne 28:9b*

Isa 40:3 in 1 Ne 10:8*

Isa 49:22 in 1 Ne 22:8; 2 Ne 6:6*

Isa 49:23 in 2 Ne 6:7

Isa 52:1a in Moroni 10:31a*

Isa 52:7 in 1 Ne 13:37; Mosiah 15:14-18*

Isa 52:8-10 in Mosiah 15:29-31; 3 Ne 16:18-20

Isa 52:12 in 3 Ne 21:29*

Isa 53:8,10 in Mosiah 15:10-11*

Isa 55:1 in 2 Ne 26:25*

Isa 11:4 in 2 Ne 30:9

Isa 11:11a in 2 Ne 25:17a; 29:1b; cf 25:11*

Isa 25:12 in 2 Ne 26:15*

Isa 29:3-4 in 2 Ne 26:15-16*

Isa 29:14a in 1 Ne 14:7a; 22:8a; 2 Ne 25:17b; 29:1a*

Isa 29:21b in 2 Ne 28:16a*

Isa 45:18 in 1 Ne 17:36*

Isa 49:23a in 1 Ne 22:8b; 2 Ne 10:9a*

Isa 49:24-26 in 2 Ne 6:16-18

Isa 52:1-2 in 2 Ne 8:24-25

Isa 52:7-10 in Mosiah 12:21-24

Isa 52:10 in 1 Ne 22:10-11*

Isa 52:13-15 in 3 Ne 21:8-10*

Isa 54:2b in Moroni 10:31a*

Isa 55:1-2 in 2 Ne 9:50-51

* denotes the Isaiah passages which are paraphrased in the Book of Mormon.

In these quoted Isaiah passages, about one-third of the verses have major differences when compared to the King James Version of the Bible -- that is, wording changes or additions which significantly change or enlarge the meaning of the verse. Another one-third of the Isaiah verses in the Book of Mormon have minor wording or punctuation changes which do not alter the verse's meaning; and one-third are exactly the same as the corresponding Biblical passages.

Purposes for quoting Isaiah in the Book of Mormon

The prophets Nephi, Jacob, Abinadi, and the resurrected Savior all cite Isaiah's words as they teach in the Book of Mormon. Their primary use of the Isaiah passages is threefold:

- ▶ to instruct the house of Israel about her covenant promises
- ▶ to emphasize key events and prophecies relating to the latter days, and
- ▶ to highlight significant messianic prophecies of Isaiah.

The first primary purpose of the Book of Mormon is to teach Israel about her covenants and prophecies (see title page, second paragraph). Isaiah's passages especially fulfill this purpose. As examples, Isaiah 48 contains the elements of a covenant contract, and Isaiah 49 includes some great covenant promises for the house of Israel. Nephi cites these chapters shortly after his people arrive in the new world, and he then teaches them about their covenant promises (1 Ne 22:7-12). Later, after Jacob has quoted Isaiah 50 and 51, he states that he has read these things that they "might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel" (2 Ne 9:1). Centuries later, the resurrected Savior uses Isaiah 52 and 54 as he delivers his law and covenant teachings (3 Ne 15-16) and his covenant people discourse (3 Ne 20-22). Jesus promises

that as the words of Isaiah are fulfilled, “then is the fulfilling of the covenant” (3 Ne 20:12; cf verse 46). Thus, one major purpose of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is to teach about the Lord’s covenants and promises to the house of Israel.

A similar major role of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is to enlighten readers about key prophecies associated with God’s kingdom in the last days. The significance of temples and priesthood leadership (Isa 2 & 2 Ne 12), God’s judgements of his children in Zion (Isa 3-5 & 2 Ne 13-15), an invasion of armies from the north towards Jerusalem (Isa 10 & 2 Ne 20), the impact of key servants and prophets (Isa 11 & 2 Ne 21), the downfall of spiritual Babylon (Isa 13-14 & 2 Ne 23-24), and the impact of the Book of Mormon and other sacred records coming from the dust (Isa 29 & 2 Ne 27) are all quoted by Nephi before he provides additional, inspired commentary in 2 Nephi 25-33. These prophecies of Isaiah highlight many significant events in different parts of the world. With Nephi’s insights, they help us to understand the fulfillment of God’s work in the latter days so we can know we are not forgotten by God (BM title page).

The second major purpose of the Book of Mormon is “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ” (title page, second paragraph). Abinadi and Nephi quote Isaiah as they deliver their important witnesses of Christ and his atonement. The most powerful messianic passage of Isaiah is the “suffering servant song” of chapter 53. The prophet Abinadi cites this chapter as he teaches King Noah and his priests (Mosiah 14). Abinadi’s inspired commentary helps us understand how Christ can make intercession for his followers, as promised by Isaiah (Mosiah 15). Additional messianic prophecies of Isaiah, chapters 6-9, are quoted by Nephi as a prelude to his great testimony about Christ (2 Nephi 25, 31-33). Isaiah is used to strengthen prophetic witnesses about Christ in the Book of Mormon.

Studying Isaiah in a Book of Mormon perspective

To study Isaiah within its Book of Mormon setting, study the material in smaller units, usually as individual chapters or, at most, a small group of chapters.

☛ First, **read the relevant material**. Read the chapter headings in the Book of Mormon of the Isaiah chapters to be quoted. Next, read the verses just prior to the quoted Isaiah sections. Then read the Isaiah material carefully and completely. Finally, be sure to read the verses (and sometimes the chapters) immediately following the Isaiah passages as inspired prophetic commentary is given!

☛ Second, **review the major or important ideas in your mind**. What for you, at this time, are the significant concepts that you remember from this material. Identify the particular message of greatest value for you. Can you liken any message unto yourself? (1 Ne 19:23-24). Seek to apply the relevant insights in your own life. One good way of focusing upon the essential elements is to record some key ideas in the margins of your scriptures. In addition, you may want to write your feelings and commitments in your journal or diary.

☛ Third, **study one small section of the material at a time, just a few verses**. This could be the verses highlighting the major message for you. It could be the least understood portion of the reading, or just a portion which you feel you want to study in greater depth. Reread those verses in their context and then use the footnotes of both the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Note any Hebrew clarifications or Joseph Smith Translation (JST) insights. Read the verses cross referenced in the footnotes in their context. Look up the topical guide (TG) entries, and see if any other Isaiah passages deal with the same theme; then read those passages. Skim through the other listings in that TG entry and note if other passages in the Standard Works provide insights for that concept. Reread the verses and consider if there might be any terms, names, etc. which might be in the Bible Dictionary; see if any of them are listed. Prepare a brief outline of the key ideas or words of that section of verses. Try to identify any poetic patterns or parallelisms. Reread the section, and ponder how it fits within its Book of Mormon context.

☛ Finally, during this study, **follow Moroni’s admonition of how to study the scriptures as you read, remember, ponder, and pray** (Moroni 10:3-5).

You will be pleasantly surprised how much you can learn in your studies of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon!