

Isaiah was a prophet, seer, and revelator. From the little known about him, he was raised in the Jerusalem area with an educated, upper-class background. Around 740 BC he was called by God to be His spokesman or mouthpiece to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah..

Isaiah's role as a PROPHET was to teach and to testify. He gave teachings of eternal gospel truths and addressed contemporary spiritual, moral, and social issues. He delivered messages of warning and promise. However, the Lord told him to make his words hard to understand. (Isa. 6:10) His teachings and messages were written as a witness to God's children through the ages.

Isaiah's function as a SEER was manifest at the outset of his writings. The introductions to both chapters one and two state that Isaiah literally "saw" the vision that he later recorded. (See also Isa. 13:1.) He was a "see-er," one who sees, and he saw great visions. In short, as a seer, Isaiah had spiritual insight beyond that of a prophet. (See Mosiah 8:15-17.) Isaiah was both a prophet and seer, for he envisioned events beyond his own time. His prophecies reveal that he perceived visions of two major future events, the Messiah and the last days.

Isaiah's role as a REVELATOR of divine truths and key events of latter times required that he package his messages in a format that the people in his time could receive and understand, **if they studied them carefully.** Few people of his time had personal copies of written scriptural records. They would hear them either as uttered by the mouth of the prophet or as spoken by a reader of the rare written copies of prophetic writings. Ancient poets and prophets, in their oral tradition society, used short, symbolic, structured poetry to help their listening audiences remember their message. The most common form of Hebrew poetry is known as '**parallelism.**'

Grammatical or 'form' parallelism (with stressed & unstressed syllable patterns and word-rhyme schemes, etc., etc.) does **not** easily transfer into English.

Semantic or 'meaning' parallelism (with a 'theme rhyme' or 'idea pattern') does often transfer into other languages because translators want to get the correct concepts, not the sounds, into the new language.

Hebrew poetry of semantic parallelisms comprises about one-third of the Bible.

Approximately 90% of Isaiah is written in poetic form! He was a **prophet, seer, and poet.**

There are seven types of parallelism used by Isaiah in his writings:

Four simple Parallelisms – dualistic with usually two lines or ideas

Synonymous – similar ideas repeated in two lines: same message in different words - Isa. 1:3

Antithetic – opposite ideas presented in two lines: bold opposites give contrast - Isa. 1:19-20

Emblematic – one idea is 'like' or 'as' another: one often is literal, other is symbolic - Isa. 1:18

Synthetic – two complementary ideas: one idea without the other is incomplete; such as a question followed by an answer, or a bold statement followed by an explanation - Isa. 1:2

Three complex parallelisms – three or more lines or ideas

Climactic – building steps in repeated pattern: literal repetition of a key word or phrase, often leading to (or from) a climax or key idea - Isa. 1:7 and 1:8

Composite – painting a mental picture: see image on your own ‘mind-screen;’ classic example opens the book of Psalms in Psalms 1:1 - Isa 1:4 (note: size of groups decrease from nation to family)

Chiastic (aka ‘Introverted’) – creating a mirror image: a pattern of ideas repeated in reverse order with main idea at central pivot point, as in ABCDCBA; a chiasm is like an hourglass with sand at the top and in the bottom with the key action in the middle - Isa 11:13; 6:10; 2:3-5

Studying Isaiah

Remember President Gordon B. Hinckley’s common admonition in leadership conferences:
“**Repetition is the key to learning**”

To study Isaiah, try not to ‘swallow the whole elephant’ in one sitting; study the material in smaller units, such as in an individual paragraph, (noted with a ¶ symbol in the KJV), or as a single chapter.

- ☛ First, **read the chapter headings** of at least a dozen Isaiah chapters in the LDS King James Bible. Next, **READ** three chapters and select the one chapter you want to study in more depth.
- ☛ Second, **READ that chapter again and identify the chapter’s major and important insights.** What for you, at this time, are the significant concepts that you see in this material. Identify the particular verse or two or three of greatest value for you. One good way of focusing upon the essential elements is to record some key ideas in the margins of your scriptures.
- ☛ Third, **STUDY that one small section of material.** **REREAD** those verses in their context and highlight the key words and ideas. Then, look at the footnotes and see any Hebrew clarifications or Joseph Smith Translation (JST) insights. Read the scripture verses cross-referenced in the footnotes. Look up the Topical Guide (TG) entries and note if other passages in the Standard Works provide insights for that concept. **REREAD** the Isaiah 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.
- ☛ Fourth, **try to identify any POETIC PATTERNS or parallelisms.** It may be easier to identify them in a modern English translation* where the lines of poetry are printed. What new perspectives do they present? **REREAD** again the study section, and ponder the key ideas again. Remember “repetition is the key to learning.” Conclude your studies with a brief outline of the key ideas or words of that section of verses. Then see if you can “liken any key insights unto yourself”? (1 Ne 19:23-24). It may be helpful to record these insights in a journal or diary or as notes on your computer.
- ☛ Finally, during this study, **follow Moroni’s admonition of how to study the scriptures as you read** (and reread), **remember** (the Lord’s mercy), **ponder**, and **pray** (Moroni 10:3-5).
You will be pleasantly surprised how much you can gain from your studies of Isaiah !!!

* Such as the New International Version (NIV)