

Judgment Against Isra'el Yesha'yahu 9:8-21

In my last post, we learned more about **The Future Hope** in **Yesha'yahu 9:1-7**. In this post, we learn about **Judgment Against Isra'el** in **Yesha'yahu 9:8-21**.

⁸ Adonai sent a word to Ya'akov, and it has fallen on Isra'el. ⁹ All the people know it, Efrayim and the inhabitants of Shomron. But they say in pride, in the arrogance of their hearts, ¹⁰ "The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with cut stone; the sycamore-fig trees have been chopped down, but we will replace them with cedars."

After giving them a glimpse of the new day that would dawn in the future, **Yesha'yahu** now says to the ten tribes of **Isra'el**, "Don't you see what's happening? The invasion of **Assyria** has already begun. Your buildings are knocked down. Your forests are wiped out. You're boasting that you'll erect stronger buildings and plant more majestic trees." The people didn't understand that God was working, judging, and dealing with them.

The preeminent sin of God's people is pride and arrogance. They believed they did not need God to survive and prosper.

¹¹ So Adonai has raised up Retzin's foes against him and spurred on his enemies -

As we have learned previously, the most notable enemies of **King Retzin** of **Aram** are the **Assyrians** and its vassals.

¹² Aram from the east, P'lishtim from the west; and they devour Isra'el with an open mouth. Even after all this, his anger remains, his upraised hand still threatens.

The **Arameans** and **P'lishtim** were the other two primary targets of the **Assyrians** in the 734-732 BCE campaigns. It is likely that they had been pressed into service in the ranks of the **Assyrian** army as it moved against **Isra'el**.

¹³ Yet the people do not turn to the one striking them; they don't seek Adonai-Tzva'ot.

God's punishment of His people was intended to convince them to return to His ways, but they were so dull of mind and spirit that they did not respond.

¹⁴ Therefore Adonai will cut off Isra'el's head and tail, [tall] palm frond and [lowly] reed in a single day.

After the first **Assyrian** incursion into the north, **Isra'el** continued in its sinful ways. God soon brought a more devastating judgment, ending their independent existence. The expression head and tail, palm branch and reed point to totality as interpreted in the next verse.

¹⁵ The old and the honored are the head, while prophets teaching lies are the tail. ¹⁶ For those leading this people lead them astray, and those led by them are destroyed.

It was mainly the leaders (including the elder and the prophet) who were responsible for the people going in the wrong direction. The ones who were to be leading and warning were teaching lies. As a result, people were destroyed.

¹⁷ Therefore Adonai takes no joy in their young men and has no compassion on their orphans and widows; for everyone is ungodly and does evil, every mouth speaks foolishly. Even after all this,

His anger remains, His upraised hand still threatens. ¹⁸ For wickedness burns like fire, it devours briars and thorns; it sets the forest underbrush ablaze, with clouds of smoke whirling upward. ¹⁹ The anger of Adonai-Tzva'ot is burning up the land; the people, too, are fuel for the fire - no one spares even his brother.

Devastation is seen as the natural consequence of wickedness itself (***wickedness burns like fire***) as well as the result of divine anger (the ***anger of Adonai-Tzva'ot*** scorches the land). Sin breaks up human relationships, even brotherly love.

²⁰ The one on the right grabs but stays hungry, the one on the left eats but is unfilled. Everyone devours his own arm's flesh -

It is uncertain whether this text refers to cannibalism or not. Nevertheless, cannibalism is a standard element of curses in **Assyrian** at that time. It was the last resort in times of impending starvation. This level of desperation could occur in times of severe famine or could be the result of siege when the food supply had become depleted. Siege warfare was conventional in the ancient world, so this may not have been as rare an occasion as might be presumed.

²¹ M'nasheh devours Efrayim; and Efrayim, M'nasheh; while together they oppose Y'hudah. Even after all this, His anger remains, His upraised hand still threatens. ~ Yesha'yahu 9:8-21 (CJB)

Although they were united against **Y'hudah**, the ten northern tribes were not united themselves - as seen in the bitterness between **M'nasheh** and **Efrayim** - historically and geographically the two closest tribes of the ten. Drought, famine, and fire were the signs of God's judgment and the results of His people's rebellion against Him.

In my next post, we will move on to **Yesha'yahu 10** to learn about the **Woes on Y'hudah and Ashur ~ Part1.**