

Isaiah 2:1-5

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Isaiah 2:1-5

The Word of Isaiah (1)

¹ The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

The Mountain of Yahweh (2-5)

² It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,

³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁵ O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD.

Mountain of Yahweh

The mountain of Zion itself for sure isn't the tallest mountain in the Ancient Near East – it isn't even the tallest mountain in the range of mountains around it!

So what is Isaiah getting at with the mountain being the highest above the hills?

Mountains in the Ancient Near Eastern cultures signified a spot where heaven and earth met. Think about famous stories where there are "mountaintop" moments throughout the Bible.

One of the predominant examples is Moses on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law. It's almost as if this vision of Mt. Zion where the nations stream up to receive the instruction of Yahweh is a second Sinai of sorts. It's the ultimate "heaven and earth" spot.

Streaming Nations

The word for "flow" in verse 2 is the verb form of the noun "river". Here we have a reversal of Genesis 2 where instead of the river coming from an Eden-like mountain to water the nations, the nations themselves are now flowing **to** the Eden-like mountain.

"A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates." — Genesis 2:10-14

Here, in a seemingly abrupt passage in the Eden story, we see something vitally important for the purposes of understanding this section of Isaiah.

The river of Eden splits off into 4 parts that each water a different area extremely relevant to the biblical story:

- **Havilah** - Pishon (meaning: 'gusher') waters the area where Ishmael's descendants will settle (Gen. 25:18). Probably south and east of Canaan.
- **Cush** - Gihon (meaning: 'bursting forth') waters the land of Cush, where the Ethiopians and Egyptians would be.
- **Assyria** - Tigris flows and waters Assyria.
- **Babylon** - The Euphrates River doesn't even mention the name of where it flows, the readers would know.

So from this list we see all of the major players in the drama of Israel all experiencing the blessing flowing from the mountain of Eden.

In Isaiah 2, written to a people currently at odds or in hot water with most of the regions mentioned in Gen 2, we see a reversal where these nations are the ones now "rivering" back up to the mountain of the LORD to receive his instruction.

It's the redemption of a lost Eden!

Swords to Plowshares

Note how the weapons typically meant for war and destruction are turned into farming equipment used for production and growth.

All of this flows from the nations rivering up to the mountain of Yahweh to learn his instruction.

Contrary to the world's stereotypical view of the Old Testament, the output of learning God's Law and instructions should be a people transformed from using instruments of destruction of life to instruments of cultivation of life.

Torah and Light Wordplay

Isaiah employs a beautiful wordplay between instruction and illumination throughout this passage. The Hebrew reveals this connection:

Instruction	תּוֹרָה	<i>to.rah</i>
Light	אֹר	<i>or</i>

Notice how verse 3 declares that from Zion "shall go forth the *torah*" and "the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." This divine instruction flows outward from the mountain to teach the nations God's ways.

But then in verse 5, there's a striking call back to Israel herself: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the *light* (אֹר) of the LORD." The very people through whom God's instruction was meant to flow to the nations are themselves called to walk in His light.

This reflects Israel's original calling - to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6), demonstrating God's ways so that all peoples might stream to His mountain. The wordplay suggests that God's *torah* and His *light* are intimately connected: His instruction illuminates the path of righteousness for both Israel and the nations.

Centuries later, Jesus would echo this very imagery in the Sermon on the Mount, calling His followers to be "the light of the world" and "a city set on a hill" (Matthew 5:14). Just as Isaiah envisioned nations streaming to Zion to receive God's instruction, Jesus commissioned His disciples to be that illuminating presence in the world - living examples of God's *torah* written on their hearts, drawing others to the mountain of the Lord through their transformed lives.

THE SAUCE

Deep dives & rabbit holes

This passage is almost copy/paste of Micah 4:1-5. Who wrote it first? Did the LORD reveal it to both individually or did the prophets know each other?

How does this passage relate to the Tower of Babel? Who's making the Highest Mountain to the heavens?