

ISAIAH 8 | *Sanctuary or Stone of Offense?*

Sign of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz

1 Then Yahweh said to me [Isaiah], Take a large placard and write on it with a man's stylus, Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz ["Speed-spoil-haste-booty"]. 2 And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me. 3 And I [Isaiah] went to the prophetess (נְבִיאָה), and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz . 4 For before the boy knows how to cry my father or my mother, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.

Assyrian Flood

5 Yahweh spoke to me again:

6 Because this people [Israel and Judah] has refused the waters of Shiloah [the Davidic covenant] that flow gently and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, 7 therefore behold, the Lord (יְהוָה) is bringing up against them the waters of the [Euphrates] River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory, and it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks. 8 And it will sweep on [past Israel] into Judah. It will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck [of Judah], and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

Shattering of Judah's Enemies

9 Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered. Give ear, all you far countries. Strap on your armor and be shattered. Strap on your armor and be shattered. 10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. Speak a word, but it will not stand, for Immanuel.

Sanctuary or Stone of Offense?

11 For Yahweh spoke thus to me [Isaiah] with his strong hand upon me and warned me not to walk in the way of this people saying:

12 Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. 13 But Yahweh of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he will become a sanctuary (מְקוֹדֵשׁ) and a stone¹ of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap

¹ **Is 28:16** 16 Thus says Lord Yahweh, Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste. **Ro 9:33** 33 As it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. **1 Pe 2:8** 8 ...A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken. They shall be snared and taken.²

Scripture or Sorcery?

16 Bind up the testimony (תְּעִידָהּ). Seal the law (תּוֹרָה) among my disciples (לְמִדְּוֹתַי) [leaders of the remnant of Israel]. 17 I will wait (חָכַה) for Yahweh, who is hiding³ his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. 18 Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. 19 And when they say to you, Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers⁴ who chirp and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law (תּוֹרָה) and to the testimony (תְּעִידָהּ)! If they will not speak according to this word [the law and the testimony], it is because they have no dawn [when Messiah comes]. 21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. 22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.

² **Mt 21:44** 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. **Lk 20:18** 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.

³ **Is 54:8** 8 In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says Yahweh, your Redeemer.

⁴ **Le 19:31** 31 Do not turn to mediums or necromancers. Do not seek them out and so make yourselves unclean by them. I am Yahweh your God.

Commentary

1. Sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Is 8:1-4).

- a. **Is 8:1-4** 1 Then Yahweh said to me [Isaiah], Take a large placard (תְּלִיָּה) and write on it with a man's stylus, Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz ["Speed-spoil-haste-booty"]. 2 And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me. 3 And I [Isaiah] went to the prophetess (נְבִיאָה), and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 4 For before the boy knows how to cry my father or my mother, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.
- b. A תְּלִיָּה is not a scroll or a stone tablet, but a flat piece of wood (Eze 37:16) or metal (Is 3:23), appropriate for posting as a sort of placard (J. N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:221). Isaiah's placard is to be public and eye-catching.
- c. The name Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the longest name in the Bible, means "Speed-spoil-haste-booty" (A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 90). Soldiers would shout these words to their comrades as they defeated their enemies (J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1049). This fourfold name of judgment is very different from Immanuel's fourfold name of blessing.
 - (1) **Is 9:6** 6 His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- d. Uriah and Zechariah, two key persons in Judah, will authenticate Isaiah's prophecy.
 - (1) **Dt 17:6** 6 On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses....
 - (2) That "the writing had been witnessed by men of public stature made it impossible to level a charge of 'prophecy after the fact' against Isaiah in coming years" (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:222).
- e. Isaiah's two sons serve as time-indicators for the destruction of Syria and Israel. Before Shear-jeshub reaches and the age of accountability (Is 7:16-17) and Maher-shalal-hash-baz says "Dada" and "Mama" (Is 8:4), Syria and Israel will fall.
 - (1) This interaction will prove whether Isaiah is a prophet or not.
- f. Historically, Isaiah presents this prophecy in 734 bc. It was fulfilled within two years.
 - (1) In 734 bc, Tiglath-pileser marched to the border of Egypt.
 - (2) In 733 bc, he took Galilee, Transjordan, and Megiddo from Israel.
 - (3) In 732 bc, he conquered Damascus and ended Aram Syria.

2. Assyrian Flood (Is 8:5-8).

- a. **Is 8:5-10** 5 Yahweh spoke to me again: 6 Because this people [Judah] has refused the waters of Shiloah [the Davidic covenant] that flow gently and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, 7 therefore behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the [Euphrates] River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory, and it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks. 8 And it will sweep on [past Israel] into Judah. It will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck [of Judah], and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.
- b. The Gihon spring, Shiloh stream, Siloam pool represent the Davidic covenant. Solomon and later Davidic kings were anointed and crowned there.
 - (1) **1 Ki 1:33-34** 33 The king [David] said to them, Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to

Gihon. 34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, Long live King Solomon!

- (2) It was where Isaiah met Ahaz (Is 7:3).
- (3) It was where the Rabshakeh met Hezekiah (Is 36:2).
- (4) It was the waters Jesus used to heal the blind man in Jn 9.
 - (a) **Jn 9:6-7** 6 [Jesus] spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.
- (5) This is the place where Jesus will, in the future, be crowned the Davidic king.
- c. God is the only one who can quench our thirst.
 - (1) **Jer 2:13-19** 13 ...My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. ...18 And now what do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates? 19 Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake Yahweh your God. The fear of me is not in you, declares Yahweh God of hosts.
 - (2) **Jn 7:37-38** 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.
 - (3) **Re 22:17** 17 The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let the one who hears say, Come. And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life without price.
- d. Assyria is likened to a flood (vv. 7-8) and bird of prey (v. 8). The entire Levant will be dominated by Assyria, except for a small Judean enclave (v. 8). God is essentially saying, "If you choose not to satisfy your thirst with me, I will bring on a flood, so that you will nearly be destroyed." Which do you prefer? The seemingly insignificant waters of Shiloah or the mighty river Euphrates?
- e. The return of the name "Immanuel" (cf. Is 7:14; 8:10) offers a ray of hope.

3. Shattering of Judah's Enemies (Is 8:9-10).

- a. **Is 8:9-10** 9 Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered. Give ear, all you far countries. Strap on your armor and be shattered. Strap on your armor and be shattered. 10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. Speak a word, but it will not stand, for Immanuel.
- b. In context, Isaiah is probably speaking to Syria, Israel, Philistia, and Edom, all of whom are seizing the opportunity to attack Judah.
- c. These verses echo Ps 2.
 - (1) **Ps 2:1-2** 1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against his Messiah saying....

4. Sanctuary or Stone of Offense? (Is 8:11-15).

- a. **Is 8:11-15** 11 For Yahweh spoke thus to me [Isaiah] with his strong hand upon me and warned me not to walk in the way of this people saying: 12 Do not call conspiracy all

that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. 13 But Yahweh of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he will become a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken. They shall be snared and taken.

- b. Yahweh puts his strong hand on Isaiah and gives him some fatherly advice:
- (1) Don't walk in the way of the majority of Judahites (v. 11).
 - (2) Don't call conspiracy what the majority calls conspiracy (v. 12).
 - (a) In context, the conspiracy is the alliance of Syria and Israel (Is 7:2).
 - (3) Don't fear what the majority fears (v. 12).
 - (a) Many today have become experts at fuelling fear. Don't give in.
 - (4) Honour Yahweh as holy. Fear and dread him (v. 13).
 - (a) **Dt 5:29** 29 Oh that [Israel] had such a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!
 - (b) **Dt 6:13** 13 It is Yahweh your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.
 - (c) **Pr 1:7** 7 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge.
 - (d) **1 Pe 3:14-15** 14 Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Messiah the Lord as holy.
 - (e) When we seek to solve the riddles of our times according to human explanations and means, we make God appear insignificant. But God calls upon us to make him the most significant fact of our existence, demonstrating by our attitudes and behavior that he is indeed holy (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:234).
- c. If Isaiah honours and fears Yahweh, Yahweh will become a sanctuary for him (v. 14).
- (1) **Dt 33:27** 27 The eternal God is your **dwelling place**, and underneath are the everlasting arms.
 - (2) **Ps 18:2** 2 Yahweh is my **rock** (סֶלֶעַ), my **mountain stronghold** (מְצוּדָה), and my deliverer (פֹּלֵט), my God, my **rock** (צוּר) in whom I take **refuge** (חֹסֶה), my **shield** (מָגֵן), and the horn (קַרְנֵי) of my salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), my **high point** (מִשְׁגָּב).
 - (3) **Ps 32:7** 7 You are a **hiding place** (סִתְּוֶה) for me. You preserve me from trouble You surround me with shouts of deliverance.
 - (4) Believers are to live in constant awareness of God's holy nature, to rest in "the holy place," the place where God dwells in all his holiness (Motyer, 95).
- d. For the majority of Israelites, however, Yahweh will become:
- (1) A stone of offence (v. 14).
 - (2) A rock of stumbling (v. 14).
 - (3) A trap and a snare (v. 14).
- e. Israel will divide over the coming Messiah, Jesus, who is Yahweh.
- (1) **Is 28:13** 13 The word of Yahweh will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, that they may go, fall backward, be broken, snared, and taken.
 - (2) **Mt 21:44** 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.

- (3) **Lk 2:34** 34 Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child [Jesus] is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel.
- (4) **Ro 9:33** 33 As it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.
- (5) **1 Pe 2:6-9** 6 For it stands in Scripture: Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, 8 and A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

5. Scripture or Sorcery? (Is 8:16-22).

- a. **Is 8:16-22** 16 Bind up the testimony (תְּעִידָהּ). Seal the Torah (תּוֹרָה) among my disciples (לְמִדָּה). 17 I will wait (חָכַה) for Yahweh, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. 18 Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. 19 And when they say to you, Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the Torah (תּוֹרָה) and to the testimony (תְּעִידָהּ)! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. 21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. 22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.
 - b. Isaiah orders his teaching to be sealed among his disciples (v. 16).
 - (1) The term disciple is found in two other places in *Isaiah*.
 - (a) **Is 50:4** 4 Lord Yahweh has given me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens. He awakens my ear to hear as a disciple.
 - (b) **Is 54:13** 13 All your children shall be [disciples] taught by Yahweh, and great shall be the peace of your children.
 - (2) Isaiah leads a discipleship community devoted to Scripture. These disciples are a “people within the people,” marked by a deep reverence for the holy God (Motyer, 93).
 - c. Isaiah chooses to wait for/hope in God as God hides his face from Israel (v. 17).
 - (1) **Is 40:31** 31 They who wait for Yahweh shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.
 - (2) **Is 54:8** 8 In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says Yahweh, your Redeemer.
 - (3) **Ps 27:14** 14 Wait for Yahweh. Be strong, and let your heart take courage. Wait for Yahweh!
 - (4) “God’s timing is best and...he will wait for his action, knowing that all other action in defiance of him is futile. This waiting upon God is often a prerequisite to

receiving his blessing, for in the act of waiting we confess our own helplessness and our complete dependence upon him” (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:236).

- (5) The disciples are to hold aloof from popular culture, taking no part in a fear-ridden society. They are to be unmoved by the fears around. They are to enjoy calm in the midst of life’s storms and menaces (Motyer, 95).
- d. Judah should be inquiring of God’s word, not mediums and necromancers (vv. 19-20).
 - (1) **Le 19:31** 31 Do not turn to mediums or necromancers. Do not seek them out and so make yourselves unclean by them. I am Yahweh your God.
 - (2) **2 Ki 21:6** 6 [Manasseh] burned his son as an offering, used fortune-telling and omens, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of Yahweh, provoking him to anger.
 - (3) **2 Pe 1:19** 19 We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.
 - (4) The law and testimony are the sufficient resource of true disciples (Motyer, 97).
 - (5) Scripture is sufficient. Don’t look elsewhere for answers.
- e. Those who reject God’s word:
 - (1) Will have no dawn (v. 20).
 - (2) Will become greatly distressed and hungry (v. 21).
 - (3) Will become angry and speak disrespectfully against Messiah and God (v. 21).
 - (4) Will be thrust into thick darkness (vv. 22).
 - (a) **Ge 1:4** 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.
 - (b) **Jn 3:19** 19 This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
 - (c) **2 Pe 2:17** 17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.
 - (5) This is true in every generation. Unbelievers get darkness. Believers get light.