
1 Nephi 21 — Isaiah 49 — The Servant's Commission and the Engraved Palms

Nephi quotes Isaiah 49 verbatim from the Brass Plates — the commission paired with the exit of ch. 20, c. 588–570 BC.

If Isaiah 48 was the chapter of *come out*, Isaiah 49 is the chapter of *now go forth*. The Second Servant Song opens with the womb-call, moves through perceived failure, expands into the *light to the Gentiles* commission, and lands on the most tender refutation of abandonment-feeling in scripture — *I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands*. The wounds carry the disciple's name.

Ten Insights

- 1. The womb-call (v. 1).** *From the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.* Identity precedes performance. The disciple is called before he acts. Cf. Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15; D&C 138:55–56.
- 2. Mouth like a sword (v. 2).** The Servant's weapon is His word. Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16. Prophetic preaching is surgical.
- 3. Hidden in the quiver (v. 2).** Long obscurity precedes deployment. Moses in Midian, Christ in Nazareth, Joseph Smith in Palmyra. Honor the quiver-time.
- 4. Apparent failure (v. 4).** *I have labored in vain.* The Servant despairs — and commits the outcome to the Lord. The Liberty-Jail posture.
- 5. Commission expanded (v. 6).** *It is a light thing... I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles.* Quoted in Lk. 2:32 and Acts 13:47. The OT's most explicit pre-Christian universal-salvation declaration.
- 6. Kings shall arise (v. 7).** The despised becomes the worshipped — kenosis-exaltation pattern. Phil. 2:6–11 in 700 BC.
- 7. Servant as the covenant (v. 8).** *Berit am* — covenant of the people. The Servant doesn't mediate the covenant; He is the covenant. John 1:14 enacted.
- 8. Prisoners go forth (v. 9).** *Patar*-loosing grammar. Salvation is liberation. Isa. 61:1; Lk. 4:18.
- 9. ENGRAVED ON THE PALMS (v. 16).** *Chaqaq* — the same verb used of the Ten Commandments cut into stone. The Lord's response to Zion's complaint of abandonment is the wounds themselves. The crucifixion-engraving is the answer.
- 10. Mighty One of Jacob (v. 26).** Servant + Redeemer + Mighty One are the same Person. The despising and the delivering belong to one Christ.

Cross-References

Gen. 12:1 (lekh-lekha); Ex. 32:16 (engraving on stone); Deut. 32:10 (apple of his eye); Ps. 22 (despised one's psalm); Ps. 23 (Shepherd); Isa. 42:1–9 (First Servant Song); Isa. 50:4–11 (Third Servant Song); Isa. 52:13–53:12 (Fourth Servant Song); Isa. 61:1–2 (Spirit upon me); Jer. 1:5 (formed in the womb); Hos. 11:1 (Israel/Christ); Matt. 27:42 (he saved others); Lk. 1–2; Lk. 2:32 (light to Gentiles); Lk. 4:18 (prisoners free); Lk. 24:39 (handle me and see); Jn. 1:14 (Word made flesh); Jn. 20:25–27 (prints of nails); Acts 13:46–47 (Paul cites v. 6); Rom. 11; 2 Cor. 6:2 (accepted time); Gal. 1:15 (from my mother's womb); Eph. 1:4 (chosen before foundation); Phil. 2:6–11 (kenosis-exaltation); Heb. 4:12 (word as sword); Rev. 1:16; Rev. 7:16–17 (no hunger, springs); D&C 6:37 (behold the wounds); D&C 18:11 (suffered the pain of all); D&C 138:55–56 (noble and great chosen before birth); 1 Ne. 1:20 (rachamim); 1 Ne. 22 (Nephi's exposition).

Apocryphal Correlations

Wisdom of Solomon 2:12–20. The suffering righteous one despised by the wicked — closest Wisdom-tradition parallel to the despised-Servant of v. 7.

4 Ezra 13:32–52. The Man-from-the-Sea who gathers a peaceable multitude; despised before being glorified. Closest 1st-century-AD Jewish parallel.

1 Enoch 48:1–10 (Similitudes). The Son of Man hidden (parallel to the quiver of v. 2) before being revealed; named before the creation of sun and moon; light of the Gentiles.

Psalms of Solomon 17:21–35. The Davidic Messiah gathers Israel from dispersion — direct gathering-theology echo of vv. 17–23.

Baruch 4–5. *Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of mourning* — the return-of-the-children poem closest to vv. 17–21.

Ascension of Isaiah 11:21–23. The Beloved despised in the form of a man — the hidden Servant of vv. 2–4 in Christianized form.

Targum Jonathan on Isaiah 49. Aramaic targum renders the Servant as *the Messiah* — pre-Christian Jewish messianic identification.

Hebrew Word Studies

mibbeten qera'ani (מִבֶּטֶן קִרְאָנִי, "from the womb He called me") — v. 1. Identity precedes performance. Jer. 1:5, Gal. 1:15, D&C 138:55–56. Election is prevenient.

or goyim (אוֹר גּוֹיִם, "light to the Gentiles") — v. 6. Lk. 2:32 (Simeon) and Acts 13:47 (Paul) both cite. The OT's most explicit universal-salvation declaration.

chaqqotikh (חֻקֵּי־יָדְךָ, "I have engraved thee") — v. 16. Same verb (*chaqqaq*) as engraving on stone tablets. On the palms — the part used to do everything. Crucifixion-grammar in advance.

berit am (בְּרִית אָמ, "covenant of the people") — v. 8. The Servant is the covenant, not its mediator. Christ's body is the covenant in person.

iiyim (אֲיִלִּים, "isles / coastlands") — vv. 1, 8. The far-away peoples; the Lehigh household specifically (cf. 2 Ne. 10:20 — *isle of the sea*).

aritz (אֲרִיצ, "terrible / tyrant") — v. 24 (BoM reading). The captors are *tyrants*, not *righteous ones*. BoM preserves a likely better Hebrew reading.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, let the womb-call rest under all your performance. You were called from the womb; you were named before you knew yourself; the Lord did not love you because you obeyed — the Lord called you, and then you obeyed. Performance-religion inverts the order. Restore it. Second, honor the quiver-time. If you are in a season of obscurity, the obscurity is not failure. The arrow polished in the quiver flies truer when drawn. Your job in the quiver is to be polished, not to force the drawing. Third — and most — look at the engraved palms when the disciple feels forgotten. The Lord's answer to the Lord hath forsaken me is not argument; it is wound. I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. The Lord cannot forget you because you are written into the wounds of His Son. Your name is on the palms. The wounds are your eternal remembrance in the body of the Lord. Hold that when the dark hour comes.