
2 Nephi 13 — Isaiah 3 — The Stay and the Staff Removed, and the Daughters of Zion

The Lord removes the props of Jerusalem and Judah; leadership collapses; the daughters of Zion are stripped; the social order is undone, c. 740–700 BC.

Prophetic sociology. The chapter enumerates a society losing, in sequence, its food (v. 1), leadership (vv. 2–3), mature judgment (vv. 4–5), qualified successors (vv. 6–7), elder honor, and women's dignity. The famous daughters-of-Zion passage (vv. 16–26) lists 21 luxury accessories that will be stripped — naming the wives of the corrupt elders just indicted in vv. 14–15. The chapter is consistent: judgment falls on the elite class in both male and female form.

Ten Insights

- 1. Stay and staff (v. 1).** *Mash'en u-mash'enah* — masculine and feminine forms together signifying every kind of support. Comprehensive removal, not selective.
- 2. Eleven categories removed (vv. 2–3).** Mighty man, judge, prophet, prudent, ancient, captain, honorable, counsellor, artificer, orator. Entire competent class is gone simultaneously.
- 3. Babes shall rule (v. 4).** Spiritual immaturity in leadership as covenant-judgment. Not literal children, but uninstructed leadership filling the void.
- 4. Generational inversion (v. 5).** Child against ancient; base against honorable. The fifth commandment inverted; moral hierarchies collapse.
- 5. Sin as Sodom (v. 9).** *Their sin to be even as Sodom.* Pride and fullness of bread (Ezek. 16:49), not primarily sexual sin. No covenant-origin protects a covenant-failing society.
- 6. Reward of their hands (v. 11).** *They have rewarded evil unto themselves.* Covenant-failure is self-punishing. The judgment is intrinsic, not externally imposed.
- 7. Eaten up the vineyard (v. 14).** *Ye have eaten up the vineyard, and the spoil of the poor in your houses.* Unfaithful leadership consumes its own people. Sets up Isa. 5's vineyard song.
- 8. Grind the faces of the poor (v. 15).** *Grinding the faces of the poor* — milling-imagery; the poor as the millstone-face under the elites' grinding wheel. Visceral economic indictment.
- 9. Twenty-one ornaments (vv. 18–23).** The Lord knows the inventory. *Tiph'eret* — same word as Aaron's priestly garments — here in self-displaying inverse mode.
- 10. Burning instead of beauty (v. 24).** Five inversions: sweet smell → stink, girdle → rent, well-set hair → baldness, stomacher → sackcloth, beauty → burning. The cost of pride enumerated.

Cross-References

Gen. 19 (Sodom); Lev. 26; Deut. 28 (covenant blessings and curses); 2 Kgs. 17:7–23; Neh. 5; Ps. 12; Ps. 80 (vineyard); Prov. 14:31; Prov. 22:22–23; Eccl. 5:8; Isa. 1:21–23; Isa. 5; Isa. 10 (Assyrian rod); Isa. 14; Jer. 5:25–29; Ezek. 16:49; Amos 2:6–8; Amos 4:1; Mic. 2:1–2; Mic. 3:1–4; Hab. 2:6; Mal. 3:5; Matt. 23; Lk. 6:24; Lk. 12:48 (more given, more required); Lk. 16 (rich man and Lazarus); Jas. 5:1–6; 1 Tim. 6:9–10; Rev. 6:15–16; Rev. 17–18 (Babylon); 1 Ne. 22; 2 Ne. 26:29; 2 Ne. 28; Jacob 2; Mosiah 4 (Benjamin on the poor); Alma 1:12; Alma 4:6–12; Hel. 13; 3 Ne. 6:10–18; 4 Ne. 1:24–29; D&C 38:24–27; D&C 49:20; D&C 56:16–20; D&C 78; D&C 104:14–18 (consecration).

Apocryphal Correlations

Sirach 13:20–22. *Humility is abomination to the proud; so is the poor an abomination to the rich* — class-tension parallel to vv. 14–15.

Wisdom of Solomon 5:8–14. Wicked confess pride too late — *what hath pride profited us?* After-the-judgment vanity of vv. 16–23.

1 Enoch 94–98. *Wo to those who acquire silver and gold in unrighteousness* — most concentrated extra-canonical parallel to the chapter's elite-judgment.

Sirach 41:5–11. *The children of sinners are abominable children* — generational-collapse parallel to vv. 4–7.

4 Ezra 16:46–53. *Whoever buys, let them buy as those who shall flee* — collapse-imminence parallel to the chapter's whole.

Tobit 4:14–16. *Give of thy bread to the hungry* — direct contrast to the chapter's elite-excess.

2 Baruch 70–72. Dark waters of the latter days — leaders unjust, princes corrupt, women shameless — closest parallel to the chapter's full sociological picture.

Psalms of Solomon 4:1–25. Condemnation of the hypocritical Jerusalem-elite — concrete parallel to vv. 14–15.

Hebrew Word Studies

***mash'en u-mash'elah* (מַשְׁעָנָם וּמַשְׁעָלָהּ, support — masculine and feminine together)** — v. 1. Hebrew rhetorical device for comprehensive removal. No support of any kind survives the covenant-collapse.

***gezelat he'ani* (גְּזֵלַת הָעֲנִי, the plunder of the poor)** — v. 14. The elites' wealth forensically linked to the poor's poverty. Economic justice is covenant-faithfulness in material form.

***tichanu* (תִּחְנוּ, ye grind)** — v. 15. Milling-imagery — the poor's faces as the millstone-face under the elites' grinding wheel.

***tiph'eret* (תִּפְאֶרֶת, beauty / glory)** — v. 18. Same word used of Aaron's priestly garments (Ex. 28:2; cf. 2 Ne. 8:24). The contrast is deliberate — Aaron's *tiph'eret* serves the Lord; the daughters' *tiph'eret* serves the self.

***ki tachat yofi* (כִּי תַחַת יָפִי, because, in place of beauty)** — v. 24. The five inversions. Post-conquest stripping of the elite. Burning, baldness, sackcloth, stench replace ornaments.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, examine your own ornaments. Modern equivalents: social media curation, status signals, conspicuous markers of in-group belonging. Whose glory does your ornament serve? Second, attend to the poor as covenant-act. The chapter names grinding the faces of the poor as the central sin. Fast offerings, concrete service, resistance to face-grinding economic structures — these are covenant-acts, not optional charity. Third, honor the elderly and the qualified. Be a counter-witness to the collapse the chapter prophesies. Call a parent; visit an elderly ward member; defer to the qualified in their domain.