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A Stone that Causes Men to Stumble and a Rock that Makes Them Fall

8: 11-15

A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall DIG: From 7:2-4 and 8:6, what is the way of this people that YHVH told Isaiah not to follow? How does what they fear contrast with what Isaiah fears? What effects do these fears have on the way each acts? On God's response?

REFLECT: What fears could motivate your agnostic friends to consider God: Job loss? A lost child? Emotional blackout? Serious illness? If you have no agnostic friends, why is that? From watching your life this week, what would someone say it means for you to fear God? How is Jesus both a *sanctuary* and a *stumbling block* (see Romans 9:33 and First Peter 2:6-8)? Which is He right now to you?

The LORD had promised to be with **His people**, saying: **God is with us (8:10b)**. But, many in the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** and the southern kingdom of **Judah** refused to believe **He** would keep **His** promise. **Isaiah** declared: **For this is what ADONAI said to me, speaking with a strong hand (8:11a CJB)**. Evidently **God's** inspiration was especially intense and direct to **Isaiah** at that time. These verses were written to the believing remnant; however, Immanuel would become a **stone that causes** those of no faith **to stumble and a rock that makes** unbelievers **fall (8:14b)**. There are both negative aspects and positive aspects to this prophecy.

The negative aspect was that **both houses of Isra'el** should **not follow the way of this people** of no faith. **He** commanded **them**, "**Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear and do not dread it**" (8:11b-12). For the second time (8:5) **God** gives **Isaiah** special revelation by speaking in the ear of the prophet. Specifically there were two things **he** should not do.

First, neither **Isaiah** nor the remnant should be intimidated by cries of **conspiracy**. They should not follow the crowd and join forces with **the Assyrians** against the northern confederacy. Because they would **not** go along with the crowd and **follow** King **Ahaz**, **they** will be accused of treason and betrayal. Secondly, **Isaiah** should not **fear what they fear**. What do they **fear**? Syria and **Isra'el**. **God** said not to be afraid of them and **Isaiah** had already prophesied what would happen to **them (7:15-17)**.

But there is a positive aspect of the message. **The LORD of heaven's armies is the One you are to regard as holy, He is the One you are to fear, He is the One you are to dread (8:13)**. Once again there are two parts. First, **the LORD** is the one to be set apart for worship because **He is holy**. Secondly, **the LORD** is the proper object of **fear**, meaning the proper object of our reverence, trust, worship, obedience and service (**Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, 10:27, 14:27, 15:33, 15:33, 19:23**).

Today we do not hear much about the **fear of the LORD**. In this "feel good" world we want to think that **God** will accept us no matter what we believe or how we act. Nothing could be further from the truth. Of course, we think, we need to try to do our best, but since we will always sin anyway, we need not expect too much from ourselves. How far this is from the thinking of **Isaiah**. **God** told **His people** to stop worrying about what **the Assyrians**, the Syrians, and **the Israelites** are going to do and to start worrying about what **He** is going to do. This is not to say that we should live in utter terror that **ADONAI** is going to kill us because **He** doesn't like the way we are thinking or acting. **Jesus** tells us that we are worth more than the sparrows or the lilies **He** cares for so much. So what does **fear of the LORD** mean for us? It means we have to reorder our priorities. Instead of asking how we can please ourselves, we must ask how we can please **God**. Instead of spending all our time worrying about how to take care of ourselves, we ought to be asking how well we are living the life of **the One** who called us to **be holy as He is holy (First Peter 1:15-16)**. If we pay attention to this calling we can trust **God** to care for us in far better ways than we can ourselves.³¹

The next passage is very unique because it spells out **Immanuel's** relationship to **the Jewish people**. To those who believe, **Immanuel will be a sanctuary**, or a place of safety (**8:14a**). **But for both houses of Isra'el**, those who do *not* believe, **Immanuel** will become **a stone that causes them to stumble and a rock that makes them fall (8:14b)**. Many times when the word **rock** is used in the TaNaKh, it pictures **Messiah (Genesis 49:24, Exodus 17:6, Numbers 20:8,**

Deuteronomy 32:4, 13, Second Samuel 22:2, Psalm 18:2, 19:14, 40:2, 61:2, 92:15, Isaiah 26:4).

The phrase **both houses of Isra'el** is the origin of the false "Two-House" theory which teaches many Gentiles, unknown to themselves, are actually the descendants of the "Lost Ten Tribes." The reason that they are so inwardly drawn to Torah and to a Torah life-style is because they actually have the soul of an **Israelite** - they are the descendants of the Northern Tribes of **Isra'el**. It is therefore imperative that the truth of their identity be received, and they began to live and act as the people they actually are: the descendants of physical **Isra'el**. They believe that only those congregations or communities who affirm this belief are furthering **God's** plans to unite **Isra'el** and **Judah** into one nation of **Isra'el** in the last days. So, in reality, this faulty "Two House" theory is just another flavor of Replacement Theology (see the commentary on [Galatians Ak - The Hebrew Roots Movement](#)).

This prophecy came true because **Immanuel** became **a stumbling block for the people of Jerusalem. He became a trap and a snare (8:14c)**. With itching ears, **the people of Judah** would continue to listen to **Ahaz**, while refusing to listen to **Isaiah**. Therefore, **they** continued down the path to destruction. **Ahaz** represented the house of David and **Isaiah** prophesied to **him**, "**The LORD will bring on you and your people and on the house of your descendent King David a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah - He will bring the king of Assyria**" (7:17).

Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured (8:15). The attitude we take toward **God** will determine how we experience **Him**. To those who revere and obey **Him, He** becomes a place of refuge and peace. But to those who reject **Him, He** becomes a stone to **stumble and fall** over. **He** does not change. If you make a place for **Him, He** will make a place for you. **I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me find Me (Proverbs 8:17; Jeremiah 29:3; Deuteronomy 4:29)**. Once you believe that, then you can know that whatever happens to you comes from **One** who is both all-powerful and always good.

Paul and others (**Matthew 21:44; Luke 2:34; First Corinthians 1:23; First Peter 2:4-8**), referred to **Israel's** unbelief of **Yeshua Messiah**, by saying: **What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Isra'el, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they**

pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone,” As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame (Romans 9:30-33). Thus, Isaiah’s message followed a common thread in the TaNaKh. God promised to bless those who would believe in and obey Him, but would discipline those who would reject Him.



As Simeon said in the Temple at Jesus’ dedication: **This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Isra’el** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Au - Jesus Presented in the Temple**). How accurately that prophecy would be fulfilled years later. Jesus and His ministry became **a stone that caused mankind to stumble, and a rock that made them fall (Isaiah 8:14b)**. The First Coming of Jesus caused a division among the Jews of the world. Some rose because of Him, because they believed, and many fell because of their lack of faith. Simeon prophesied that Jesus would **be a sign that will be spoken against**, and for the nation of Israel that has been true to this very day. Once again, this concept is started in Luke and completed in Acts. There is a constant division in Isra’el (Acts 14:1-2, 28:23-24).

It is interesting to note that Jews, then and today, do not see Yeshua in this passage at all. They see it as referring to Isaiah himself. **The rabbis teach that the prophet had been instructed by God to hold firmly to his principles, and thus enable him to stand out alone, disregarding all dangerous, though popular, demands or tendencies.**

We need to remember that the same sun that hardens clay also melts wax. Therefore, the choice is ours today. The same Son, in His unchanging nature, is both **a sanctuary and a rock that makes people fall**. It depends on how we respond to His holiness.