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The LORD Has Sent a Message Against Jacob

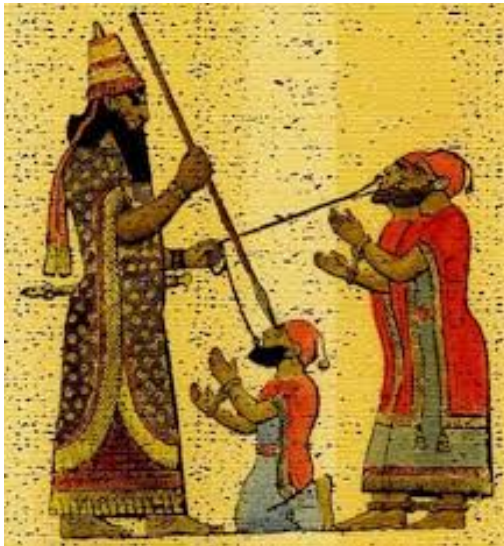
9: 8-12

The LORD has sent a message against Jacob DIG: From 7:1 and 9:10-11, what must have happened in Isra'el? (Note: The opposition of King Rezin of Syria in 9:11-12 indicates this prophecy was given *before* the alliance described in 7:1). How did the people of Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria respond to these attacks in 9:9-10 and 13? How *should* they have responded? For this reason, what will God do to their leaders in 9:14 to 17? With what result? The repetition in 9:12, 17, 21 and 10:4 shows that this is a poem or song. From this refrain, what do you think the poem is about?

REFLECT: From these verses, what attitudes and actions do you see are particularly offensive to ADONAI? Are any of these evident in your life? In the life of our nation? God's final judgment came only after many attempts to warn the people about the consequences of their deeds. What has the LORD brought into your life recently as a warning of the consequences of where you are heading? How have you responded to those warnings?

The doublet, generally saying the same thing over twice from different perspectives, is one of **Isaiah's** traits. The second element in the doublet always gives clearer meaning to the first. For example, **Chapters 28-29** mirror **30-35**, and **Chapters 42:18** to **43:21** reflect **43:22** to **44:23**. In this case **9:8** to **11:16** runs parallel with **7:1** to **9:7**. The prophets recognized, but never accepted, that the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** and the southern kingdom of **Judah** were divided. But one day they will become one kingdom under **God** and **Messiah** will reign forever. Under the inspiration of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**, **Isaiah** has just traced this course of action for **Judah** in **7:1** to **9:7**. Now **he** does the same for **Isra'el**.

God's Word had been rejected in favor of **Isra'el's** self-will. **Her** internal collapse (**9:10**) would be followed by external invasion (**9:11**). When the vineyard produced stinking fruit, the wild animals were allowed to come in and trample it (**5:4-5**). The only way a nation can recover from this kind of devastation is returning to the Word of **the LORD**. They had truly built an amazing capitol city of **Samaria**, and humanly speaking, had much to be proud about. But to leave **God** out of the equation only invites disaster (**Amos 5:11**).



In the first part of his four-stanza poem, **Isaiah** prophesied: **ADONAI has sent a message against Jacob; it will fall on Isra'el (9:8)**. The word **message** is in the emphatic, meaning that **the LORD** had spoken! Would **His** people live by **His** Word or not? This **message** came through the ministries of **Amos and Hosea** from 760 BC onward. Although writing to the nation of **Judah**, **Isaiah** often used the northern kingdom of **Isra'el**, also called **Jacob**, as an example of the fact that **God** judges **His** sinful people. The **message** was one of coming judgment on the northern kingdom of **Isra'el**. The last part of the verse is a Hebrew idiom meaning *soon to be realized*. The coming **fall** of **Isra'el** would be realized very shortly. **She** would soon realize that **her** boasting was only hollow words. This was also a not so subtle message to the southern kingdom of **Judah**, who should have realized that **she** too would be destroyed if **she** persisted in **her** sin.

Pride was the main reason that **the LORD's** message would fall on **Isra'el**. **Ephraim**, with its capitol of **Samaria**, was one of **Isra'el's** largest tribes. It often represented the entire Northern Kingdom (**7:2** and **17**). With the immediate fulfillment of **Isaiah's** prophecy **all the people will know it** was the word of **ADONAI**. Sadly, **they** will realize this too late. **Their** pride would be **their** downfall. **Isaiah makes his point more forcefully by means of a metaphor**. **All the people will know it - Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria - who say with pride and arrogance of heart, "The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone; the fig trees have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars" (9:9-10)**. **Their pride** was seen in the fact that **they** thought **they** could experience only temporary setbacks (**the bricks have fallen**) if **the Assyrian** army would attack them. **ADONAI** was using **Assyria** to discipline **Isra'el**, to humble **her** so that **she** would return to **Him**. But it was as if **Isra'el** shot back at **God**, saying, "We're not going

to repent, we're just going to rebuild. And we don't need **You** to do it." **The northern Kingdom** had a spirit of defiance and rebellion in this response.

They felt that they would be able to make **their** nation better than ever. The expressions here go from that which is cheap to that which is expensive, from **bricks** to **dressed stone** (So what if the Assyrians break down our homes made of brick, we will rebuild them with new **dressed stone**), and from **fig trees** to **cedars** (So what if **the Assyrians** cut down all our **fig trees**, we will replace them with **cedars**). But sadly, this was not to be the case.

Jeroboam II (782-753 BC) gave the northern kingdom of **Israel** prosperity, restoring the boundaries that King Solomon had established (**Second Kings 14:25**). But he led the nation into spiritual adultery (**First Kings 12:25-33**), and eventual political collapse (**Second Kings Chapters 15:31 and 17:1-41**). Of the last six kings reigning during the final twenty years of **Isra'el**, four died of assassination and only one passed the throne to his son. So much for replacing **fig trees** with **cedars**!

Finally, the first wave of judgment hit. **But the LORD has strengthened Rezin's foes against them and has spurred their enemies on. Assyrians from the east and Philistines from the west have devoured Isra'el with open mouth (9:11-12a)**. On every hand adversaries would arise, not in spite of **ADONAI**, but at **His** bidding. From the east and west they would come, before them and behind them. It would be **Magor-Missabib** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah, to see link click Da - Jeremiah and Pash'chur](#)), meaning *terror on every side*, and a foreshadowing that **Judah** would eventually experience. The mouths of their **enemies** open wide to devour those who had been so confident in themselves. Having taken themselves out from under **the hand** of blessing, they would find that the hand of **God** was still outstretched, but then it would be for judgment.

But even this judgment did not appease the wrath of **Ha'Shem**, because **the people** refused to deal with **their** sin. As a result, just as they thought **their** judgment had come to an end and breathed a sigh of relief, **Isaiah** prophesied: **Yet for all this, His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised (9:12b)**. This refrain is repeated three more times (**9:17, 21, 10:4**) and increases the effects of **God's** intense anger, highlighting the certainty of continued judgment.

Where is the line between "decent self-respect" and pride, or between "healthy self-esteem" and self-conceit? The answer is deceptively simple. It all depends on what the "self-respect" or the "self-esteem" is based. If it is based on placing ourselves at the center of our world, as the world does (**First John 2:15-17**), then it is deadly. Such an attitude is nothing other

than **pride** and conceit, because we are trying to make ourselves the basis for our own existence. That is not possible in this world **God** has made. As a result, to say, "I am somebody important because I say so," is ridiculous.

We are not complete in ourselves. As charming as the story of *The Little Engine That Could* may be, saying, "I think I can, I think I can," does not create the ability to do anything. Only when we surrender to the love of **ADONAI** and learn that we are worth the life and death of **the Prince of Peace**, will we discover how much we are really worth. Only when we have admitted to ourselves **that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature (Romans 7:18)** will we be able to know the inner strength that enables us to say: **I can do everything through Him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13).**³⁶