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The Light of Isra'el Will Become a Fire

10: 12-19

The light of Isra'el will become a fire DIG: Read 9:13-14 aloud, accenting the tone of voice and attitude expressed in the many times the words I and my are used. What root problem does this reveal? According to verse 15 what have they gotten backwards? What is Ha'Shem's response to their pride in verses 15-19? Compare 9:16 with 37:36; what do you think happened here? How is God both like a *light* and a *fire* in 10:16-19? What is the truth about the LORD expressed in each idea?

REFLECT: When was the last time you tried to accomplish something through your own strength and wisdom? How did it work out? Did it last? Was it satisfying? Why or why not? Who has the power in your life? Who holds the steering wheel of your life? Who sits on the throne of your heart? Do you know someone who believes the lie? Does YHVH seem more like a guiding light or a consuming fire right now? How so? When have you experienced Him in the other way? What have you learned about the LORD from these experiences?



The indignant answer of the prophet interrupts the blasphemy of the Assyrian king who ventures to compare the God of Isra'el with the useless heathen idols. Isaiah declares that Assyria was not acting out of ignorance. Rather, **she** was strutting around like a peacock, arrogant and cruel. So when Ha'Shem has finished all his work against Mount Tziyon and Yerushalayim, He will punish the king of Assyria for the willful

pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes (10:12). The word **finished** is a tailor's term, meaning *to snip off* a thread when the sewing is done. After using **Assyria** to punish **Jerusalem**, YHVH would then **punish Assyria** because of **the king's willful pride** evidenced by **his haughty look (Psalms 18:27 and 101:5; Proverbs 6:17 and 30:13).** This transitional sentence makes it perfectly clear that the punishment Samaria and Jerusalem endures **(10:5-11)** will not be done in spite of **God**, but because of **Him**. In addition, **Assyria's** judgment will be fully justified as a result of **her** greedy and arrogant attitude.

The Assyrian king bragged about **his** abilities and achievements when **he** said: **For by the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a Mighty One I subdued their kings (10:13).** The ease at which **Assyria** conquered other nations made **her** prideful. **The king** assumed the victories were a result of **his** own skill, intelligence and cunning. Six times he said **I**, and three times he used the word **my**. **The king** felt that what was achieved had been done by his **strength** and **wisdom**.

Then he boasted about his irresistible power. **As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations; as men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered all the countries; not one flapping a wing, or opened its mouth to chirp (10:14).** It was like stealing **eggs** when the mother bird was gone from her **nest**. It was that easy. None of these nations offered any effectual opposition.

The king of Assyria believed the lie that **he** controlled his own destiny. The more his **pride** swelled, the more he took the place of **God**. **He** grabbed the steering wheel of **his** own life and in effect said, "I'm driving now!" When **he** said: **like a Mighty One I subdued their kings (10:13), he** usurped **ADONAI's** authority and position, because that phrase is a description of **the LORD Himself (Genesis 49:24; Isaiah 1:24, 10:34; 33:21, 49:26, 60:16).** This produced a sense of self-entitlement, thinking that **he** could justify anything **he** did. If **he** wanted to reach **for the wealth of the nations, as men gather abandoned eggs (10:14),** then that was his right. But it didn't make it right. Superior skills and abilities are a gracious gift from **God** given for **His** purposes. They do not represent an innate superiority over others to do with as you please. Believing the lie would lead to **Assyria's** destruction.

Because of **Assyria's** pride, **the LORD** said **He** would judge **the king** and **his** empire. **Does the ax raise itself above the person who swings it, or the saw boast against the one who uses it? As if a rod were to wield the person who lifts it up, or a club brandish**

the one who is not wood (10:15)! Assyria was merely an **ax**, or **saw**, or a **rod** in **God's** hand; **Assyria's** strength was really **her** weakness. When **she** boasts, it is like a tool boasting against its maker. It is not the **rod** who lifts up the man, but the man who lifts up the **rod**. Ultimately, the strength is not in the **rod**, but in the hand of the man who swings it. By itself it will lie still on the ground. Therefore, this is **Assyria**; **she** is a **rod** in the hand of **God**. And since **Assyria** did not know that, the judgment must come.

Ha'Shem said **He** would destroy the **Assyrian** army by a **wasting disease** and **fire**. All health, vigor and glory in which **Assyria** exulted will be eaten away and all that will be left will be a wasted, burning carcass. **Isaiah** prophesied: **Therefore, ADONAI, the LORD of heaven's armies, will send a wasting disease upon His sturdy warriors; under His pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing flame (10:16)**. First, **God will send a wasting disease upon them (to see link click Gw - Then the Angel of the LORD Put To Death a Hundred and Eighty Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp)**. This is among the punishments mentioned in the Torah. **The LORD** said: **Then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life (Leviticus 26:16)**. In another verse Moses announced: **The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish (Deuteronomy 28:22)**. Therefore, to show the uniqueness of the punishment, **God** will not use a second army to wipe out **the Assyrians** but strike them with **wasting disease**.

Isaiah stresses **ADONAI** as the ultimate authority. **God** is the ruler of the world, not Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon or Sennacherib. **Heaven's armies** belong to **the LORD** and they march to His call (**Joshua 5:15**). For one who had seen **the LORD high and exalted (6:1)**, **Assyria's** enormous army, and suffocating pride, meant very little. Before the consuming reality of **ADONAI**, all human works are merely timber to be burned up.

Secondly, **the Assyrians**, marching on **Jerusalem**, were walking straight into the fire! The wrath of **God** will burn against the **thorns** and **briers**. **The Light of Isra'el will become a fire, and their Holy One a flame** and **Assyria** would fall **in a single day** (see **Gp - The Timeline of Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah**). **It will burn and consume their thorns and their briers**, pictured as common soldiers. **The splendor of His forests**, or generals, and **fertile fields it will completely destroy, as when a sick man wastes away (10:17-18)**. So although some are counted as **thorns and briers (5:6)**, while others are seen as mighty **forests**, the difference doesn't mean much to a raging **fire**.

And the remaining trees (soldiers) **of his forests** (army) **will be so few that a child could write them down (10:19)**. The result is that there will be so few soldiers' left that **a child could write** all of their names. **There is a rabbinical tradition that only ten men survived and, as this number is represented in Hebrew by the letter yod, which is a mere stroke, a little child could do it.** The motif that connects the punishment of **Assyria** with the remnant of **Isra'el** that survives is seen next.