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Woe to You, Ariel, Ariel, the City Where David Settled

29: 1-8

Woe to you, Ariel, Ariel, the City where David settled DIG: What happened regularly on the temple's altar that Isaiah is warning is mere "lip service," and unintelligible at that (verses 4 and 13)? Who is being criticized in this mockery of the city's unwarranted hope in their immunity from God's judgment? Although it will be the Assyrian army outside their gates, who is really "encamped against" Jerusalem (29:3, also see 28:21)? How would this realization affect the city's proud leadership (29:4, compare with 28:14-15)?

REFLECT: When has ADONAI turned things around for you, suddenly, in an instant? What were you doing when this happened? How did God show His love to you in a special way? What does this show you about the LORD's grace? Were your parents believers? What legacy are you leaving for your children?

This is the second woe in the Book of Woes. Jerusalem prided herself on her pure worship as opposed to the idolatrous Samaria, but in fact, pure worship does not replace a pure heart. It turned out that pride led to her downfall. But God would not only be responsible for her downfall, He would also be able to restore her. Throughout **Isaiah**, a word of judgment (**8:1-4**) is very quickly followed by a word of redemption (**8:5-8**).

The corrupt leadership of **Judah** was apparently urging an alliance with Egypt specifically because they did not believe that **the LORD** could save **them** (**5:18-19, 7:12, 30:2, 31:1**). So, **Isaiah** cries out: **Woe to you Ariel, Ariel (29:1a) the city where David settled (29:1b)! Ariel** means two things, *the lion of God* and *the burning altar-hearth of God*. The word is used in *the lion of God* sense in **Second Samuel 23:20** and **Isaiah 33:7**. The word is used in the *burning altar-hearth of God* sense here in **Isaiah 29:2** and **Ezekiel 43:15-16**. **Isaiah** will use both figures. **He** will view **Ariel** as a *burning altar-hearth* and **he** will view **Ariel**

as a *lion*.

We learn that **Ariel** means **Jerusalem** because this is **the city where David settled (Second Samuel 5:6-10)**. Her close association with **David** was another expression of **Jerusalem's** pride. To the Jewish mind, **David** was the ideal man of **God**. **The rabbis taught that all Jews would enter the Messianic Kingdom, while all Gentiles (unless they converted to Judaism and took on the yoke of the Torah), were doomed to sh'ol. Ezekei'el** understood that **the soul who sins is the one who will die (Ezekei'el 18:1-32)**. For every righteous father like king like Uzziah, there was a wicked son like Ahaz; for every Ahaz, there was a righteous son like Hezekiah. For every Hezekiah, there was a wicked Manasseh. Association guarantees nothing. Salvation is individual and personal. Going to church or messianic temple does not guarantee personal righteousness. Just because you sit in the garage doesn't make you a car!

The LORD chided **the Jews** living in **Jerusalem**, saying: **Add year to year and let your useless cycle of festivals go on (29:1b)**. Adding **year to year** seems to be a sarcastic invitation by **Isaiah** to have the citizens of **Jerusalem** go right ahead with **their** useless **cycle of festivals**. **They** were useless because **their** hearts were far from **God**. Although **they** would continue with **their cycle of festivals**, **they** could not avert the attack by Sennacherib and the Assyrians **(36:1-22)**. **The feasts** may have pleased **the Judeans**, but they did not please **ADONAI**. As opposed to the covenant signed with the antichrist **(28:14-29)**, this was **the near historical covenant with Egypt**.

God's response was to put **Jerusalem** under **siege! Yet I will lay siege to Ariel (29:2a)**. Just when we think we have **God** figured out, **He** pulls the rug out from under our feet. **He** is **the Maker**, not us, and **He** can use **His** power anyway **He** wants **(29:16)**. There is no mention of Assyria here because she irrelevant. The focus is not on Assyria but on **Jerusalem**. The human author wants to make it clear that **ADONAI** is no mere spectator in the theater of human history. It will be **God** who puts **Jerusalem** under **siege** when the Assyrians are at the gate. **He** is **the One** controlling **Judah's** future.

Then **Isaiah** uses another play on words when **he** says: **She will become mourn and lament (29:2b CJB)**. These two words sound virtually the same with just one small change of vowel pattern, *mourning* and *moaning*. The impact of **God's** actions here are emphasized by the use of *haya*, **Ariel** will not merely **mourn and lament, she will become** them when **she becomes** the sacrifice. **She will come**

to Me like an altar hearth (29:2c). We learn that **she will be to me like an altar hearth**, or the *burning altar-hearth of God*. The reason for the **woe** is that the cities pride will be brought down to the ground. **She** will be so low that **her** voice will **mumble out of the dust** like **a ghost** in **8:19**. If we dismiss the sacrifice **ADONAI** has made available to us, then we ourselves **become** the sacrifice. If we do not accept **God's** substitution (**Genesis 22:1-19**), then we must carry the burden of our own sin (**Hebrews 10:26-27; Romans 8:11-13**).



I will encamp against you all around. David may have encamped within **Jerusalem**, but **the LORD** will **encamp against her**. As Sennacherib laid **siege to Ariel**, walling it off so no one could enter or leave, it would in fact be **ADONAI** in the form of the Assyrians. **God Himself** declared: **I will encircle you with towers and set up my siege works against you (29:3)**. The Assyrians developed many ingenious devices to break down the walls of cities they wanted to pillage. Among the greatest were great wheeled **towers** that included a battering ramp on the bottom and spaces for attacking soldiers on the top. **These** were pushed up against the city walls on ramps of earth and wood.

Brought low, or humiliated, **you will speak from the ground; your speech will mumble out of the dust**. This is probably an allusion to the notion, which was common to the ancient peoples, as well as to the Hebrews, that the souls of the dead had a weak, strident sound, entirely different from the voices of living people. The mourners, who were mostly women, spoke in a shrill, feigned voice, and may have practiced ventriloquism; in which case the **voice** would seem to come **from the ground**, where it was popularly supposed the disembodied spirits were.⁹⁸ **Your voice will come ghostlike from the earth; out of the dust your speech will whisper (29:4)**. Thus, **God** has the power of life and death. It was **He** that **the**

Judeans needed to pay attention to, not the Assyrians. **Messiah** warned **them**: **I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has the power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him (Luke 12:4-5).**

Next, the tone shifts from judgment to redemption (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Bz - Redemption**). **Isaiah** wants **the Judean's** to know that **they** can trust **Him** when **they** are faithful *and* **they** can trust **Him** even after **they** have experienced **His** discipline. How foolish **they** were to trust Egypt instead.

*When my son was very young and I had to discipline him, I always tried to reassure him how much I loved him when the discipline was over. I would hold him and spend some time with him. I didn't want to leave him emotionally hurt and distant from me. I wanted him to be secure in our relationship. So when the discipline was over, I would hold him in my arms and tell him how much he meant to me, and how much I loved him. This is what **God** is doing here.*

Once the threshing and the plowing of **Ariel** are over with, as the parables in the previous section pointed out (**28:14-29**), they will give way to planting. **Isaiah** tells us that **God** is going to punish **Ariel's enemies**. **But your many enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff (29:5a)**. **The many enemies of Ariel** are, in reality, no more than **fine dust** or **windblown chaff**. While **Tziyon** would be surrounded by one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian troops, **she** would not be taken at that time (see **Gw - Then the Angel of the LORD Put To Death a Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp**).

ADONAI will come to **His** people as **they** cry out to **Him** for mercy (**Ruth 1:6; First Samuel 2:21; Psalm 8:4, 106:4, Jeremiah 15:15, 29:10**). **Suddenly, in an instant, the LORD of heaven's angelic armies will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire (29:5b-6)**. **He** comes to **His** people to right their wrongs. If they are wrong, **His** coming means punishment (**24:21**), but if they were being wronged, **He** comes to deliver. **He** is **the God** of the exodus, delivering **His** people and destroying **His** enemies. This judgment will be in the form of convulsive judgments and will cause **Ariel's** enemies to disappear. The phrase, **a devouring fire**, is used specifically of the Sh'khinah glory.

Then the hordes of all the Gentile nations that fight against Ariel, that attack her and her fortress and besiege her, will be as it is with a dream, with a vision in the night. As when a hungry man dreams that he is eating, but he awakens, and his hunger remains; as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, but he awakens faint, with his thirst unquenched (29:7-8a). By means of these judgments the enemies of **Ariel** who brought her down, will themselves be destroyed. The result will be that they will be so completely destroyed that they will appear to be only **a dream (Zechariah 12:2-4, 14:1-3)**. In one sense, **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** speaks in general terms of **all the Gentile nations that fight against** Jerusalem over the centuries, but the specific context is Sennacherib and the Assyrians. Compared to the terrifying reality of **ADONAI**, the mighty Assyrian army **will** only seem like **a dream**. Here today, gone tomorrow. **Then the Angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning - there were all the dead bodies (37:36)! So, will it be with the hordes of all the Gentile nations that fight against Mount Zion (29:8b).**

When the Assyrian soldiers were destroyed in **Isaiah’s** day, no doubt the people of **Jerusalem** were overjoyed. But shortly the difficulty subsided and life returned to normal. Rather than turning back to **God**, the nation sunk more deeply into sin. Assyria came against **Yerushalayim** and was destroyed accordingly. This assurance should have encouraged the people to trust **ADONAI** and worship **Him** properly, but it didn’t.