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The Seven Women Seeking the Bridegroom: Isaiah 4:1 as Transition Point in a Redemption Allegory

Jared T. Marcum

Abstract: *Nephi laboriously copied many of the words of Isaiah in hopes that his readers would rejoice in Christ. While Isaiah 4:1 (2 Nephi 14:1) is generally not viewed as Messianic, there may be an allegorical interpretation that would place this verse among Isaiah's other Messianic writings. A pre-Nicene patristic writer, Victorinus of Poetovio, interpreted the seven women of Isaiah 4:1 as representing the seven churches of the Apocalypse and the one man as Christ. Victorinus's Christ-centered interpretation of Isaiah 4:1 has received very little attention in modern scholarship. This paper uses textual analysis to determine if a Christ-centered allegorical interpretation may be considered a strong reading of the verse and the surrounding text (Isaiah 3–4). The results of this analysis show that Isaiah 4:1 may symbolize Zion's turning point in a doctrinally rich allegory of Zion's sin, sorrow, repentance, and redemption through Jesus Christ.*

Isaiah 4:1 reads as follows in the King James Version: “And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” Nephi included this verse in his Isaiah chapters of the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 14:1). As an introduction to these Isaiah chapters, Nephi wrote that “my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish” (2 Nephi 11:6). He then added “I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye

may liken them unto you and unto all men” (2 Nephi 11:8). Even though we may not typically place Isaiah 4:1 on the list of Messianic verses contained in Nephi’s Isaiah chapters,¹ some have seen this verse as a testimony of Jesus Christ.

The earliest record of such an interpretation was made by Victorinus, a patristic commentator and Bishop of Poetovio (Ptuj in modern-day Slovenia), who was martyred during either the Diocletian or Numerien persecutions. Around AD 260² Victorinus wrote, “The one man is Christ . . . the seven women are seven churches, receiving His bread, and clothed with his apparel, who ask that their reproach should be taken away, only that His name should be called upon them.”³ Victorinus was citing Isaiah 4:1 in a commentary on the seven churches of the Apocalypse (see Revelation 2–3). Unfortunately, we don’t know why Victorinus interpreted Isaiah 4:1 this way since, even though Victorinus wrote a commentary on Isaiah, that commentary has not survived.⁴

A literature review for this topic revealed that this Christ-centered reading made by Victorinus has received very little attention in modern scholarship. That does not mean that a Christ-centered reading of Isaiah 4:1 cannot be found among Christians. However, most such interpretations are explored by non-academic commentators.⁵ Still, a Christ-centered reading is not wholly without scholarly mention. Donald Parry, in addition to interpreting Isaiah 4:1 as his colleagues

1. For an example of such a list, see Donald W. Parry, *Search Diligently the Words of Isaiah* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2023), 7–18.

2. Martine Dulaey, ed., *Victorin de Poetovio: Sur L’Apocalypse et autre écrits*, Sources Chrésiennes, no. 423 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1997), 15–16.

3. Victorinus of Poetovio, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John*, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 7, *Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Co., 1886), 345–46.

4. Jerome respected the work of Victorinus, and it is through Jerome that we know of Victorinus and his commentaries. Miran Špelič, “Jerome and Victorinus: A Complex Relationship Between the Compatriots,” *Theological Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (2021), 293–298. Victorinus’s reference to Isaiah 4:1 occurs in his commentary on the seven stars of Revelation 1:16.

5. For examples of these non-scholarly interpretations, see “Seven Women Shall Lay Hold of One Man,” WorldChallenge.org, worldchallenge.org/seven-women-shall-lay-hold-one-man. Jeanne M. Horne, *Isaiah: Prophet to the Nations* (self-pub., 1997), 117.

do (summarized below), left room for a symbolic reading. He asked, “Could this passage also speak symbolically concerning the Lord (‘one man’) and His covenant people (‘seven women’), whose disgrace will be taken away when they are called by His name?”⁶ The purpose of this paper is to answer Parry’s question by analyzing the surrounding text to see if Isaiah 3–4 can support such an allegorical reading. If so, perhaps we can add Isaiah 4:1 to a long list of Isaiah’s writings that inspire Christians to rejoice in Christ, just as Nephi hoped.

Modern Scholarship

To begin this discussion, it will be helpful to summarize how modern biblical scholars have interpreted Isaiah 4:1. Many scholars outside of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have grouped Isaiah 4:1 with the rest of Isaiah 3. In 1884, Keil and Delitzsch wrote that “the division of the chapters is a wrong one here, as this verse [Isaiah 4:1] is the closing verse of the prophesy against the woman.”⁷ Most subsequent Isaiah commentaries follow a similar line of reasoning.⁸ This makes Isaiah 4:1 a sort of concluding statement to, and part of, the bleak picture of Isaiah 3, where the prophet wrote that “thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war” (Isaiah 3:25), and Zion’s gates “shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground” (Isaiah 3:26). Accordingly, many commentators have seen the seven women’s pleading request in Isaiah 4:1 as a sort of low point for Jerusalem following its destruction. For example, J. J. M. Roberts commented that the “day” mentioned in Isaiah 4:1 is one of “judgment, when the war has swept away most of the men, a woman’s pride will have to be satisfied with merely having a husband in name, even if she

6. Donald W. Parry, “Isaiah 3,” in *Old Testament Minute: Isaiah* (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2022), archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/old-testament-minute-isaiah.

7. Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, “Isaiah,” in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 150.

8. For others examples of scholars who place Isaiah 4:1 with their discussions of Isaiah 3, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 201; John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 24: *Isaiah 1–33*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 72; J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, ed. Peter Machinist (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 59; Margaret Barker, “Isaiah,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 501.

has to share him with six other women and must provide her own food and clothing.”⁹

In addition to situating Isaiah 4:1 as a low point in Isaiah’s prophecy, scholars outside the Latter-day Saint tradition have usually focused on possible ancient fulfillments of Isaiah 3–4:1. Blenkinsopp noted a possible Assyrian fulfillment, stating that Isaiah 3 “more likely reflects the anticipated or experienced effects of Sennacherib’s Judean campaign . . . than unrest earlier on in the reign of Ahaz.”¹⁰ Watts saw connections with the Babylonian campaign and Jeremiah’s writings, who used similar phraseology to that used in Isaiah 3–4:1 (see Jeremiah 14:2; Lamentation 1:4; 2:8–9, 12, 13).¹¹ Keil and Delitzsch noted a possible additional ancient fulfillment. They, like Watts, saw correlations between Isaiah’s prophecy and Jeremiah’s laments but also point out similarities between Isaiah’s words and the Roman conquest. In their discussion of Isaiah 3:26 — where Isaiah wrote that Zion, “she being desolate shall sit upon the ground” — Keil and Delitzsch postulated that, “she sits down upon the ground, just as Judaea is represented as doing upon Roman medals that were struck after the destruction of Jerusalem, where she is introduced as a woman thoroughly broken down, and sitting under a palm-tree in an attitude of despair, with a warrior standing in front of her.”¹²

Latter-day Saint scholars likewise usually group Isaiah 4:1 with the rest of Isaiah 3 for reasons similar to scholars outside of Latter-day Saint tradition.¹³ Ogden and Skinner even noted that the Hebrew Bible indicates that Isaiah 4:1 belongs with Isaiah 3.¹⁴ Additionally, the Joseph Smith Translation groups Isaiah 4:1 with the rest of Isaiah 3 — though it is difficult to know if Joseph Smith, his scribes, or editors of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints made this change.¹⁵ In our current Latter-day Saint edition of the King James

9. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 65.

10. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 199.

11. Watts, *Isaiah*, 72.

12. Keil and Delitzsch, “Isaiah,” 149.

13. Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 44–45. Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers and Distributors, 2002), 37.

14. D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *Verse by Verse: The Old Testament*, vol. 2: *1 Kings through Malachi* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 190. See also Nyman, *Great Are the Words*, 37.

15. The original JST manuscript shows two penciled-in verse changes for chapter 4. Next to the verse numbers 3 and 5, someone penciled in 2 and 4. The numbers do not appear to be in Frederick G. Williams’s handwriting

Bible, footnote *a* reads, "i.e. because of scarcity of men due to wars," tying Isaiah 4:1 to Isaiah 3:25, where Isaiah wrote, "thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy might in the war."

Even though Latter-day Saint commentators have generally agreed with those outside of the faith tradition on grouping Isaiah 4:1 with Isaiah 3, many Latter-day Saint commentators do not focus on past fulfillments (conquests of Assyria, Babylon, etc.). Instead, they often discuss possible future fulfillments due to Isaiah 4:1 timing the fulfillment as "in that day." For example, Bruce R. McConkie wrote that "'in that day'—the millennial day—'seven women shall take hold of one man.'"¹⁶ Various Latter-day Saint commentaries over the years have agreed with McConkie and focused on this millennial fulfillment.¹⁷ However, Kerry Muhlestein noted that it may not be an either/or interpretation. He agreed that "in that day" likely references "the primary fulfillment will be in the latter days. . . . Yet it seems that much of it [Isaiah 3–4] is also about Isaiah's day. Most likely there are several fulfillments. Other probable fulfillments occur in Isaiah's day during the scattering of the northern tribes and the near destruction of Judah, and in the destruction and scattering in the days of the Babylonian empire."¹⁸

Both the ancient and millennial fulfillments of Isaiah 3–4 allow us to follow Nephi's counsel to "liken them [Isaiah's words] unto you and unto all men" (2 Nephi 11:8). The ancient fulfillment indicates that pride is Zion's weakness, and that suffering and destruction are the fruits

(the scribe for Isaiah 3–4). Consequently, it is difficult to know who penciled in the numbers. "Old Testament Revision 2," p. 98, Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-2/105. Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 2004), 583–851. See also Monte S. Nyman, "The Contribution of the JST to Understanding the Old Testament Prophets," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Truths*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1985), 121–46, rsc.byu.edu/joseph-smith-translation/contribution-jst-understanding-old-testament-prophets.

16. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 655.
17. See Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 108–9. See also Ogden and Skinner, *Verse by Verse*, 2:190–91.
18. Kerry Muhlestein, *Learning to Love Isaiah: A Guide and Commentary* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2021), 36–37. This multiple-fulfillment perspective is also echoed in the Latter-day Saint Bible Dictionary, where it states that Isaiah's prophecies "are probably fulfilled more than one time and have more than one application" (Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Isaiah").

of pride. Both ancient and modern Israel cannot escape God's justice nor the consequences of their hubris. The millennial view adds that great wars will precede the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, killing many. However, wanton destruction will end when Christ personally reigns on the earth, cleanses Zion, and guides his people. As Muhlestein noted, "whichever fulfillment we choose to consider, Isaiah makes it clear that despite the terrible, desperate time he is describing, there will be some who will be spared, and they will see the beauty and glory God has to offer them."¹⁹

The Importance of Allegory

Even though there is great value in pondering the possible ancient and millennial fulfillments of Isaiah 4:1, Victorinus and Parry suggested that we might also read the verse allegorically, a reading that may open immediate applications that do not place Isaiah 4:1 in the distant past or millennial future. If the seven women can symbolize covenant believers and the one man can represent Christ, then Isaiah 4:1 may be instructive on what it means to approach Christ and plead for his divine mercy. Still, we must tread gingerly. Symbolic interpretation can be a tricky business, and we must be careful lest we "look beyond the mark" and miss the "words of plainness" (Jacob 4:14). However, it is perhaps more dangerous to wholly dismiss allegorical interpretation. As Jeffrey R. Holland wrote, "Jehovah used an abundance of archetypes and symbols. Indeed, these have always been a conspicuous characteristic of the Lord's instruction to his children."²⁰

For example, in recent years, John Welch reintroduced a Christ-centered allegorical interpretation of the Good Samaritan that dominated early Christian discourse but had been largely lost after the Enlightenment. In this allegorical interpretation, Christ is the Samaritan who saves each of us, as represented by the traveler. Welch argued, "this interpretation offers a strong reading of the text. In terms of completeness, coherence, insight and outlook, this may be its best reading."²¹ Why was this interpretation replaced by the now-common moral interpretation? Welch found that the allegorical interpretation remained dominant up through Martin Luther. However:

19. Muhlestein, *Learning to Love Isaiah*, 37.

20. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 137. As quoted in Parry, *Search Diligently*, 75.

21. John W. Welch, "The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 86.

The rise of humanism, scholasticism, individualism, science, and secularism during the Enlightenment, coupled with Calvin's strong antiallegorical stance and capped off with the dominantly historical approach to scripture favored in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, eventually diminished the inclination of scholars to see much more in this text than a moral injunction to be kind to all people.²²

It is important to note that Welch does not argue against the moral injunction of the Good Samaritan. "One need not force a choice between 'ethical or nonethical' interpretations: 'Emphasis can be placed sometimes more on the ethical aspect and other times more on the theological aspect.' The two do not exclude or threaten each other."²³ As we read Isaiah 4:1 allegorically, we need not dismiss the possible ancient and millennial fulfillments of the verse. As noted above, much can be learned from those fulfillments.

Being open to symbolic and allegorical interpretations may be particularly important for readers to truly understand the Lord's message in Isaiah. For, "the prophet Isaiah was singularly creative and artistic . . . and he used a variety of symbols to add color, depth, and meaning to his words."²⁴ Symbols which testify of Jesus Christ must receive particular attention since "all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him" (2 Nephi 11:4). In fact, the mark that Jacob referred to is likely a reference to Jesus Christ himself.²⁵ Therefore, one way to avoid "looking beyond the mark" is to intentionally look for Jesus Christ in the scriptures, including symbolic references to him. Many of the Messianic messages that Christians take for granted in Isaiah have come to us in the form of symbols. "The stem of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1) and the "root out of dry ground" (Isaiah 53:2) are a couple examples.

Even though interpreting scriptural symbolism is primarily a spiritual venture—requiring God's help through the Holy Ghost—"an

22. Welch, "Good Samaritan," 88.

23. Welch, "Good Samaritan," 92.

24. Parry, *Search Diligently*, 75.

25. See Dale G. Renlund, "Jesus Christ is the Treasure," *Liahona*, November 2023, 96, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2023/10/57renlund](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2023/10/57renlund). Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Looking Beyond the Mark," in *A Witness for the Restoration: Essays in Honor of Robert J. Matthews*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Andrew C. Skinner (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 2007), 149–64, [rsc.byu.edu/witness-restoration/looking-beyond-mark](https://www.byu.edu/witness-restoration/looking-beyond-mark).

abundance of study and effort”²⁶ are also necessary (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8). Sometimes, a symbol is revealed or confirmed to us after hours, weeks, or years of diligent study. In that diligent study, we might hope to find what Welch found in the Parable of the Good Samaritan — evidence for a strong allegorical reading. As we seek for a strong reading, there are two questions that may be helpful.

First, what evidence in the surrounding text and elsewhere in scripture supports a symbolic reading? Welch serves as an example of this type of verification. After discovering the early Christian allegorical reading of the Good Samaritan, he sought to validate that interpretation through an investigation of the text. He found that other elements in the parable strengthened and expanded a Christ-centered reading.

Second, we may further validate a symbolic reading by asking if the reading is in harmony with God’s Plan of Salvation. This requires a “firm knowledge of gospel doctrines and truths.”²⁷ Again, Welch’s Good Samaritan research serves as an example. Welch did not only align the symbols found in the parable, but he also showed that the Christ-centered interpretation is an accurate doctrinal answer to the original textual question posed by the lawyer, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). Welch further strengthened the doctrinal soundness of the allegorical reading with illuminating support found elsewhere in scripture, particularly Latter-day Saint scripture.²⁸ Welch showed that the parable of the Good Samaritan “works very well as an extended allegory for the plan of salvation. All of its elements fit meaningfully into an allegory of the fall and redemption of mankind, encasing many allusions to divine, sacred, sacramental, ecclesiastical and eschatological symbolic elements.”²⁹

The following discussion will apply these two approaches to see if the Christ-centered interpretation proposed by Victorinus and Parry constitutes a strong reading of the text. Our research questions are then as follows:

1. Does Isaiah 4:1 and the surrounding text create an allegorical narrative about Zion and Jesus Christ?
2. Is the resulting allegorical narrative doctrinally sound and supported elsewhere in scripture?

26. Parry, *Search Diligently*, 75.

27. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 11.

28. Welch, “Good Samaritan,” 86.

29. Welch, “Good Samaritan,” 85–86.

It may be worth noting how this paper will break down Isaiah 3–4 for the purposes of constructing an allegorical narrative. As noted above, scholars tend to situate Isaiah 4:1 as the concluding statement to Isaiah 3. In an allegorical reading, however, Isaiah 4:1 might better be considered as a turning point between the two chapters.³⁰ Isaiah 3 and 4 possess stark contrasts. Isaiah 3 describes the consequences of Jerusalem's prideful rejection of Yahweh. Isaiah 4 outlines Yahweh cleansing and glorifying Jerusalem. From an allegorical perspective, Isaiah 3 may represent Zion's prideful rebellion against the Lord and the consequences for her wickedness. Isaiah 4 may represent the Lord blessing righteous Zion. Doctrinally speaking, righteousness may follow sin in cases of true repentance. The allegorical interpretation of Isaiah 4:1—as proposed by Victorinus and Parry—provides this essential repentance hinge point between Zion's sin in Isaiah 3 and her righteousness in Isaiah 4.

The following discussion begins with a textual analysis of the elements of Isaiah 4:1. Following a discussion of the verse itself, we will also analyze parts of Isaiah 3–4 that expand Zion's repentance narrative. This textual analysis will (a) search for symbolic meanings that may be extracted from the words themselves, (b) analyze how parallelisms in the text might further add meaning to the allegorical narrative, and (c) look at similarities with other repentance narratives (allegorical and literal) found elsewhere in scripture.

Women as Representing Zion

The text appears to provide significant support for the seven women as symbolic representations of covenant Zion. The fact that the seven are portrayed as female may provide our first symbolic support. Earlier, Isaiah used parallel female figures in the form of daughters and a solitary woman that represented the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 3:16–26). In Isaiah 3:16–24, the daughters of Zion are portrayed as full of prideful indulgence. Some Latter-day Saint commentators have

30. Interestingly, two of the major Septuagint Codices—the Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus—treat the verse in this way by adding a section break both before and after the verse. "Isaiah, 3:2–4:2," Codex Sinaiticus, The Codex Sinaiticus Project, 6 July 2009, codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?__VIEWSTAT_EGENERATOR=01FB804F&folioNo=2&lid=en&quireNo=43&side=r&zoomSlider=0. *The Codex Alexandrinus; In Reduced Photographic Facsimile: Old Testament*, part 3, *Hosea–Judith* (London: British Museum, 1936), 303, Is. iii.8–iv.5.

interpreted these verses as condemnation on women who have fallen into immodesty and/or vanity.³¹ In an allegorical reading this female-only limitation is likely unnecessary due to the frequency with which the scriptures use women to symbolize the whole of God's covenant people, both male and female. The daughters of Zion are a frequent metaphor for the city of Jerusalem — and by extension the people of the covenant — throughout the Old Testament. This is particularly true in the book of Isaiah, where Jerusalem and Zion are often personified as women.³² Additionally, in the New Testament, the “bride of Christ” is a common symbol for God's covenant people.³³

If we then interpret the women of Isaiah 3:16–4:1 as symbolically representative of covenant Zion — with Isaiah modifying the symbol from daughters (3:16–24) to a single woman (3:26) and then to seven women (4:1) — we can start to craft an allegorical narrative for Zion. In Isaiah 3:16 we see the daughters of Zion fall into prideful vanity. Isaiah wrote, “the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.” The results of that pride and vanity are that Yahweh “will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts” (Isaiah 3:17). These punishments describe the shaving of the head, a specific humiliation that a conqueror would inflict upon their newly captured slaves.³⁴

Isaiah continued, “that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.” The daughters of Zion end up wearing sackcloth, have ropes around their necks, and are painfully branded, marking them as slaves to oppressive masters. Where are their protectors? Isaiah wrote that

31. See Ellis T. Rasmussen, *A Latter-day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 506.

32. Elaine R. Follis, “Zion, Daughter of,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1103. Tikva S. Frymer-Kensky, “Women, The Nonhuman Female,” in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier et al. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 1140. Parry, *Search Diligently*, 102–106. For instances of women representing Zion in the Old Testament, see 2 Kings 19:21; Psalm 9:14; 48:11; 97:8; Isaiah 1:8; 3:16–17, 26; 4:4; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:2, 23; Lamentations 1:6; 2:4:22; Micah 4:8–13; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 2:10; 9:9.

33. For New Testament examples see Matthew 9:15; 15:1–13, 25:1–13; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34; John 3:29; Ephesians 5:22–33; Revelation 12:6; 21:2, 9.

34. Watts, *Isaiah*, 71.

"Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war" (Isaiah 3:25). Isaiah's graphic descriptions add important details to Zion's allegorical narrative. Her fall into prideful indulgence leads to a loss of the Lord's protection and as a result she falls victim to Satan's violent and oppressive rule.

How does Zion react to her loss and oppression? Isaiah wrote that "her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground" (Isaiah 3:26). Three of the imagery elements in this phrase add richly to a potential allegory for Zion, including: Zion's location (on the ground), her situation (being desolate), and her feelings (lament and mourn). The imagery of Zion's location may have several implications. First, the ground was the seat of slaves and Isaiah may be emphasizing Zion's enslaved status.³⁵ Another symbolic implication of Zion's location may relate to Zion's covenantal status. As noted by Walter Brueggemann, "to be 'from the dust' is to enter covenant and to return 'to dust' is to have the covenant voided."³⁶ This imagery "from the dust" (or vice versa) was used frequently to describe the covenant established with royalty. For example, the Lord used "dust" imagery to condemn the Israelite king Baasha for violating covenants. "Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin" (1 Kings 16:2). The following verses in 1 Kings describe Baasha's return to the "dust."

Isaiah may have further emphasized Zion's fall from covenantal royalty by paralleling the description of Zion sitting on the dusty ground against the fine clothing in Isaiah 3:16–23, that befits "the dowagers of Jerusalem society."³⁷ Brueggemann stated, "the image of dust refers to the status of a nobody before he gains the power of the throne and the status of a nobody when he has lost his throne."³⁸ Zion's situation — described in Isaiah 3:26 as "desolate" — adds further allegorical imagery to her covenantal status. Wildberger noted that Zion's desolation may more than simply describe the destruction of Jerusalem. This desolation may indicate that Zion is being described as "a childless widow."³⁹ In ancient Israel, childlessness was symbolically significant.

35. See Parry, Parry, and Peterson, *Understanding*, 460.

36. Walter Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84, no. 1 (1972): 3.

37. Watts, *Isaiah*, 70.

38. Brueggemann, "Dust to Kingship," 5.

39. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 159.

Brueggemann noted that “barrenness is a manifestation of curse or being out of covenant.”⁴⁰

However, when one returns to “dust,” there is more implied than simply a fall from exalted status back to that of a normal citizen. Dust frequently represented going from death to life and life to death. Adam was formed from “the dust of the ground, and [God] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). Conversely, “thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.” (Psalm 104:29). For example, when the Lord removed Baasha from the throne, Baasha does not return to the dusty life of a normal citizen. He and all his household return to the dust of death (see 1 Kings 16:3–6). Brueggemann wrote that in Psalm 104:29, “Covenant and creation here are closely related. . . . When there is good relation, i.e., under Torah, then there is revived *nepeš* [soul]; when relations deteriorate, there is dust and death.”⁴¹ Consequently, Isaiah’s description of Zion sitting desolate on the dusty ground may allegorize that in addition to being out of the covenant and enslaved, Zion is also spiritually dead.

This brings us to a third element of imagery contained in Isaiah 3:26—Zion’s lamenting and mourning. Isaiah wrote in 3:24 that the fine clothing of the daughters of Zion was replaced by sackcloth. We may conclude that by writing that Zion laments while sitting on the ground, Isaiah referenced the customary mourning practice of wearing sackcloth while sitting on the ground and pouring ashes over one’s head. This practice was an outward expression of the deepest sorrow.⁴² Allegorically, this may show that Zion’s enslavement, loss of covenant relationship, and spiritual deadness has at long last compelled her to a deep contrition. She has hit rock bottom, in other words.

In Isaiah 3:26, the King James translators rendered the Hebrew *waniqqātâ* as desolate in “she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.” *Waniqqātâ* could have a dual meaning in this verse. On one hand it may represent Zion as a childless and barren widow, as noted above. Additionally, it may add doctrinal richness to Zion’s lament. Forms of *nāqâ* appear 44 times in the Old Testament and this word usually communicates innocent, clean, blameless, etc.⁴³ For example,

40. Brueggemann, “Dust to Kingship,” 4.

41. Brueggemann, “Dust to Kingship,” 7.

42. Genesis 37:33–35; Esther 4:1–2; Job 42:6; Psalm 30:11; Jonah 3:5–8.

43. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), s.v. “נָקָה.”

waniqqātâ is used in Numbers 5:28 to describe a woman proven innocent following the Sotah ritual. If a man suspected his wife of adultery, but there were no witnesses to confirm his suspicion, he could bring her to the priest at the Tabernacle. The priest would make an "offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance" (Numbers 5:15). This offering consisted of barley alone, with no oil or frankincense. The priest would put the memorial offering in the wife's hands while the priest held a cup of dust from the Tabernacle floor mixed with water. The wife would then swear to an oath of innocence, which the priest wrote down and then "blotted out" the oath by dipping it in the cup of Tabernacle dust. The wife would drink the bitter water and if guilty she would miscarry and/or become infertile. Numbers 5:28 was the result if she was innocent. "And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then *she shall be free [waniqqātâ]*, and shall conceive seed." Not only would the ceremony exonerate the wife, it was also "sufficient to remove the destructive effects of suspicion and fear within relationships."⁴⁴

The symbolic implication of the dual meaning of *waniqqātâ* may be that Zion's deep sorrow serves an important purpose that helps free her from the shackles of sin and repair her broken relationship with God. The importance of deep sorrow is doctrinally confirmed elsewhere in scripture. As Paul later wrote to the Corinthians,

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves [apologia], yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! (2 Corinthians 7:10–11)

Paul's use of the Greek *apologia* here means to make an answer or defense when accused by others.⁴⁵ Therefore, allegorically, Zion's deep mourning is the only honest answer for her sins and represents true godly sorrow. This sorrow then helps cleanse her of those sins and turn away from them. The combined allegorical implication of

44. Philip J. Budd, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 5: *Numbers* (Nashville: Word Books, 1984), 67.

45. See Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 117.

the imagery of Isaiah 3:26—including Zion’s position (sitting on the ground), situation (desolate), and feelings (lament and mourn)—may be that she realizes that without Yahweh and the protection of his covenant, she is destitute, empty,⁴⁶ and a slave to the adversary. She humbly recognizes that she has been cut off from God’s presence and is spiritually dead. This Godly sorrow helps her turn away from her sins and back to God.

Isaiah 4:1—which immediately follows Zion’s mourning in Isaiah 3:26—then, becomes that allegorical turning point, as personified by seven women. The first allegorical detail may be in the word Isaiah chose for the women of Isaiah 4:1. From the verse, we can tell that the seven women are unmarried since they are proposing marriage to the one man. However, Isaiah does not use the word that is commonly interpreted as damsel in the Old Testament (*naʿārâ*), which often references a young woman that has never been married before.⁴⁷ Instead, Isaiah used *ʾiššâ*, a more generalized term for a woman that is most often translated as wife.⁴⁸ This is the term used to describe the widows in the levirate regulations—the brotherly obligation to marry and raise seed to a deceased brother through his widow (see Deuteronomy 25:5). Hence, it is likely that Isaiah meant that these seven women were previously married and are now unmarried widows.⁴⁹ Their widowed status also makes good contextual sense. Isaiah had just outlined the loss of men due to war (see Isaiah 3:25) and personified the city of Jerusalem as a mourning woman (see Isaiah 3:26). In an allegorical sense, understanding the women as widows helps us contextualize Zion’s situation. In her prideful state, Zion loves and binds herself to the world and its arm of flesh. Ultimately, this relationship fails her, and she is left exposed to Satan’s attacks.

In an allegorical reading, the fact that the women are numbered as seven has particular significance. In Hebrew, seven refers to something that is complete or whole. This symbol is found extensively throughout the Old and New Testaments.⁵⁰ In Isaiah 4:1, the number

46. *Destitute* (NIV) and *empty* (ESV) are two other English translations of (*nāqâ*).

47. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “נָעָרָה.”

48. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “אִשָּׁה.”

49. See Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 159.

50. For examples of seven used in the Old Testament that may have symbolic significance, see Genesis 2:3; Leviticus 25:4; Genesis 41:26–30; Joshua 6:1–16; 2 Kings 5:10–14. See also Corbin Volluz, “A Study in Seven: Hebrew Numerology in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2014):

seven could have multiple symbolic applications that add to the repentance allegory. Perhaps the number seven represents Zion as a whole group — just as Victorinus interpreted the seven women as representing the seven churches of the Apocalypse. After all, "pride is the universal sin."⁵¹ Another possibility is that the number seven emphasizes Zion's complete desperation and humility. Perhaps these women are like the prodigal son, whose desolation compelled him to see the truth of his situation, "[come] to himself" (Luke 15:16–17) and turn to his father. Both interpretations add emphasis to Zion's predicament. *All* members of Zion must turn to Christ in *complete* humility.

Bread and Clothing

Before the seven women make their request of the one man, they offer to "eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel" (Isaiah 4:1). Initially, the offer by the women to provide their own bread and clothing may seem a bad doctrinal fit to the allegorical narrative. Christ is the bread of life (see John 8:35) and he seeks to clothe us in robes of righteousness (see Isaiah 61:10). Why would the seven women not want these things from him? This is where a contrasting parallelism with Isaiah 3 may help us understand why the women would offer to eat their own bread and clothing. Isaiah 3:6–7 states that "a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people."

This demand is made of a close kinsman — the man's brother in the house of his father. This description — along with the brother wearing a cloak or an outer coat (translated as clothing in verse 6) — may indicate that this brother held some kind of leadership position in the family.⁵² The position of authority, the close relationship, and the surrounding circumstances indicate that this demand may be an example of

57–83. Udo Becker, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols*, trans. Lance W. Garmer (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1994), 266.

51. Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride," *Ensign*, May 1989, 4, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1989/04/beware-of-pride?lang=eng. Dieter F. Uchtdorf addressed the men of the Church directly on the issue of pride, demonstrating that pride is not just a female problem. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Pride and the Priesthood," *Liahona*, November 2010, 55, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2010/10/pride-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng.

52. See Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 160. See also Watts, *Isaiah*, 132.

the ancient practice of the redeeming kinsman (*gō'ēl*⁵³). Botterweck stated that a *gō'ēl*:

refers to a man's brother, uncle, cousin, or some other kinsman who is responsible for standing up for him and maintaining his rights. Behind this usage stands the strong feeling of tribal solidarity: not only the members of a clan, but also their possessions, form an organic unity, and every disruption of this unity is regarded as intolerable and as something which must be restored or repaired.⁵⁴

Unterman added, "The *gō'ēl* ('redeemer') was always the nearest adult male relative."⁵⁵ The Mosaic law set forth specific rules regarding *gō'ēl* (see Leviticus 25:25–34, 47–54; Numbers 35:16–21; Deuteronomy 19:6, 12). "Basic duties of the *gō'ēl* were: (1) to buy back sold property; (2) to buy back a man who had sold himself to a foreigner as a slave; (3) to avenge blood and kill a relative's murderer; (4) to receive atonement money; and, figuratively, (5) to be a helper in a lawsuit."⁵⁶

Redeeming kinsmen were safety nets in Israel. When things went wrong economically, a *gō'ēl* could save someone from ruin and slavery, keeping property and people within the larger family unit. Much had been lost in Isaiah 3:1–5. Judah and Jerusalem had lost "the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water" (Isaiah 3:1). The Lord had taken their leaders — and without strong leaders and the basic necessities of life, "the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour" (Isaiah 3:5). The Hebrew word translated as oppressed in Isaiah 3:5 (*nāḡās*), often references the oppression given by a taskmaster or creditor.⁵⁷ For example, this word describes Israel's taskmasters during their slavery in Egypt (see Exodus 5:6–14). *Nāḡās* also describes the creditors who were to release debts during the Jubilee year (see Deuteronomy 15:1–3). These same debts

53. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "גֹּאֵל."

54. Helmer Ringgren, "Gā'āl," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:351.

55. Jeremiah Unterman, "Redemption," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:652.

56. Jennifer Clark Lane, "The Lord Will Redeem His People: Adoptive Covenant and Redemption in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 40.

57. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "נָגַא."

were reserved for redemption from a *gō'ēl* (see Leviticus 25:25–28). In Isaiah 3, Jerusalem is famine-stricken and leaderless. Everyone becomes a debtor and creditor. As recompense, all in Jerusalem exact not only property as payment but likely people in the form of slaves.

It would have been natural for a man to turn to his brother, his closest redeeming kinsman, in such a circumstance. However, there are several aspects of Isaiah 3:6 that make it unusual when compared with other *gō'ēl* examples in the Bible. First, the request is "a categorical command"⁵⁸ and lacks the conventional respect that was likely customary in such a situation. Isaiah even may have indicated the demand was a disrespect by immediately prefacing the verse with "the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable" (Isaiah 3:5).

Other redemption requests in the Bible are much less forceful. For example, when Jeremiah's uncle, Hanameel, requested that Jeremiah redeem a family field, Hanameel asked "Buy my field, I pray thee . . . for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself" (Jeremiah 32:8). Hanameel entreated Jeremiah with respect and recognized that Jeremiah could accept or refuse the request. This right of refusal also shows up in the story of Ruth when the nearer kinsman relinquishes his rights to redeem Ruth and her property (see Ruth 4:6). The man of Isaiah 3:6, on the other hand, appears to disregard the station of the *gō'ēl*, his brother's right to refuse, and commands his brother to take charge. In fact, Wildberger translated the man's actions as "then one will pounce on his brother."⁵⁹

The second unusual part of the demand in Isaiah 3:6 is that the man wants to "let this ruin be under thy [his brother's] hand." Muhlestein noted that this phrase indicates that "no one will want to take responsibility for the situation in which they find themselves." In other words, the man does not want accountability for the ruin of the family on his own shoulders. Instead, he wishes to place that accountability on the shoulders of his brother.

In contrast to the man of Isaiah 3:6, we read the offer of the seven women, to "eat of our own bread, and wear our own apparel" (Isaiah 4:1). The contrasting tenor of these requests is striking. Where the man of Isaiah 3:6 commands and feels entitled to his brother's bread and clothing, the seven women feel no such entitlement. What may add to

58. Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 132.

59. Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 123.

the significance of the women's offering is that in terms of marriage, bread and clothing were not simply daily necessities. Along with conjugal rights, they comprised a woman's marital claim upon her husband (see Exodus 21:10–11). When the seven women say they are willing to provide those rights for themselves, they are remitting their claim to those rights.

Allegorically, the juxtaposition of the demand in Isaiah 3:6 and the offer in Isaiah 4:1 adds significant detail to Zion's narrative. In Isaiah 3:6 prideful Zion is disrespectful, entitled, and wanting to abdicate accountability to others. All she feels is the "sorrow of the world" which "worketh death" (2 Corinthians 2:10). Later, as her humiliation completes and she has lost everything, a thoroughly humbled Zion does not feel that she is entitled to anything. Hence, she takes accountability for her own sins and accepts the consequences, particularly those placed on her by the Lord, who had taken "away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water" (Isaiah 3:1). It may have been presumptuous for the seven women to request the very thing that the Lord had purposely removed. We see the prodigal son behave in a similar fashion during his repentance. He was willing to give up his familial station as son. "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18–19). Allegorically, the offer to self-clothe and self-feed may symbolize that after all her suffering, Zion is now willing to offer up what Christ truly delights in, "a broken and a contrite heart" (Psalms 51:17).

Shall Take Hold of One Man

The one man of Isaiah 4:1 seems to step in and out of the story with only one concrete description, that he is "one." From an allegorical perspective—particularly for Christological allegory—"one" could have multiple meanings. For example, Deuteronomy enumerates God as one. "The LORD our God is one [*ehād*] LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4). '*Ehād*' can also be translated as *only*.⁶⁰ The "one man" might also be the "only man." Christ is often described as "only." He is the "Only Begotten Son" (John 3:16) and "there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ" (2 Nephi 31:21). There is also an interesting scriptural relationship between the woman's request to be "called by thy name" and the concept of "only." At the conclusion of his

60. See 1 Kings 4:19. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "אֶחָד."

Isaiah chapters, Nephi wrote, "there is *none other name* given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved" (2 Nephi 25:20; see also 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 5:8; Acts 4:12).

Besides being described as "one," there may be another less concrete allegorical hint to the one man as a potential symbol for Jesus Christ. The phrase, "take hold of one man" (Isaiah 4:1) describes the physical action demonstrated by the seven women as they make their proposal to the one man. The Hebrew word for "take hold" (*ḥāzaq*) is different than the word for "take hold" used in Isaiah 3:6 (*tāpās*) that describes the demand made by the man of his brother. *Hāzaq* can also mean to make strong or be strengthened by.⁶¹ For example, Daniel used forms of *ḥāzaq* to describe his vision of the Lord, whom he also described as a man.

Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he *strengthened me* [*wayḥazzaqēnī*], and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, *be strong* [*ḥāzaq*], yea, *be strong* [*ḥāzaq*]. And when he had spoken unto me, I was *strengthened* [*hiḥzzaqtī*], and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast *strengthened me* [*ḥizzaqtānī*]. (Daniel 10:18–19)

Allegorically, by taking hold of Christ, Zion is recognizing that he is the "only one" with the strength to help. This taking hold was also described by Alma during his repentance. "As my mind *caught hold* upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death" (Alma 36:18).

As mentioned, Isaiah 3:6 uses the word *tāpās* in "a man shall *take hold* of his brother of the house of his father." *Tāpās* usually simply denotes physically holding something and does not carry with it the idea of strengthening.⁶² Consequently, there may be an important symbolic juxtaposition between the brother of Isaiah 3:6 and the one man of Isaiah 4:1. The brother is ultimately incapable. He says, "I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people" (Isaiah 3:7). We see a similar situation in the story of Ruth, where Naomi and Ruth's closer kinsman replied to Boaz "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance:

61. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "ḥāzaq."

62. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "tāpās."

redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it” (Ruth 4:6). The allegorical implication of the inability of these incapable kinsmen may be that Zion must “cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils” (Isaiah 2:22). Relying on the arm of flesh will not yield the redemption Zion desires. Instead, Zion must trust in him that is “mighty to save” (Isaiah 63:1).

A Name that Removes Reproach

The phrase “only let us be called by thy name” (Isaiah 4:1) may be the most direct indication that the one man may act as a symbol for Jesus Christ. This phrase explains why the seven women take hold of the one man. They are not simply begging for help but are proposing marriage. Hans Wildberger wrote that the name request did not mean,

“if we could only have your name,” or something like that, as it is often translated; after the marriage the wife often kept the name she had had before it. . . . It points back to an ancient custom which was practiced also when one participated in marriage rites, which formally were handled like a purchase: the announcing of the name was the last action, declaring the marriage transaction had been finalized.⁶³

In a very similar way, the followers of Christ also take upon them his name (see Isaiah 43:7; 3 Nephi 27:5). In the ancient world, names were “perceived not as a mere abstraction, but as a real entity, ‘the audible and spoken image of the person, which was taken to be his spiritual essence.’”⁶⁴ Jennifer Clark Lane noted, “There are several instances when names are changed in the Old Testament, and this change of name indicates a corresponding change in character and conduct. This illustrates the Hebrew belief that names represent something of the essence of a person. A new name shows a new status or the establishment of a new relationship.”⁶⁵

Allegorically, by asking for a new name, the seven women may be showing that they wish to change their behavior and form a new type

63. Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 160.

64. Bruce H. Porter and Stephen D. Ricks, “Names in Antiquity: Old, New, and Hidden,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 1:504–5. The contained quotation is from W. Brede Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, trans. John B. Carman (Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), 416.

65. Lane, “Redeem,” 42.

of relationship with the one man—in a similar way that Abram and Jacob took new names when they formed a new relationship with the Lord. Within the Latter-day Saint tradition, taking on a new name has particular significance, especially in a temple context. Latter-day Saint ordinances and covenants witness “unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:13). In this way, the name request made by the seven women may mirror a believer’s pleadings to be called into Christ’s covenant family.

The seven women clearly understand that the man’s name would remove their reproach. The humiliation that the seven women “would like to escape under any circumstances, consists of being a widow and unmarried, and possibly also in having no children and living under the threat of being raped.”⁶⁶ All three of these negative consequences fit well within the larger text since the daughters of Zion are enslaved in Isaiah 3:24 (sexual exploitation), loses her “men” in Isaiah 3:25 (widowhood), and she is left desolate in Isaiah 3:26 (barren). Allegorically, this reproach has driven Zion to a vital realization, that only the Lord’s name can save them from it. Isaiah 52 also emphasizes how enslavement can help Zion remember God’s name. “My people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl. . . . therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I” (Isaiah 52:5–6).

Victorinus allegorized that when the seven women ask for the one man to remove their reproach, they represent the church who asks Christ “that they may be cleansed from their sins . . . which is taken away in baptism, and they begin to be called Christian men, which is, ‘Let thy name be called upon us.’”⁶⁷ The direct relationship between the seven women’s reproach and asking for his name adds doctrinal richness to an allegorical interpretation of the verse. This is particularly true for Latter-day Saint doctrine, where a desire for forgiveness of sin is a prerequisite for participation in sacrament and baptismal ordinances. These ordinances are directly tied to taking upon them the name of Christ. As it says in the Doctrine and Covenants:

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have

66. Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 161. For examples of these three humiliations, see Isaiah 54:4, Genesis 30:23, and 2 Samuel 13:12–13 respectively.

67. Victorinus, *Commentary*, 7:346.

truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church. (Doctrine and Covenants 20:37)

A few verses later, the bread sacrament prayer echoes these commitments by including the phrase, “willing to take upon them the name of thy Son” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).

Women proposing marriage to a man is unusual in the biblical record. Outside of Isaiah 4:1, the only other case of such a proposal is Ruth’s proposal to Boaz—another story that is often interpreted allegorically as a type for Jesus Christ and his covenant people.⁶⁸ Some aspects of Ruth’s story may further help us understand the nature of the marriage proposal made by the seven women. When Ruth proposed to Boaz, she said, “I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman” (Ruth 3:9). Muhlestein proposed a “more literal translation: ‘I am Ruth thy handmaid. Spread thy *wing* over thy handmaid, for thou art a *redeemer*.’”⁶⁹ Consequently, Ruth’s request is generally recognized by scholars as an instance of Boaz acting as a redeeming kinsman (*gōēl*). However, the law of Moses does not list marriage as a specific responsibility of the *gōēl*. Yet, Boaz insists that marrying Ruth was part of that responsibility during his negotiations with the nearer kinsman (see Ruth 4:5).

Scholars have various explanations as to why Boaz appears to conflate the responsibility of the *gōēl* with marriage. André LaCocque conjectured, “it is evident from all this that the action of the ‘liberator’ [*gōēl*] joins that of the *levir* in the story of Ruth. The two legislations,

68. For an examples of Boaz and Ruth as types for Christ and his covenant people, see Kerry Muhlestein, “Ruth, Redemption, Covenant, and Christ,” in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament: The 38th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. D. Kelly Ogden, Jared W. Ludlow, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 187–206; Matthew L. Bowen, “Encircled About Eternally in the Arms of His Love: The Divine Embrace as a Thematic Symbol of Jesus Christ and His Atonement in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 59 (2023): 109–134, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/encircled-about-eternally-in-the-arms-of-his-love-the-divine-embrace-as-a-thematic-symbol-of-jesus-christ-and-his-atonement-in-the-book-of-mormon/.

69. Muhlestein, “Ruth,” 200, emphasis added.

originally independent of each other, are [in the story of Ruth] overlapping through a series of extraordinary circumstances."⁷⁰ Frederic Bush argued that the levirate laws — though only specifically applying to a brother-in-law within the law of Moses — may have been an unwritten customary obligation shouldered by the *gō'ēl* when a brother-in-law was not readily available since levirate law contained no such back-up provisions.⁷¹ It is also worth noting — as stated by Wildberger above — marriage involved a purchase, which in the law required a bride-price of 50 shekels of silver (see Deuteronomy 22:29). This purchase would likely make the wife part of what was to be redeemed.

It is difficult to determine with certainty if *gō'ēl* and/or levirate laws were part of the proposal made by the seven women in Isaiah 4:1. However, there is nothing in the verse that prohibits such a reading and there may be hints that indicate that these laws and their related customs would likely be involved. The first such hint may be that the Mosaic Law prohibited widows from marrying outside the family unless certain conditions were met, including the *levir* refusing the obligation. Otherwise, widows "shall not marry without unto a stranger" (Deuteronomy 25:5–10). It is likely that the seven women would have first looked to the immediate family for their rights as widows in the family.

However, the new name request casts doubt on the one man being a brother-in-law. Widows did not go through the naming ceremony when they married a *levir*. They were already purchased into the family. For a *levir*, "the marriage is effected by its consummation; no ceremony is necessary."⁷² By asking for a new name the seven women appear to understand that a marriage ceremony would need to take place. Unlike a *levir*, a *gō'ēl* would need to enact a purchase to redeem a widow and marriage rites would need to be performed. Boaz performed such rites when redeeming and marrying Ruth. The story reads "so Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife" (Ruth 4:13). Bush noted that, "The language of this idiom is culture specific in that the verb 'to take' doubtless carries the connotation 'to take home,' reflecting the formal procession to the bridegroom's home in the marriage

70. André LaCocque, *Ruth: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 109. For regulations governing levirate marriage, see Deuteronomy 25:5–10; For regulations related to *gō'ēl*, see Leviticus 25:25–34, 47–54; Numbers 35:16–21; Deuteronomy 19:6, 12.

71. Frederic W. Bush, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 9: *Ruth–Esther* (Nashville: Word, Inc.: 1996), 226.

72. Bush, *Ruth–Esther*, 222.

ritual.”⁷³ Hence, it may be most likely that the seven women are turning to a more distant kinsman than would be available in the immediate family. Contextually, this more distant relationship is plausible due to the loss of men described in Isaiah 3:25. If so, we may conclude that the proposal carries with it similar characteristics as Ruth’s proposal to Boaz. The one man being a *gō’ēl* adds doctrinal richness to the story. The Lord is the *gō’ēl* of all mankind. Isaiah and others in the Old Testament referred to him as such (see Job 19:25; Psalm 19:14; Isaiah 41:14; Jeremiah 50:34).

Another unique part of the marriage proposal in Isaiah 4:1 is that the widows are the initiators. The biblical record shows that widows were not directly involved in levirate marriage or kinsman redemptions. For example, the story of Tamar may illustrate that a widow interfering in such matters was unacceptable and perhaps dangerous. Tamar appears to have preferred a potentially deadly deception rather than ask Judah for her rights (see Genesis 38). Ruth’s story gives a similar illustration. Ruth chose to go to Boaz secretly by night, “before one could know another.” She apparently thought it risky for others to know what she was doing. The fact that Boaz had to be the one to negotiate with the nearest kinsman may further indicate that women were typically not involved in such matters (see Ruth 4).

One might then ask, if proposals by women were culturally unacceptable and perhaps fraught with peril, under what conditions would women subvert cultural norms and propose marriage? Is economic and social desperation enough motivation? Ruth’s story may indicate that desperation was not enough. Ruth never proposed to anyone else, including the incapable nearer kinsman that had redeeming rights before Boaz. From the text we may conclude that Ruth’s marriage proposal was not solely motivated by desperation. Trust likely played a larger role in her reasoning. Boaz was extremely generous to Ruth at their first encounter and Naomi was overjoyed at his goodness (see Ruth 2:8–15; 3:1–4). Ruth could feel confident that Boaz would put *hesed* (mercy and kindness)⁷⁴ above cultural considerations. In an allegorical reading of Isaiah 4:1, we might apply Ruth’s reasoning to the seven women. It is likely that the seven women would only risk a marriage proposal to a redeeming kinsman with whom they felt safe. Such an assumption could make the one man of Isaiah 4:1 a man like Boaz, who is full of *hesed* — someone who was merciful, kind, gracious, and

73. Bush, *Ruth-Esther*, 253.

74. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “חֶסֶד.”

willing to redeem. This characterization could add strength to the allegorical reading of the one man as a representation of Jesus Christ. Zion knows that she can be strengthened by Christ and that he is willing to redeem. As Moroni wrote, "if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

Beauty and Cleanliness

Isaiah 4:2 begins with a magnificent promise. "In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious." This statement contrasts Zion's deplorable condition at the end of Isaiah 3, where the prophet wrote of the daughters of Zion, "instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty" (Isaiah 3:24). Even though, as mentioned earlier, the stink, baldness, sackcloth, and burning are all references to slavery, Isaiah 3:24 described slavery in the context of the daughters's physical beauty and contrasts Isaiah's list of anklets, headbands, bracelets, scarfs, sashes, etc. (see NRSV, Isaiah 3:16–23) that represented a false and worldly glory. Isaiah characterized the daughters of Zion in a similar way that Nephi portrayed the great and abominable church, who also desires "the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing" (1 Nephi 13:8). Just as the great and abominable church "shall tumble to the dust and great shall be the fall of it," Isaiah outlined a similar fall for the daughters of Zion. They not only end up in bondage, but also lament and mourn on the dusty ground (see Isaiah 3:25). Allegorically, these daughters show that prideful Zion's falsified beauty is eventually removed, and a sinful ugliness is revealed. Zion's "whited seplulchres" have been stripped away, and all that was left was "dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).

In the allegorical narrative, Zion's meek pleading with the "one man" brings about a transformation, "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem" (Isaiah 4:4).⁷⁵ What is this filth and blood? The filth may

⁷⁵ LXX translates "daughters" as "sons and daughters."

be related to Isaiah's physical description of the daughters of Zion in Isaiah 3:24 — and by extension the woman of Isaiah 3:26. The blood is likely a reference to how those in Jerusalem had accumulated their wealth. Immediately before characterizing the daughters of Zion and their appearance, Isaiah wrote “the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor?” (Isaiah 3:15) For Isaiah, this treatment of the poor may have constituted blood on the hands of Jerusalem. Isaiah used this “bloody hands” imagery a couple chapters earlier. Due to Jerusalem's abuse and neglect of those less fortunate, Yahweh vowed to “hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood” (Isaiah 1:15). The Lord washing and purging Zion of both blood and filth, may be a fulfilment of the conditional promise of Isaiah 1:16–18, which reads:

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Allegorically, the specific reproach that the seven women feel deeply accountable for — and request to be taken away by the one man — are likely the sins for which the Lord condemned them in the earlier chapters, namely failing to take care of those less fortunate and even robbing them to become materially wealthy. The Lord's pronouncement in Isaiah 4:4 of being clean of filth and blood may add to Zion's allegory by showing how her new covenant with the Lord — to take upon his name — has truly changed her. Zion is now committed to living righteously by taking care of the oppressed, fatherless, and the widow. There is no more blood on Zion's hands. Such commitment to love their neighbor, is echoed in Moses 7:18, where a condition of true Zion is that “there was no poor among them.”

Judgment and Burning

The end of verse 4 describes the Lord's method for cleansing the filth and purging the blood of Zion. Isaiah wrote, “by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning” (Isaiah 4:4). Judgement is mentioned in Isaiah 3:14, where Yahweh vows to judge Israel for their treatment of the

poor. How will he judge the people? The Hebrew word for judgment (*mišpāt*) can be translated as justice.⁷⁶ The Lord more clearly explains this judgment/justice a few verses earlier. "It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him" (Isaiah 3:11). Allegorically, Zion had the blood of the poor on her hands and is punished in equal measure through similar treatment given her by her enslavers (Isaiah 3:24). The Lord's judgment will always result in people eating "the fruit of their doings" (Isaiah 3:11). Allegorically, this spirit of judgment could mean that prideful Zion, as outlined in Isaiah 3, will be rewarded for her oppression of others with oppression from the adversary. On the other hand, humble and repentant Zion is rewarded good for good, receiving cleansing for her sincere repentance.

Burning is also mentioned in Isaiah 3, though it is of a different kind than the "spirit of burning" mentioned in Isaiah 4:4. In Isaiah 3:24 the prophet wrote that the daughters of Zion would experience "burning instead of beauty." The Hebrew word for burning (*kī-*) in Isaiah 3:24 is unique in the Old Testament and specifically describes the branding mark burnt into the skin of slaves.⁷⁷ The word burning in "by the spirit of burning" (Isaiah 4:4) is *bā'ēr*, and is the burning that is done by a consuming fire.⁷⁸ This is the same word used to describe the Lord's presence in the burning bush atop Mount Sinai (See Exodus 3:2–3; Deuteronomy 4:11). *Bā'ēr* is also used to emphasize that Israel was to eliminate all evil influences from among them.⁷⁹

The "the spirit of burning" of Isaiah 4:4 contrasts the burning that occurs in chapter 3. The allegorical implication may be that prideful Zion experiences burning in a different way than humble Zion. Prideful Zion is in desolate darkness, mourning for her sins, and under the control of Satan—a control so oppressive that it can only be described as burnt into someone. On the other hand, the Lord uses his "spirit of burning" to sanctify Zion by visiting her "with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 11:35). The sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost then leaves her "spotless before me [the Lord] at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

76. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "מִשְׁפָּט."

77. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "כִּי."

78. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "בָּעַר."

79. Often translated as "put [*bā'ēr*] the evil away [*bā'ēr*]." see Deuteronomy 17:7, 12; 19:13, 19; 21:9, 21; 22:21–22, 24

Nourishment and Holiness

Isaiah continues his description of the Lord's redemption with the statement that, "the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel" (Isaiah 4:2). This abundance contrasts the destitution and desolation written in Isaiah 3, where those in power have "eaten up the vineyard" (Isaiah 3:7) and where the Lord "doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water" (Isaiah 3:1). The idea of physical nourishment has strong spiritual connotations in the scriptures. For Adam and Eve, one fruit would give them life everlasting and the other, the discernment between good and evil. The manna in the wilderness taught the children of Israel to rely on the Lord for daily spiritual nourishment (see Exodus 16:12–35; Revelation 2:17). Christ later used the story of manna to teach that he is the bread of life (See 6:35). Each food element of the Passover was imbued with spiritual meaning (see Exodus 12). The law of Moses used food as a central feature in the sacrifices and burnt offerings.

There are likely many symbolic paths to follow. The Kashrut may be practically helpful in further constructing an allegory of Zion's redemption. The Lord tied the Mosaic dietary laws directly to Israel's holiness. "For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Leviticus 11:44–45; see also Exodus 22:30; Deuteronomy 14:21). The idea in Isaiah 4:2 may be similar. Isaiah wrote that the "the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely." *Excellent* and *comely* (*gā'ôn* and *tip'ārâ*) may be better translated as *majesty* and *splendor*.⁸⁰ The fruit provided by the Lord would be for Zion what the dietary laws were supposed to be for Israel, a way to adorn them in holiness. In an allegorical sense, we see the Lord removing prideful Zion's spiritual nourishment in Isaiah 3, and then restoring that nourishment to a humble Zion in chapter 4. This spiritual nourishment will inspire their true conversion, sanctification, and exaltation.

This bounty of the fruit of the earth comes to the "escaped of Israel," a likely contrast to the fallen and lost men of Isaiah 3. This reference to surviving men is repeated in Isaiah 4:3, where Isaiah wrote, "he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called

80. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "גָּוֹן"; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "תִּפְאָרָה."

holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." The promise to be "called holy" is significant. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for holy (*qādôš*) is most often used to describe heavenly beings and priests.⁸¹ It was also used to describe Israel as a whole, whom the Lord desired to "be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy [*qādôš*] nation" (Exodus 19:6).⁸² The allegorical connotation may indicate that Zion is not only clean, but she has been called into God's service, becoming a kingdom full of worthy priests.

This calling into service provides a stark contrast with the men of Isaiah 3. By writing of the removal of the leaders of Jerusalem (see Isaiah 3:1–3), the incapable kinsman (see Isaiah 3:6), and that "thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war" (Isaiah 3:25), Isaiah may have characterized the men of Isaiah 3 as incapable, unable, or unwilling to save prideful Zion from desolation and slavery. These "mighty" but ultimately incapable men might be juxtaposed against the "called holy" men in Isaiah 4, who, if they are holy men, would play important roles in Zion's salvation. Such men had responsibilities to teach the law, administer ordinances, act as examples for all of Israel, and even symbolized Yahweh (see Leviticus 21; Numbers 3, 8, 18).

This priestly connection to the phrase "called holy" might also provide another contrast with Isaiah 3. In Isaiah 3:24, the daughters of Zion are encircled by a binding rope (rent) and clothed in sackcloth. A holy nation of priests, on the other hand, are clothed in the robes of the holy priesthood (see Exodus 28). Allegorically, perhaps by calling Zion holy once again, we might assume that Yahweh will replace Zion's binding rent and ragged sackcloth with holy temple priesthood robes. As noted later in the Book of Isaiah, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, . . . shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion" (Isaiah 52:1–2). The implication of "sit down" in these verses differs from the sitting "on the ground" by Zion in Isaiah 3:26. In Isaiah 52, Zion is "instructed to get up from the dust, where slaves must sit, and sit instead in a place of honor, as on a throne."⁸³

As noted earlier, the idea of being raised from the dust, was likely symbolic of being brought back to life in a covenant relationship with

81. See Leviticus 21:7–8; Numbers 16:5–7, 2 Chronicles 35:3. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "שׂדִּיִּן."

82. See also Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9; Numbers 16:3.

83. Parry, Parry, and Peterson, *Understanding*, 460.

Yahweh.⁸⁴ Where Zion was sitting in the dust just a few verses earlier, she is now brought back into covenant and enthroned. Psalm 113:7–9 captures this transformation. “He [The Lord] raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.” It may be notable that even though Zion was willing to go without the Lord’s clothing and food — as the seven women stated in Isaiah 4:1 — she ends up receiving the complete blessings of her station as spouse. By the end of Isaiah 4:3, we may see that she is fed with “fruit of the earth” (Isaiah 4:2), clothed in holy temple robes, and sitting upon a throne. The allegory of Zion in Isaiah 4 may bear additional similarity to the prodigal son, whose father brought “forth the best robe, and put it on him” and proclaimed, “let us eat, and be merry” (Luke 15:22). As stated later in the Book of Isaiah:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels (Isaiah 61:10).

Consequently, Isaiah 4:3 may teach an important allegorical lesson about the relationships between pride, humility, and priesthood. Pride brings an end to priesthood capacity for “the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:37). We see that the Lord was tired of such priesthood service in Isaiah 1, where the prophet wrote, “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; . . . Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth” (Isaiah 1:13–14). On the other hand, humble and obedient priesthood holders are “set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 103:9–10). These humble priesthood holders “offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:3).

Directly after decreeing those who remain in Zion as holy, the King James Version reads, “every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 4:3). The Hebrew for “that is written” (*hakkātûb*) usually denotes something officially registered or decreed.⁸⁵ Other English versions of the Bible better communicate this intent. For

84. See Brueggemann, “Dust to Kingship,” 1–18.

85. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “כָּתוּב.”

example, both the ESV and NRSV translate the last phrase in Isaiah 4:3 as, "everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem." Being written unto life may not just refer to physical life. The Hebrew word for life (*ḥay*) is often used to communicate the blessed life, or even eternal life. It also can refer to the life of a family or community.⁸⁶ This word is also used to describe Adam, when he is formed "of the dust of the ground, and [God] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living [*ḥay*] soul" (Genesis 2:7). Hence, the last phrase of Isaiah 4:3 may emphasize that Zion has been lifted from the dusty ground and restored to the blessed covenantal life that God decrees upon the righteous, a life that includes the blessings of family and community. This life is a complete reversal from the life experienced in Jerusalem as described in Isaiah 3, where "the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour" (Isaiah 3:5), and where Zion is symbolized by a mourning woman that is all alone (see Isaiah 3:25). Allegorically, where prideful Zion is divided and all oppress their neighbors, humble Zion enjoys the good life, where her family and community are "of one heart and one mind" (Moses 7:18).

Guidance and Protection

As part of Zion's redemption, Yahweh promised to restore two more of the blessings that Jerusalem lost in Isaiah 3. At the beginning of this chapter, the Lord removed daily necessities and the capable leaders of Zion (see table 1). This removal might allegorically represent the removal of the Lord's presence. Many of the titles in these verses are used elsewhere in scripture to describe the Messiah, some by Isaiah himself.

Table 1. Titles in Isaiah 3:1–3 that match Messianic titles elsewhere in scripture.

Isaiah 3:1–3 Description	Scripture Citation	Quotation
stay of bread	John 6:35	"I am the bread of life"
stay of water	John 4:14	"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."
mighty man (soldier)	Isaiah 42:13	"The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man"

86. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "חַי."

Isaiah 3:1–3 Description	Scripture Citation	Quotation
man of war	Exodus 15:3; see also Isaiah 42:13	“The LORD is a man of war”
judge	Isaiah 33:22; see also Isaiah 2:4; 3:13; 5:3; 11:3–4; 51:5	“For the LORD is our judge”
prophet	Deuteronomy 18:15; see also Acts 7:37, 1 Nephi 22:20–21	“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet
prudent, eloquent orator (both refer- ences to divining and magic) ⁸⁷	John 18:29–30	“Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, if he were not a malefactor (magician or sorcerer), we would not have delivered him up unto thee.” ⁸⁸
ancient	Isaiah 44:6	“Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, . . . I am the first, and I am the last”
captain of fifty (prince or chieftain)	Isaiah 9:6	“The Prince of Peace”
honourable man (someone that is lifted up or exalted)	Isaiah 6:1	“I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up”
counselor	Isaiah 9:6	“and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God”
cunning artificer (craftsman)	Mark 6:2–3	“From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter

The possible combined symbolism is that Judah would lose every aspect of God’s presence among them. He would no longer be their king, save them from their enemies, prosper them, and give them the true wisdom that the diviners of Isaiah’s day sought to counterfeit. In

87. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “דָּוִדִּי;” s.v. “שֹׁדֵדִי.”

88. Jesus was accused of being a magician because of his miracles. See John W. Welch, “The Legal Cause of Action against Jesus in John 18:29–30,” in *Celebrating Easter: The 2006 BYU Easter Conference*, ed. Thomas A. Wayment and Keith J. Wilson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2007), 161.

the Lord's stead, Zion would have "children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them" (Isaiah 3:4). As a result, Zion's houses would be ruined (see Isaiah 3:6) and "they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths" (Isaiah 3:12). Allegorically, prideful Zion loses her protectors, her guidance, and she is left open for enslavement (See Isaiah 3:24–26).

Isaiah 4:5–6 is a contrasting restoration of these two lost blessings — protection and guidance. These verses read:

The LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and a shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

The first part of these two verses reference how the Lord guided the children of Israel through the wilderness during the time of Moses (see Exodus 13:21). The Exodus story carries with it scores of symbolic meanings that we cannot fully address in this paper. However, in a general sense, the story of the Exodus is the Lord freeing Israel from slavery and guiding them on a long journey away from that slavery to a promised land.

In Isaiah 3, the prophet wrote of prideful Zion falling victim to slavery, just as the Israelites had been subjected to "hard bondage" (Exodus 1:14). Allegorically, Isaiah 4:5–6 may then be considered the Lord's declaration that he will redeem Zion from Satan's slavery and lead her to the promised land of eternal life. However, the trip may be long and full of peril, just as the 40 years in the wilderness were long and perilous for the children of Israel. Fortunately, Zion will not walk the journey alone. The Lord promised to go "in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day" (Deuteronomy 1:33).

It is significant that Isaiah wrote, "upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies" (Isaiah 4:5). During the Exodus, a single cloud, smoke, or fire manifestation guided the whole camp of Israel. Isaiah 4 promises more individualized attention on each dwelling place of Zion. However, it is not just the homes of Zion that will enjoy God's presence. Isaiah wrote of assemblies as well as dwelling places receiving God's continual presence. The Hebrew word for assemblies (*miqrā'*) describes all types of gathering under

Mosaic law, including feasts and sabbath gatherings.⁸⁹ The allegorical implication may be that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:32).

In addition to providing guidance, Yahweh will also build a “tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” The word in this verse for tabernacle (*sukâ*) describes a temporary and rudimentary shelter, usually made of materials that were readily available.⁹⁰ It probably should not be confused with the nomadic tent (*ôhel*) that also represented Yahweh’s abode while he led Moses and the children of Israel through the wilderness.⁹¹ This does not mean that Isaiah 4 does not include temple symbolism. The phrase “called holy” in Isaiah 4:3 and the reference to Yahweh’s presence through the cloud and fire in Isaiah 4:5 likely carry temple connotations (see above).

In this case, the tabernacle that Isaiah described is temporary and quickly constructed. It was the shelter Jonah built to protect himself from the scorching sun (see Jonah 4:5) and the covering that Jacob built for his cattle while traveling to Shalem (see Genesis 33:17–18). The symbolic connotation may be that the Lord will quickly and immediately come to Zion when she is in need. The storm clouds of life can gather quickly and without warning. In those moments, the Lord promises to immediately build a shelter against whatever is plaguing Zion. Such shelters may not be 100% effective at keeping out all trouble, but they provide “a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain” (Isaiah 4:6). This sentiment is echoed in the story of Alma’s people. Even though the Lord did not remove their difficulty, their burdens “were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15).

This promise to provide refuge may directly show the Lord fulfilling the redemption request made by the seven women. In Ruth’s search for a *gō’ēl*, we see refuge and protection as a central feature of her request. She asked of Boaz, “spread therefore thy skirt [wings, *kanāpekā*] over thine handmaid” (Ruth 3:9). Earlier in the story, Boaz is impressed with Ruth’s faithfulness to Naomi and hoped that the

89. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “נָתַתִּי.”

90. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “סֹכֵה.”

91. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. “אֹהֶל.”

"LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings [*kānāpāyw*] thou art come to trust" (Ruth 2:12).⁹² As noted in the NRSV, the phrase "come to trust" might better be translated as "come for refuge." Ruth's request for Boaz to spread his wing over her was likely a direct request for refuge that a redeemer could provide. We may see the Lord fulfilling such a request by promising refuge at the end of Isaiah 4:6.⁹³

Summary and Conclusions

By contrasting the dark picture that Isaiah painted in Isaiah 3 with the beacon of hope he shines in Isaiah 4, we can build an allegorical narrative that validates the symbolism suggested by both Victorinus and Parry and situates Isaiah 4:1 as a vital repentance point within that allegorical narrative (see table 2). The above textual analysis shows that the allegory is both internally consistent and supported by external scriptural texts, particularly when comparing parallel ideas and phrases between the two chapters.

Table 2. Isaiah 4:1 as a repentance point in a larger allegorical narrative.

Isaiah Verses	Descriptions	Allegorical Reading
3:1–3	The Lord removes necessities and leaders from Jerusalem and Judah.	The Lord removes his guidance and nourishment from prideful Zion.
3:4–9	Jerusalem and Judah are in chaos and poverty. A man demands that his brother rule and take accountability for the ruin. The brother refuses, saying he does not have the means to help.	Prideful Zion feels worldly remorse for her sins, feels entitled to help, but fails to take accountability for her mistakes. She turns to the world for help, but there is no help to be found.
3:10–15	Isaiah described the sins of Jerusalem and Judah, particularly their oppression of the poor. The Lord judges them for their treatment of the poor. They receive evil for their evil acts.	Prideful Zion seeks for position and power through oppression of the less fortunate. She is judged by the Lord and receives evil for evil.

92. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v. "קָנַי".

93. See Bowen, "Encircled About," 116.

Isaiah Verses	Descriptions	Allegorical Reading
3:16–24	The daughters of Zion fall from pompous splendor to slavery.	Prideful Zion glories in vanity but those appearances are hollow. Her sins have left her empty and dark inside. She becomes victim to Satan's tyrannical rule.
3:25–26	Jerusalem loses its protectors and is left desolate and in mourning.	Without the Lord's protection, a humiliated Zion is left to mourn for her sins. This time her mourning is sincere, and her sorrow helps free her from her iniquities.
4:1	Seven women turn to one man to save them from their reproach and offer to feed and clothe themselves.	Humiliated Zion seeks after the Lord in true penitence, with a broken heart and contrite Spirit. She knows she deserves nothing.
4:2	The branch of the Lord is made beautiful and glorious.	The Lord restores Zion, removes the inner darkness, and frees her from Satan's grasp.
4:3	Those that remain are nourished with the fruit of the earth and called holy.	The Lord nourishes Zion. She is called back into God's service and is clothed in robes of righteousness.
4:4	The Lord cleanses the daughters of Zion and purges the blood of Jerusalem with judgment and burning.	The Lord purifies Zion of her former sins. She now takes care of the poor, is judged to receive good for good, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost.
4:5–6	The Lord provides a cloud and fire upon every dwelling place.	The Lord graces Zion with his presence and guidance.
4:6	The Lord provides protection and refuge to Zion	The Lord provides immediate protection and relief from life's trials and tribulations.

The allegory, as proposed above, directly addresses Nephi's purpose for sharing Isaiah's writings through a doctrinally rich narrative. For Nephi, Isaiah's words were important for their ability to persuade others "to believe in the Lord their Redeemer" (1 Nephi 19:23), who Nephi understood as the only source that mankind may look to "for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26). Many covenant members of Zion fall to temptations of pride and vanity, can quickly forget to take care of others, and too often rely on the incapable arm of flesh. Consequently, they lose the Lord's nourishment, presence, and guidance, are open to Satan's captivity, and they suffer deeply for their sins.

However, this suffering is not the end of the story. Isaiah 4:1 may

allegorize the ever-important act of truly meek repentance and a recognition that "there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 31:21). Even though she knows that she is entitled to nothing because of her sins, Zion's plea is accepted by Jesus Christ because she has a "broken heart and contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20). Following the allegorical turning point in Isaiah 4:1, the subsequent verses may allegorize the numerous blessings that Jesus Christ bestows upon humble Zion. He washes away her filth; calls her into his service; and guides, protects, and clothes her in his robes of righteousness.



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