

# The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

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Text

Isaiah 14:24 - 17:14

Topic

Isaiah reveals what he calls the 'purpose God purposed' for certain nations involved with Israel & Judah.

Title

***"The Purpose Driven Nations"***

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## **History 140 - Africa & the French Atlantic.**

That is an elective History class you can take at my alma mater, UC Riverside. Maybe it's just me, but that title doesn't really grab me.

## **History 001 - The Historian as Detective.**

I'd sign up for that!

## **8<sup>th</sup> Century BC Semitic Conflicts.**

I'd pass on that, too, *except it isn't a college class*. It's chapters 13 through 27, *fifteen chapters*, in the heart of the Book of Isaiah.

Two verses in chapter fourteen provide a great explanation. "This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, And this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the LORD of hosts has purposed, And who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, And who will turn it back?" (v26-27).

God has His purposes for the Gentile nations. The 'purpose God purposed' for four of the nations is in our passage: Assyria, Philistia, Moab, and Damascus.

We are not Isaiah's audience. But we can be sure Jesus is in this passage, since we know that He came "in the volume of the book" (Hebrews 10:7).

The Lord will tell us four things about His nature:

1. From Assyria God says, "I remove your burdens."
2. From Philistia God says, "I am your refuge."
3. From Moab God says, "I am not willing that any perish."
4. From Damascus God says, "You forget Me at your own peril."

### **#1 - Assyria - "I remove your burdens." (14:24-27)**

What if it was the day after Christmas in 1991 and you heard that the Soviet Union had dissolved? That is the kind of excitement a Jew would derive from these nation prophecies of Isaiah.

Isa 14:24 The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand:

There's that word, "purposed." We might say, "It's all going according to plan." History is not random. It has a beginning in Genesis and reveals a forever future in the Revelation. God has published His plan, and "so it shall stand."

Isa 14:25 That I will break the Assyrian in My land, And on My mountains tread him underfoot. Then his yoke shall be removed from them, And his burden removed from their shoulders.

In every sports movie, I expect someone to say, "This is our house." God would "break the Assyrian in [His] land... on [His] mountains."

The devil takes the battle to God's house. He advances, he accuses, he attacks. Individually and together - *we are God's house on Earth*. We should adopt a "Not in my house" attitude.

Isa 14:26 This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, And this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

Isa 14:27 For the LORD of hosts has purposed, And who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, And who will turn it back?"

- God has a purpose that He has purposed. A plan. It is to save mankind through Jesus, who came to Earth as the God-man through the nation of Israel.
- His "hand" represents the power. You could with accuracy say, "He's got the whole world in His hand."
- He stretches it out, employing His providence, to see to it nations accomplish His will.

### **Nations don't always obey God.**

Every nation decides its own course. Jeremiah explained it this way: "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it" (18:7-10).

People often wonder about the place of the United States in Bible prophecy. *It depends on how we respond to Jeremiah 18.* You might say we are in Jeremiah 18, along with all other Gentile nations.

If you are not a believer, God removes the yoke of sin and death that burdens you. He took it upon Himself.

You say you are a believer? Why, then, are you carrying any burdens? In the classic allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christians burden is a heavy weight that represents the weight of sin on his soul. He is desperate to find a way to be relieved of this burden. Along his way, he meets various characters who offer him advice and guidance, and he encounters many obstacles that test his faith and resolve. Eventually, Christian comes to the foot of the Cross, where his burden is lifted and he experiences a profound sense of relief and forgiveness. From that point on, he is able to continue his journey with a renewed sense of purpose and faith, unencumbered by the weight of his past sins.

Martin Luther said, "*Either sin is lying on your shoulders, or it is lying on Christ - and if it is resting on Christ, you are free.*"

### **#2 - Philistia - "I am your refuge." (14:28-32)**

If any nation was an arch enemy to God's people, it was the Philistines. Their animosity towards one another is illustrated nicely in the story of David and the Philistine giant, Goliath.

Isa 14:28 This is the burden which came in the year that King Ahaz died.

Isa 14:29 "Do not rejoice, all you of Philistia, Because the rod that struck you is broken; For out of the serpent's roots will come forth a viper, And its offspring will be a fiery flying serpent.

The phrase "all of you" is accurate because Philistia was a confederacy of five cities: Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath.

Isaiah warned the Philistines not to rejoice in the death of the current king of Assyria, for his son would be worse.

Who do the snakes represent? Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum concludes, *"[They represent] three key members of the House of David. Ahaz was the snake, and under him territory was lost to the Philistines. Under Ahaz's successor, Hezekiah (the viper), most of the territory would be regained. The fiery flying serpent is the Messiah, under whom there will be the total future occupation of Philistia."*

Isa 14:30 The firstborn of the poor will feed, And the needy will lie down in safety; I will kill your roots with famine, And it will slay your remnant.

The "firstborn of the poor" are the poorest of the poor. For Israel, there will be food and safety. For the Philistines, there will be famine, and those who survive that would be slain.

Isa 14:31 Wail, O gate! Cry, O city! All you of Philistia are dissolved; For smoke will come from the north, And no one will be alone in his appointed times."

Isa 14:32 What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD has founded Zion, And the poor of His people shall take refuge in it.

The invading Assyrians would be seen afar off. If any Gentile messengers asked what was going on, they would be told that the LORD was fulfilling His promises to Zion, and protecting the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Zion is synonymous with Jerusalem, the place that God loves. [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) explains,

The word *Zion* is also used in a theological or spiritual sense in Scripture. In the Old Testament *Zion* refers figuratively to Israel as the people of God (Isaiah 60:14). In the New Testament, *Zion* refers to God's spiritual kingdom. We have not come to Mount Sinai, but "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22).

Christians are not promised physical refuge. Quite the opposite. Jesus told us that we would have tribulation in the world. Persecution is the norm, not the exception.

We are pilgrims, strangers on Earth. That sounds almost romantic. Do you think of yourself as a refugee? It carries a much different connotation. Our church - the people, not the building - is a refugee camp.

**You won't seek Jesus as a refuge if you don't see yourself as a refugee.**

### **#3 - Moab - "I am not willing that any perish." (15:1 - 16:14)**

Moab gets the most ink. Moab had strong ties to Israel, but always opposed them, spiritually as well as politically.

Isa 15:1 The burden against Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste And destroyed, Because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste And destroyed,

Isa 15:2 He has gone up to the temple and Dibon, To the high places to weep. Moab will wail over Nebo and over Medeba; On all their heads will be baldness, And every beard cut off.

Isa 15:3 In their streets they will clothe themselves with sackcloth; On the tops of their houses And in their streets Everyone will wail, weeping bitterly.

Isa 15:4 Heshbon and Elealeh will cry out, Their voice shall be heard as far as Jahaz; Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab will cry out; His life will be burdensome to him.

There would be nowhere in Moab that wasn't affected, and that didn't mourn. 911 affected us like that. It was a national event in the truest sense.

Isa 15:5 "My heart will cry out for Moab; His fugitives shall flee to Zoar, Like a three-year-old heifer. For by the Ascent of Luhith They will go up with weeping; For in the way of Horonaim They will raise up a cry of destruction,

It gave Isaiah no pleasure to announce the terrible judgment that would befall Moab. More on this later.

Isa 15:6 For the waters of Nimrim will be desolate, For the green grass has withered away; The grass fails, there is nothing green.

Isa 15:7 Therefore the abundance they have gained, And what they have laid up, They will carry away to the Brook of the Willows.

Isa 15:8 For the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab, Its wailing to Eglaim And its wailing to Beer Elim.

Isa 15:9 For the waters of Dimon will be full of blood; Because I will bring more upon Dimon, Lions upon him who escapes from Moab, And on the remnant of the land."

Moab fled with whatever they could. Some escaped, until wild "lions" got them.

Isa 16:1 Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, From Sela to the wilderness, To the mount of the daughter of Zion.

"To send lambs" meant to pay tribute as a sign of submission. Isaiah admonished Moab to submit and pay tribute by sending lambs. They were given a choice.

Isa 16:2 For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; So shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.

Isa 16:3 "Take counsel, execute judgment; Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; Hide the outcasts, Do not betray him who escapes.

Isa 16:4 Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, Devastation ceases, The oppressors are consumed out of the land.

Isa 16:5 In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness."

Hmm. Suddenly it is Moab being told "Let My outcasts dwell with **you**." That, plus the mention of "the Tabernacle of David" is a clue that this is a far future prophecy of the Kingdom Age. Prior to the Second Coming, during the Time of Jacob's Trouble, Israel will seek refuge from enemies. Satan, cast down to Earth, will vent all his anger against them. (Revelation 12:13-16.) Those who befriend them by so much as giving a cup of cold water will be rewarded by God.

Coming back from the future...

Isa 16:6 We have heard of the pride of Moab - He is very proud - Of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath; But his lies shall not be so.

Isa 16:7 Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab; Everyone shall wail. For the foundations of Kir Hareseth you shall mourn; Surely they are stricken.

Isa 16:8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, And the vine of Sibmah; The lords of the nations have broken down its choice plants, Which have reached to Jazer And wandered through the wilderness. Her branches are stretched out, They are gone over the sea.

Isa 16:12 And it shall come to pass, When it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, That he will come to his sanctuary to pray; But he will not prevail.

Instead of turning to the LORD Moab sought her own useless gods. Unbelievers turn to the useless methods of this world for help. The religions, the philosophies, the psychologies, of the world can, sometimes, *reform* you. They cannot *transform* you. Only God can transform you by giving you His gift - God the Holy Spirit to indwell you.

Isa 16:13 This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning Moab since that time.

Isa 16:14 But now the LORD has spoken, saying, "Within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble."

Isaiah gave the prophecy, then some time later received more. Always be growing in knowledge. Receive more from the Lord.

"My heart will cry out for Moab" (15:5). We skipped, but now return to, verses nine through eleven.

Isa 16:9 Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sibmah, With the weeping of Jazer; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; For battle cries have fallen Over your summer fruits and your harvest.

Isa 16:10 Gladness is taken away, And joy from the plentiful field; In the vineyards there will be no singing, Nor will there be shouting; No treaders will tread out wine in the presses; I have made their shouting cease.

Isa 16:11 Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab, And my inner being for Kir Heres.

God's prophets felt their messages. It helped to reveal the heart of God, not only His hand. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God wanted to save them. We would say that He was not willing that any should perish, but all come to repentance and believe Him.

We must constantly remind ourselves that unbelievers *cannot obey God*. If they misunderstand us, mistreat us, persecute us, they are only acting according to their nature - their sin nature.

I was never a cat person. Then one day, in a fit of temporary insanity, while we were at *Petsmart*, Pam bought a cat. We acquired another one when we heard noises under a bush in our backyard. One lone kitten crawled out.

That second cat, Cora, is my cat. She follows me around, sits in my lap purring, and occasionally will do a somersault for me while we're walking down the hall.

Cat lovers post meme's and videos, showing their cats doing destructive things. We give cats a pass, because, after all, it's in their nature without warning have the zoomies. It's my fault if I don't take their nature into account and think we can have furniture.

The unsaved sinners all around you cannot do anything but sin. It is their nature. They need a new nature. They must be born again, and receive God the Holy Spirit.

#### **#4 - Damascus - "You forget Me to your own peril."**

The northern kingdom of Israel was also referred to as "Ephraim." They and Damascus, the capital of Syria, had been allies against Judah. Both would be besieged and deported by Assyria. Israel was singled out for special rebuke since they had forsaken their Rock. We Christians, born again, should be held to a higher standard.

Isa 17:1 The burden against Damascus. "Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, And it will be a ruinous heap.

Isa 17:2 The cities of Aroer are forsaken; They will be for flocks Which lie down, and no one will make them afraid.

Isa 17:3 The fortress also will cease from Ephraim, The kingdom from Damascus, And the remnant of Syria; They will be as the glory of the children of Israel," Says the LORD of hosts.

It was brother-against-brother in the Promised Land. Other Christians are not the enemy. You'd never know that if you are on social media.



Isa 17:4 "In that day it shall come to pass That the glory of Jacob will wane, And the fatness of his flesh grow lean.

Isa 17:5 It shall be as when the harvester gathers the grain, And reaps the heads with his arm; It shall be as he who gathers heads of grain In the Valley of Rephaim.

Isa 17:6 Yet gleaning grapes will be left in it, Like the shaking of an olive tree, Two or three olives at the top of the uppermost bough, Four or five in its most fruitful branches," Says the LORD God of Israel.

Isa 17:7 In that day a man will look to his Maker, And his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel.

Isa 17:8 He will not look to the altars, The work of his hands; He will not respect what his fingers have made, Nor the wooden images nor the incense altars.

Isa 17:9 In that day his strong cities will be as a forsaken bough And an uppermost branch, Which they left because of the children of Israel; And there will be desolation.

Isa 17:10 Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation, And have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, Therefore you will plant pleasant plants And set out foreign seedlings;

Isa 17:11 In the day you will make your plant to grow, And in the morning you will make your seed to flourish; But the harvest will be a heap of ruins In the day of grief and desperate sorrow.

A remnant would "look to his Maker, And his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel." There are a few other hopeful statements concerning their repentance. God's discipline was working, but it must be carried through.

Isa 17:12 Woe to the multitude of many people Who make a noise like the roar of the seas, And to the rushing of nations That make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!

Isa 17:13 The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters; But God will rebuke them and they will flee far away, And be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, Like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

Isa 17:14 Then behold, at eventide, trouble! And before the morning, he is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, And the lot of those who rob us.

Dr. Fruchtenbaum believes that these three verses are looking forward to the Battle of Armageddon. The nations are described as being as massive as the raging of the seas and the roaring of great waters. The Lord shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm. The nations will experience sudden terror and annihilation.

President Ronald Reagan once said, *"If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under."*

Isaiah warned, "You have forgotten the God of your salvation, And have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold." The Hebrew word translated "forgotten" means "to *misl*ay, that is, to *be oblivious* of, from want of memory or attention" (Strong's #H7911). It is a willful forgetting.

Our beloved United States is willfully forgetting God. Unless we repent, it will be to our detriment and, possibly, downfall. Billy Graham said, "If we fail to solve this moral and spiritual crisis we may be doomed like the great nations of the past."

### **The US, Russia, Ukraine, China, Iran, Turkey.**

It is easy to stress over what is unfolding. Keep the big picture in mind. Factor Israel into your thinking.

**Ask yourself: "Am I a carefree refugee who looks upon everyone with compassion, not forgetting God?"**