

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 10:1-19, JUDGMENT THROUGH ASSYRIA

God is obviously capable of imposing His judgment on whomever He desires without using intermediaries; however, He does use elements of the world system for His purposes whenever it is His will to do so. In the situation before us today, Yahweh is warning Judah that He is going to use Assyria as His instrument of judgment against them for the purpose of imposing divine discipline against His rebellious people. The chapter refers to the Assyrian invasion of Judah that took place during Hezekiah's reign. God stopped that invasion short of the total conquest of Judah, but the nation suffered a lot of damage.

This discipline was being imposed, in part, for the way the leadership of Judah had mistreated God's people. At this point, the corrupt government's treatment of the people in terms of everyday life is the subject, but the leadership had also led them into idolatry.

Isaiah 10:1–2 <sup>1</sup>Woe to those who enact evil [רָעָה] statutes And to those who constantly record unjust [עֲמָלָה] decisions, <sup>2</sup>So as to deprive the needy of justice And rob the poor of My people of *their* rights, So that widows may be their spoil And that they may plunder the orphans.

The rulers and political leaders of Judah were using their power to unjustly enrich themselves at the expense of the people by unfairly interpreting the law and recording unfair decisions that favored the wealthy and the powerful. This is not necessarily describing legislative activities, although it could be doing so. They already had the Mosaic Law. It is possible their corruption led them to creating laws that were outside the Mosaic Law and were designed specifically to take advantage of the less powerful and wealthy in society. This Scripture could be referring to either situation.

Evil, רָעָה, means evil, wickedness, and iniquity; it refers to an act which is morally evil and corrupt which is damaging to one's relationship with God and with other people according to a standard. The standard was the Mosaic Law. Conducting oneself in an evil manner is operating in the realm of Satan, not in the realm of the God of Israel, and that situation was more than simply displeasing to Yahweh. This was a situation that demanded correction. It is particularly evil to take advantage of those who cannot defend themselves, such as widows and orphans, and God took particular notice of them.

Psalms 68:5 <sup>5</sup>A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

Unjust arbiters create problems in society. Unjust, עֲמָלָה, means trouble, labor, toil; it refers to a source of difficulty. It brings about misery which is a state of ill-being due to affliction or misfortune. Leaders and arbiters who are not impartial create tensions in society between the favored ones and the unfavored members of that society. It creates fear, anxiety,

distrust, and ill-will among people. Those who are not in the favored class feel particularly alienated when living in an unjust society.

It is noteworthy that Yahweh referred to the needy and the poor as “My people,” despite the fact that they had also forsaken Him and turned to idolatry. This reveals the fact that no matter how much the Israelites reject Yahweh, He will never completely reject them. He will discipline them “with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out” (Ezek. 20:34), but He will never completely forsake them. His ultimate goal is restoration, not destruction.

Next, the people were presented with a series of rhetorical questions indicating the certainty of judgment.

Isaiah 10:3 <sup>3</sup>Now what will you do in the day of punishment, And in the devastation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your wealth [כְּבוֹד]?

The implication is that they will be unable to do anything about the day of punishment and devastation that will come at the hands of someone outside of Israel. There will be no one to help them and no place they can go for protection. Their wealth, which was so important to them that they were destroying the lives of their own people to accumulate it, will be destroyed. They could turn to God for deliverance, but they have rejected Him and have no desire to return; therefore, they are going to suffer the consequences for their rebellion.

Wealth, כְּבוֹד, primarily means glory, honor, or wealth; it also means heavy or weighty. In this context, it seems to refer to wealth, and that is how the majority of translations understand it (NASB, RSV, HCSB, NET, LEB, ESV, CJB). One translates it “honor” (YLT) and three “glory” (KJV, NKJV, ASV). Out of 200 uses of the word in the Bible, it is translated “wealth” 5 times. Young offered an explanation for translating it “glory.” “[T]he word refers to what is weighty; i.e., whatever they now boasted of and placed their trust in. It is not necessarily riches acquired unjustly, though such may have been the case” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, 1:357]. I could not find anything to justify this trust or faith aspect of כְּבוֹד, and even he suggested that “wealth” could be the correct meaning. If you refer back to Isaiah 9:10, the pride they took in their wealth was quite evident. The word glory “is used ironically and applies to their pride in their cherished possessions and wealth” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 169]. There was no place they could deposit their wealth where it would be safe; it was going to be stolen and destroyed.

Isaiah answered his own question and told them what was going to happen to them.

Isaiah 10:4 <sup>4</sup>Nothing *remains* but to crouch among the captives Or fall among the slain. In ~~spite of~~ all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.

There were only two options: the Israelites would be taken captive, or they would die at the hands of the invaders. God's anger was still kindled against them, and His divine

discipline could be stayed by only one thing—repentance. They could return to Him and be spared, or they could refuse to return and be destroyed.

Even though Yahweh was going to use Assyria against Judah as His instrument of divine discipline in fulfillment of the promised curses for disobedience and rebellion, the Assyrians would also suffer divine judgment for their own rebellion against God. The fact that God used them for the accomplishment of His purposes does not mean they were in good standing in His sight.

Isaiah 10:5 <sup>5</sup>Woe to Assyria, the rod [שֵׁבֶט] of My anger And the staff [מִטָּה] in whose hands is My indignation,

In this verse, God revealed that Assyria was His instrument through whom He was going to express His anger and indignation against Israel. Rod and staff are essentially synonyms pointing to the fact that God was going to use Assyria to discipline the Israelites.

Rod, שֵׁבֶט, means a rod, a staff, a club, or a scepter. It also means a tribe, but that definition is not relevant in this context. It was used for support or as a weapon, and evolved into meaning a shepherd's staff, a scepter, a symbol of divine guidance and care, of authority, and a tool for discipline. The rod was used for counting sheep. It is used here as a tool for discipline.

Staff, מִטָּה, means a staff, rod, shaft, or branch. It also means a tribe, but that definition is not relevant in this context, because here it refers to an instrument of chastisement.

Isaiah revealed God's purpose for using Assyria to punish Israel and Judah. Both nations suffered at the hands of this wicked nation.

Isaiah 10:6 <sup>6</sup>I send it against a godless [תְּהִי] nation And commission it against the people of My fury To capture booty and to seize plunder, And to trample them down like mud in the streets.

God was going to send a vicious, godless nation to discipline His nation and the people that were uniquely His, but who themselves had become godless. In reality, who was more godless, Assyria or Israel? Israel had the presence of God in the Temple, they had personal knowledge of the Creator God, and they had the Law given them on Mt. Sinai, but they rejected that knowledge. At least the pagan Assyrians were only doing what is expected of those who operate according to the dictates of Satan's world system. Israel should have been a righteous nation, but it was not.

Godless, תְּהִי, means profane, filthy, defiled, impious, godless, and implies perversity of heart; it refers to a godless person who has no faith in God and does not obey Him. The word characterizes one who lives in opposition to all that is right. The root of the word means to incline away with the implication of, in this context, inclining away from God.

I have already discussed the history of Assyria. Understanding their culture's seemingly boundless capacity for evil explains why people in the Mesopotamian region were so utterly terrified when Assyria had them in their sights.

“Of all the nations which inhabited ancient Mesopotamia, the Assyrians were the most warlike and ruthless. They lived for war and gloried in their military exploits and cruelty. They developed a highly advanced war machine and used naked terror as a means of conquest and as a method of holding their defeated enemies in abject fear and submission.... After the capture of the city, the Assyrian king would sit upon his throne at the gate of the city, surrounded by his resplendent court. The conquered population was marched before him, headed by their king or ruler. Most of the captives, young and old, would then be killed, or burned alive as a sacrifice to the national god of Assyria, Assur. Sometimes the captives would be flayed alive, or blinded, or would have their heads impaled on sharp stakes. Those who were not massacred would be driven into captivity, sometimes with hooks in their noses. The city itself would be plundered and its accumulated wealth carried away into Assyria” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 171-172].

What Yahweh was planning for Judah was very unpleasant, yet it was exactly what He said would happen to them in the event they rebelled against Him. He sent prophets to warn them and convince them to turn back to their God, all to no avail. Now He was sending them a nation who would punish them for their disobedience. At that point in history, what better people to do unpleasant things than Assyria? But we also have to remember that Assyria could do only that which God allowed them to do. One of the things they could not be allowed to do was exterminate the Jews either in Israel or in Judah.

Nevertheless, God was not going to allow Assyria's evil conduct to go unpunished. Yes, they unknowingly did God's bidding, but that does not negate the fact of their godlessness and evil nature which also had to be judged. Even though they did not know God, they had the knowledge of Him (Rom. 1:18-23), and His moral absolutes were implanted in the conscience (Rom. 2:14-16). They were without excuse.

Just as Isaiah was about to declare the destruction of Assyria, the prophet Nahum predicted the destruction of Assyria as recompense for her evil nature. God does not leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3).

Nahum 2:12-13, 3:1, 7 <sup>12</sup>The lion tore enough for his cubs, Killed *enough* for his lionesses, And filled his lairs with prey And his dens with torn flesh. <sup>13</sup>“Behold, I am against you,” declares the LORD of hosts. “I will burn up her chariots in smoke, a sword will devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the land, and no longer will the voice of your messengers be heard.” ... <sup>1</sup>Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies *and* pillage; Her prey never departs. ... <sup>7</sup>“And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, ‘Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her?’ Where will I seek comforters for you?”

Nahum was providing comfort to Judah by revealing to them the destruction of the nation they feared most at that time. He was a prophet during the time of Josiah's revival. Habakkuk addressed the issue of God's use of an evil nation for His purposes. “The first two chapters [of Habakkuk] deal with the question of how the Lord, the Holy One, can tolerate such evil in the world as was occurrent in the prophet's day. The concluding

chapter constitutes a triumphal climax to the problem posed in the first two chapters. It presents a vision of divine judgment, showing that God will deal with wrongdoers, both in their lifetimes and afterward, at the future assizes [courts] that He has decreed" [Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1895].

Assyria rebelled in her own right against God by failing to understand that she was simply being used as a rod of judgment for the accomplishment of God's will. Assyria thought she was so powerful and so superior that she was incapable of defeat.

Isaiah 10:7 <sup>7</sup>Yet it does not so intend, Nor does it plan so in its heart, But rather it is its purpose to destroy And to cut off many nations.

Assyria was very aggressive and conquered many nations and people groups in the region throughout its history. They seemed to think it their divine right to do as they pleased with no regard for the true Sovereign, Yahweh. Esarhaddon had this to say about himself: "I am powerful, I am all powerful, I am gigantic, I am colossal, I am honored, I am magnificent, I am without equal among all the kings" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 174].

It would not be correct to presume that Assyria had any knowledge that they were going to be used as God's instrument of judgment. God did not appear to the king and give him instructions or a lesson on the doctrine of Israelology. They didn't care about Yahweh, and they certainly didn't recognize Him as superior to their gods. He was just another deity to them who was going to go down to defeat in Judah just as He went down to defeat in Samaria. They thought their gods were the all-powerful gods of the area.

There are several explanations for the claim that Assyria's princes are as kings. Some believe it refers to army generals and others believe it refers to political rulers representing the Assyrian king. It could be officials of both kinds.

Isaiah 10:8 <sup>8</sup>For it says, "Are not my princes all kings?"

Buksbazen thinks that conquered kings were made generals in Assyria's army [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 174]; therefore, they are the princes in question. That seems unlikely given the Assyrian proclivity for killing conquered kings. Smith and Oswalt think the Assyrian army commanders were more powerful than the numerous city-state kings in the area [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 1-39*, 257; John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, 264]. Young's opinion was that the Assyrian king was superior to his princes, but those princes were superior to the kings of the other nations and city-states in the region [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, 1:361].

Isaiah 10:9 <sup>9</sup>"Is not Calno like Carchemish, Or Hamath like Arpad, Or Samaria like Damascus?"

Just as the mentioned cities either will fall or have already fallen to Assyrian forces, the Assyrians are confident that no one can withstand them including Judah. Of course, God

has other plans for Judah, but the Assyrians don't know that—and wouldn't care if they did know.

Next, it was revealed that the Assyrian king launched a verbal assault on the God of Israel which indicated his contempt for Yahweh.

Isaiah 10:10–11 <sup>10</sup>“As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols [אֱלִילִים], Whose graven images [פְּסִילִים] were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, <sup>11</sup>Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?”

Judah's idolatry was no different than the idolatry of the other nations Assyria conquered, but they had one God that was different. In Assyria's mind, however, the God of Israel was just another god among the gods of the nations, and a rather insignificant one at that, who could not withstand the mighty Assyrian army. After all, the pagan gods of other nations, mightier and greater than Yahweh, were no match for the Assyrians. Why would the God of Israel be any different? The Assyrian king would soon find out why! This was obviously blasphemy.

Idols and graven images cannot help anyone; they are nonentities and can do nothing for anyone whether the person who believes in them understands that or not.

Idol, אֱלִילִים, means idol, worthless, and futility; it refers to a pagan and material effigy that is worshiped as a representation or in lieu of a deity. It has the sense of futility, that is, uselessness as a consequence of being purposeless or incapable of producing results. It is worthless having no qualities that would render it valuable or useful.

Graven image, פְּסִילִים, means an idol or a graven image; it also refers to a pagan and material effigy that is worshiped as a representation or in lieu of a deity.

Sennacherib and his servants displayed this contemptuous attitude towards Yahweh when the Assyrian forces were preparing to lay siege to Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 32:17–19 <sup>17</sup>He also wrote letters to insult the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against Him, saying, “As the gods of the nations of the lands have not delivered their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand.” <sup>18</sup>They called this out with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, so that they might take the city. <sup>19</sup>They spoke of the God of Jerusalem as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, the work of men's hands.

Note the psychological warfare tactic used here. They intended to “frighten and terrify” the citizens of Jerusalem into surrendering. The claim was presented to them that Yahweh was just another insignificant pagan idol, subservient to the god of Assyria, who would be defeated. Presumably, the Assyrians knew the God of Israel was also the God of Judah and Jerusalem, and they conquered Samaria; therefore, in their mind, the God of Judah and Jerusalem was powerless to resist Assyria's army.

In verse 12, Isaiah assured the people that God was going to punish Assyria for her sinful arrogance. This verse appears in the midst of the boasting the Assyrian kings apparently took great pleasure in doing. "In its present setting, v. 12 functions as a transitional element making it plain that what is done to Jerusalem and Samaria (and their idols) (vv. 8-11) is not done in spite of Yahweh but because of him, and that the coming punishment upon Assyria is fully justified by her rapacious and arrogant attitude (vv. 13, 14)" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, 266].

Isaiah 10:12 <sup>12</sup>So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp [תַּפְאָרַת] of his haughtiness [עֵנֵי רוּם]."

The first thing revealed here is that God was using Assyria for His purposes; He was in total control of the events about to transpire. That purpose was to impose divine discipline on the wayward nation, but once that was done, Assyria was going to suffer the consequences mandated by a righteous, just God for her own behavior.

The fruit of the arrogant Assyrian heart was warfare, the cruelty it inflicted on people, and, most importantly, blasphemy.

The use of the word "pomp" indicates that the Assyrian kings thought very highly of themselves, in fact, they called themselves the "king of kings." Pomp, תַּפְאָרַת, means splendor, beauty, glory, and honor; it refers to the quality of being magnificent or splendid. It also relates to the state or quality of giving high attribution or status to someone. I don't know whether or not the Assyrian kings were accorded god status, but they did think they were superior to everyone else and their god was superior to all other gods.

God hates haughty people and He judges them.

Proverbs 6:17 <sup>17</sup>[God hates] Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,

Psalms 18:27 <sup>27</sup>For You save an afflicted people, But haughty eyes You abase.

Haughtiness, עֵנֵי רוּם, literally means height of the eye, hence "haughty eyes." It is an idiom referring to arrogance. The arrogant think highly of themselves, but God despises them and will bring them low.

The Assyrian boasting continued.

Isaiah 10:13–14 <sup>13</sup>For he has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did *this*, For I have understanding; And I removed the boundaries of the peoples And plundered their treasures, And like a mighty man I brought down *their* inhabitants, <sup>14</sup>And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest, And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth; And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened *its* beak or chirped."

The Assyrian kings were taking all the credit for their success. The king, however, was the chief priest of the national god, Assur. We did note earlier that after a successful conquest, they sacrificed captives to their god, and there are archaeological records of the Assyrians giving thanks to the gods for various victories. Despite whatever thanks they gave to their gods for victory, there is no doubt they held a very high opinion of themselves, and they certainly thought they were superior to the gods of every other nation including the God of Israel. The text doesn't state it, but it sounds as though these kings thought they were a god just as many other rulers throughout history have claimed to be deity. Today, at the least we might say they were legends in their own minds.

They were boasting in their strength and in their wisdom, or at least in what they thought was wisdom. One of the lessons to learn here is that intelligence and wisdom are two different things. What the Assyrians possessed in intelligence, they lacked in wisdom. "By normal human standards the Assyrians were indeed a highly intelligent people. Their magnificent cities and edifices, the ruins of which were excavated within the last century or so [19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries], their imposing high temples known as ziggurats, after which the tower of Babel was patterned, their exquisitely wrought fine arts and highly sophisticated civilization and their military organization, all these bear witness to their intellectual vigor" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 174-175].

The Bible makes it very clear that true power and true wisdom are found only in the Creator God. They Assyrian kings may have thought they exercised wisdom, but they had none.

Proverbs 1:7 <sup>7</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Daniel 2:20 <sup>20</sup>Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him.

Notice all the personal pronouns in these two verses. It was all about them and what they accomplished by means of death, destruction, and extreme cruelty. Their cruelty was legendary. There are numerous records attesting to the horrifying acts these people inflicted on those unfortunate people they defeated.

Satan keeps trying to bring the world back to a unified state just as it was before Babel. Assyria was one nation among many individuals and nations he has used throughout history to attempt that very thing. As one gathers eggs, the Assyrian kings attempted to gather the earth. They thought it would be easy to steal other nations as their own, as easy as stealing eggs out of a bird's nest. The concept of gathering the world together has existed throughout history, although no one will be successful until the appointed time which is during the Tribulation. Greece and Rome had worldwide conquest in mind. Today, communism and Islam want to control the world. The United Nations desperately wants to impose a one world governmental system. This is nothing new. Assyria was simply a pawn in the hands of Satan in his cosmic struggle to defeat God. God allowed certain things to happen in order to further His plan for history, and when that was complete, He judged Assyria for her sin and rebellion.



Through the prophet, God exposed Assyria's foolish false pride. In terms of application, arrogance and pride no matter who exhibits it is characterized by the truth in verse 15. These are simple questions with obvious answers, yet the majority of the world's people stumble over them just as Assyria stumbled over them.

Isaiah 10:15 <sup>15</sup>Is the axe to boast [פָּצַר] itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt [גָּדַל] itself over the one who wields it? *That would be like a club wielding those who lift it, Or like a rod lifting him who is not wood.*

Mere tools are not superior to the one wielding those tools, and so it was with Assyria and their role in Middle East history at that time. Assyria's braggart attitude was just as silly as the tool thinking it had power over the one using it. God was using the Assyrian kings as a tool to accomplish His divine purposes with Israel, and once He was done with that tool, it would be consigned to the ash heap of history while Israel would continue on—although severely chastened.

The words “boast” and “exalt” indicate that the Assyrian kings were exalting themselves, on their own authority (indicated by the verb form), which was just as foolish as a tool thinking it had control over its use.

Boast, פָּצַר, means to beatify, to glorify, to boast, or to manifest or show one's glory. It refers to what one does to and for himself, not what someone else does to the person. This is the product of a vain imagination and the hubris of a sinful heart. The only glory these kings actually possessed was the glory assigned to them by the world system which is not true glory according to God's definition. Nothing about them was glorious and worth boasting about in God's sight.

Exalt, גָּדַל, means to grow up, to become strong, to be great. It refers to being or becoming great in size, scale, magnitude, or importance. It refers to what one does to and for oneself, not what someone else does on behalf of the person. These kings were imagining themselves to be the most important, exalted kings on earth. God was eventually going to give them an attitude check.

The bottom line for Isaiah's words, as they pertained to his Israelite audience, refers to trusting Yahweh, who is in sovereign control of Israel and world history, and conversely, to refuse to either fear or trust in the Assyrians. They have been told that God is going to use Assyria for His purposes and when He has accomplished those purposes, Assyria will face His judgment. The next 4 verses describe the nature of that judgment.

Isaiah 10:16–19 <sup>16</sup>Therefore the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will send a wasting disease [רָזָן] among his stout warriors [גִּבּוֹרָיו]; And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame. <sup>17</sup>And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame, And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day. <sup>18</sup>And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body, And it will be as when a sick man wastes away. <sup>19</sup>And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number That a child could write them down.

The One who will execute judgment in Assyria is Yahweh of armies, not Israel. When Assyria's armed forces that are in Israel preparing to lay siege against Jerusalem are destroyed, it is Yahweh's army that does it, not Israel. Israel was surrounded by hostile forces and penned up in Jerusalem. The Assyrian king would later boast that after conquering many cities in Judah, he had Hezekiah shut up like a bird in a cage in Jerusalem. Interestingly, he didn't mention the massive defeat inflicted on his army by the God of Israel.

2 Chronicles 32:21–22 <sup>21</sup>And the LORD sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in shame to his own land. And when he had entered the temple of his god, some of his own children killed him there with the sword. <sup>22</sup>So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side.

This was just the beginning of the end of Assyria. The invasion of Judah took place in 701 B.C., the Babylonians and the Medes essentially destroyed Assyria in 612 B.C., and by 605 B.C. the remnants of the nation were eliminated. The Bible leaves no doubt there was a providential hand behind the nation's downfall.

Assyria's army was an excellent war machine. Stout, מִשְׁקֵינִי, means sturdy, stout soldier/warriors. It refers to excellent fighters in war exemplified by rugged physical strength. It can also mean a choice thing, a thing that is the best among things from which to choose. The army was made up of the finest, fittest fighting men the nation could provide. Yet, a single angel could destroy them in a night by killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (2 Kings 19:35). Some theologians believe the word "stout" is a reference to kings, because the word may mean "distinguished people," but it makes more sense as a reference to the Assyrian army, and most lexicons relate this verse to fighting men, warriors.

The Lord was going to see to it that this once lean mean fighting machine was going to waste away and become a shadow of its former self. Wasting disease, רָזוֹן, means emaciation, leanness, and consumption; it refers to a disease or sickness that causes emaciation and weakness.

Yahweh was referred to as "the light of Israel" and Israel's "Holy One." Even in the midst of God's disciplinary destruction of both Israelite Kingdoms, He was still Israel's God. The light that was Israel's light was a consuming fire to Israel's enemies. God is described as a "consuming fire" in a number of contexts involving pagan Gentiles and Israelites. He is particularly a "consuming fire" against His enemies who are also Israel's enemies.

Deuteronomy 9:3 <sup>3</sup>"Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you.

It did happen that the Lord consumed the Assyrian army in a single night during the siege of Jerusalem, but it took some years before the Lord completely destroyed them as an

independent nation. The nation was going to waste away just as a terminally ill patient wastes away. These pagans were going to be totally consumed, soul and body. Not every single person will perish, but only a few will remain.