

## ISAIAH: JUDGMENT AND HOPE

### 23. Isaiah 29

#### Jerusalem Humbled and Rebuked

Let's turn in our Bible to [Isaiah 29](#).

Last week in [Isaiah 28](#) we learned about the Lord's *Strange Language* and His *Strange Work*. The people of Judah (and particularly the city of Jerusalem) had trusted in the babbling of those who **didn't** speak for the Lord, so the Lord told them that they wouldn't be able to understand those who **did** speak the word of the Lord

**NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY** — *make nonsense of God's sense and you will get your fill of (nonsense).*<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah declared that YHWH was going to use the tongue of another nation to speak to them —

*Isaiah 29:11 For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people,*

That nation would be the Assyrians — and YHWH's word through them was this: **"Judgment!"**

Then we saw Isaiah speak about the *Strange Work / Strange Deed* of YHWH.

*Isaiah 28:21 For the Lord will rise up as on Mount Perazim; as in the Valley of Gibeon he will be roused; to do his deed—strange is his deed! and to work his work—alien is his work!*

His work — this final fate is something they would have never dreamed! What was this strange/alien work? **JUDGMENT!**

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<sup>1</sup> Kidner, F. D. (1994). Isaiah. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 650). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

*Isaiah 28:21 (The Message) God will rise to full stature, raging as he did long ago on Mount Perazim And in the valley of Gibeon against the Philistines. But this time it's against you. Hard to believe, but true. Not what you'd expect, but it's coming.*

Here's the way **Isaiah 29-31** roll out

**Chapter 29** — The Lord will Humble and Rebuke Jerusalem (by way of the Assyrians siege of the city)

**Chapter 30-31** — The Lord Rebukes and Defends Jerusalem

## ISAIAH 29

<sup>1</sup>Ah, Ariel, Ariel,

In verse 8 *Ariel* is identified as Zion. This is the only place in the Bible where Ariel is used as a name for Jerusalem. We find the word only one other time in the Old Testament (Ezra 8:16) where it is the name of a priest.

Ariel means “lion of God.” *Ariel* is used four times in two verses — and all of those are in the context of God’s judgment. Jerusalem may have thought of herself as the *Lion of God*, but God didn’t share that opinion. When the Assyrians showed up the city of Jerusalem (which was not just buildings and walls — but the people living there) would be exposed! When the Assyrian armies devastated much of Judah and ultimately surrounded Jerusalem, the city would discover that it was God’s lion in name only. They were resting on what Jerusalem used to be in its glory under the reign of king David and were blind to who **they** were.

Did you know that there are three of you: There’s the you YOU think you are. There’s the you OTHERS think you are. There’s the You GOD KNOWS you to be! God has His ways of exposing the REAL you — the REAL me. He will use adversity show us that we aren’t the mighty Christians we think we are, others think we are. That’s a humbling thing. That’s exactly what is happening here.

<sup>1</sup>Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts run their round.

Two ways to view this. We don't have to view them as an either/or.

1. Worship had become routine instead of life changing reality.
2. The Assyrians have laid siege to Jerusalem but they went on the "routine" of "worship" with no sense of urgency or repentance or seeking God because they were trusting that Egypt would show up at anytime and drive out the Assyrians.

But it wasn't going to be that way.

**<sup>2</sup>Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel.**

Ariel will *distressed* and be like an Ariel. There's another way this word *Ariel* can be translated, and perhaps Isaiah is creating a play on words to amplify the way the Lord is going to humble the people who are the Lion of God in name only. The NLT is really helpful here.

*Isaiah 29:2 (NLT) Yet I will bring disaster upon you, and there will be much weeping and sorrow. For Jerusalem will become what her name Ariel means—an altar covered with blood.*

The city that is *Ariel*, the Lion of God in name only, will be like an *Ariel* — a hearth, or an altar.

**<sup>2</sup>Yet I will distress Ariel....**

**<sup>3</sup>And I will encamp against you all around, and will besiege you with towers and I will raise siegeworks against you.**

Again, we see God personifies His judgment in Assyria. The Assyrians are not some independent agent threatening the destruction of *Ariel*. YHWH wanted His people to know that when the Assyrians under Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem in 701 BC. it was YHWH himself distressing the city, surrounding the city and raising siegeworks against the city.

**<sup>4</sup>And you will be brought low; from the earth you shall speak, and from the dust your speech will be bowed down; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and from the dust your speech shall whisper.**

They thought they were the roaring lion of God. They thought they were so smart to empty their treasuries to hire Egypt to rescue them. But the Lord shows them the inescapable end of declaring your independence from God and putting your trust in created things to save you: *brought low – speaking from the dust – not roaring – but a whisper.*

Reminds me of Psalm 2

*Psalm 2:1–5; 10-11 (ESV) <sup>1</sup>Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup>“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” <sup>4</sup>He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. <sup>5</sup>Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,.... <sup>10</sup>Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. <sup>11</sup>Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

**<sup>5</sup>But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff.**

To their surprise their plans failed to work out like they thought! Rather than be rescued by foreign help — YHWH would use foreign nations to judge them — and then judge the foreign nations He used to judge His people.

WE DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS — There is this constant tension in the book of Isaiah. YHWH speaks of judging His people **AND** delivering His people.

How is it that He's going to humble them but also bring them to a place of trust? that He is going to use the Assyrians to bring judgment on His people — and yet at the same time deliver His people and bring about a change of heart in which His people will turn from allegiance to and reliance upon others to allegiance and reliance upon Himself?

**NOTICE**

**<sup>5</sup>... And in an instant, suddenly, <sup>6</sup>you will be visited by the Lord of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.**

And that's exactly what we read in 2 Kings 19!

***2 Kings 19:35–36 (NLT)** <sup>35</sup>That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. <sup>36</sup>Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there.*

The city of Jerusalem wakes up in the morning and there 185,000 dead Assyrian soldiers — but the rest of the armies are gone along with Sennacherib.

YHWH might use Assyria for judgment — but He doesn't need anyone to accomplish deliverance. THAT is the God we trust and serve!

**<sup>7</sup>And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.**

For sure this is speaking to the morning recorded in 2 Kings 19:35-36. But I believe this is also looking forward to the not yet future — speaking of all of the nations thought all of the centuries that have fought against Jerusalem. I also believe it is a reference to a day in the yet future that Zechariah speaks of when Jerusalem will be attacked by the armies of the world

***Zechariah 14:2–3 (ESV)** For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. <sup>3</sup>Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.*

When it looks as though the city is about to fall, and the enemy armies are sure of victory, Jesus Christ will return and deliver His people (19:11–21) and sit upon the

throne of David in Jerusalem to establish His righteous reign upon the earth — and every one of those times when Jerusalem was under attack will seem like a dream.

**<sup>8</sup>As when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he is eating, and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he is drinking, and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.**

Here the focus shifts to the Assyrians. They were dreaming of what they were going to do with the spoils of their destruction of Jerusalem. (As a 1<sup>st</sup> grader I had this recurring dream of getting a Yellow Tonka Truck earth mover and dump truck. It was so real that when I woke up I went looking for it). It was such a real dream for the Assyrians that they could almost taste it. The Assyrians thought for sure that their thirst for power and conquest would be satisfied for a season. But they had a rude rude awakening!

Isaiah says that it will be like that for *all the multitudes of the nations that fight against Mount Zion*.

**<sup>9</sup>Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink!**

REMEMBER — Jerusalem had a high opinion of themselves — they thought of themselves as “the Lion of God.” They were blinded by their own pride. Their pride made them spiritually **blind**. Pride always blinds us to the truth about ourselves. That is why spiritual pride is so dangerous.

*Proverbs 16:18 (ESV) Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

*1 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV) Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

Their pride also made them spiritually **drunk**. Alcohol is a depressant. It depresses the function of the part of the brain involved in decision making and judgment and coordination. THAT is the effect pride has on our hearts in regard to spiritual

and moral decision making (reaction time is impaired), discernment is blurred, it's hard to walk a straight line following Jesus.

YHWH says — **pause and wonder** — stop and think about this because YOU did this to yourselves!

**Because** Jerusalem chose blindness, and chose spiritual drunkenness, God *sent* something

<sup>10</sup>**For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep,**

Think of drunks “sleeping it off.” In the same way YHWH will bring a deep spiritual lethargy upon the blind, proud, drunk people of Jerusalem.

**HERE'S THE DEAL** — Pride leads to spiritual lethargy and that sleepiness leaves a person spiritually, morally and even physically vulnerable!

The problem of spiritual sleep didn't end with Jerusalem of Isaiah's day. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD Paul the apostle had to warn Christians living in the city of Rome and the city of Corinth about the need to wake up!

***Romans 13:11 (NLT)** This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*

***1 Corinthians 15:34 (ESV)** Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

<sup>10</sup>**For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).**

The prophets were silent, and the word of God was neglected because the people *wanted* it that way. In silencing the **prophets** and the **seers**, God simply gave Jerusalem what she wanted. The prophet Amos spoke of the same thing.

**Amos 8:11 (ESV)** *“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.*

By the way — I believe the same thing is happening today. The word of God is not being taught because there is no deep desire for it in the hearts of men and women. Virtually every Saturday night we pray for the Lord to stir in the hearts of men and women a hunger for the Word of God.

Isaiah likened Jerusalem to the *blind* and to the *drunk*. Now, he likens them to the *illiterate*.

**<sup>11</sup>And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed.”**

This was not a matter of being cognitively illiterate. Isaiah says that the cognitively **literate** man received the **vision** of God but it was like a **sealed** book to him.

**<sup>12</sup>And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot read.”**

The person who was actually **illiterate** does no better — *I’m looking at it but it’s just jibberish to me.*

The words of Isaiah might as well have been a closed scroll because they were as incapable of hearing and understanding them as an illiterate person being able to understand a novel.

**The Lord explains WHY in verses 13-14.**

**<sup>13</sup>And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,**



How did they end up with the externals of faith without loving God? The **NKJV** gets to the heart of it

***Isaiah 29:13 (NKJV)** Therefore the Lord said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have **removed their hearts far from Me,***

God doesn't move away from His people; they remove their hearts from Him.

The **NIV** is helpful to understanding the last phrase of **verse 13**

***Isaiah 29:13 (NIV)** ...Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.*

In 21<sup>st</sup> century church culture worship is misunderstood as being a personal and emotional experience derived from God-focused music. What people consider worship is shaped by music and unspoken rules and cues. It's a kind of emotional conditioning and response that does not have to engage the heart.

**Because of verse 13** we read in **verse 14**

**<sup>14</sup>therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”**

YHWH is going to silence the other voices through what He does.

**<sup>15</sup>Ah, you who hide deep from the Lord your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, “Who sees us? Who knows us?”**

He's talking about those meetings behind closed doors as men advised Hezekiah to pay Egypt to save them. They were devising those plans as if God was not present, as if God doesn't exist, as if God doesn't know.

**THIS IS HUGE** — God can hide things from you and me (v. 10–12) but we cannot hide anything from God.

Before we look down our spiritual noses on Isaiah's audience we should all take a step back — pump the brakes. Probably everyone listening has done that in one way or another — to some extent or another. We close the door behind us thinking God isn't watching or listening.

We need to think and plan and act as if the living God was right there with us. THAT is what it means to walk in the fear of the Lord.

**<sup>16</sup>You turn things upside down! NKJV Surely you have things turned around!**

**Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?**

This gets to the crux of what is wrong with all humanity and why everything is broken. It is at the heart of The Fall in **Genesis 3** where our first parents declared independence from their loving Creator; and chose to be Self-informed; self-defined; self-directed. Every man and woman who has ever lived have followed in their steps.

Millennia later in the day of Isaiah — They devised plans in direct opposition to God's plan — *What does God know?*

It is utterly foolish to say (maybe outloud) — for sure with our lives) — I don't like what God has to say about gender and sexuality / what is right and what is wrong — what does He know? I am going to make myself whatever I want to be. I am going to shape myself in the way that I want to be shaped. I want to do what I want to do.

It's like the clay on the potter's wheel telling the potter that he's got it all wrong.

**DON'T MISS THIS** — This is tethered back to the spiritual blindness of the men and women of Judah.

**VERSE 17-19** are so awesome! Remember the context: It's a time of deafness to the voice of God. There's a famine for hearing the Word of God. No one is listening.

**17**Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest?

Lebanon was know for its mighty forests, which would be brought low and turned into a fruitful field. On the other hand, the fruitful field would become as a forest. God would cut one down and raise another up. **THAT is a revolution!**

That is what happens when the heart of man is ruled by God. There is always a revolution!

**18**In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.

Sounds so very much like the ministry of Jesus.

***Luke 7:22 (NLT)** <sup>22</sup>Then he told John's disciples, "Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the **blind see**, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, **the deaf hear**, the dead are raised to life, and **the Good News is being preached to the poor.**"*

Sounds very much like what Jesus does spiritually to every man and woman who believe the Gospel —

***2 Corinthians 4:6 (KJV)** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Jesus brings a word that breaks through the hardness of heart. Where Jesus rules in a person's heart pride no longer prevents them from hearing His word or seeing His work. The crazy script of verse 16 is flipped.

**19**The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

**FIRST** —This is so much like the opening words of the Sermon on the mount. In the Kingdom of God, the world's value system is upended.

**SECOND** — *Pride is the enemy of joy. We can be proud and have **fun**, we can be proud and have **success**, we can be proud and experience **excitement**, and we can be proud and be **happy** because of happy circumstances. But we cannot be proud and have **joy in the Lord**, or to whatever degree we are proud, we are missing **joy in the Lord**. The proud can never have **joy in the Lord** if they are in humble or poor circumstances.*<sup>2</sup>

**<sup>20</sup>For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, <sup>21</sup>who by a word make a man out to be an offender,**

This is all about injustice

***Isaiah 29:21 (NLT)** Those who convict the innocent by their false testimony will disappear. A similar fate awaits those who use trickery to pervert justice and who tell lies to destroy the innocent.*

**DON'T MISS THIS** — The work of the LORD does not stop at restoring His corrected people. It extends to bringing justice upon the wicked — specifically those who have no sense of proportion or justice:

**and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and with an empty plea turn aside him who is in the right.**

There is coming a day when there is not only going to *be joy for the meek and sight for the blind* — but there's going to be an **end** of injustice. There will only and always be nothing but justice.

**<sup>22</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:**

Isaiah takes them back to the very beginning of the nation of Israel. It's interesting here that it says that Abraham was redeemed. YHWH constantly

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<sup>2</sup> Guzik, D. (2000). *Isaiah* (Is 29:17–21). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

begins His words to Israel by saying: *I am YHWH who redeemed you from bondage in Egypt.*

But Abraham was a free citizen of Ur of Chaldees when God appeared to him and called him out from that place. God wants us to know that He when He called Abraham out of the land of idols that He was setting Abraham free to worship the only True and Living God.

The same God who rescued the father of the nation of Israel from idolatry is now speaking to the house of Abraham's grandson, Jacob; whose name YHWH would change to Israel and whose twelve sons became the 12 tribes of Israel.

<sup>22</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: **“Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale.**

There's a bit of a rebuke here. If you were sitting around tables in this room I would ask you why you think that's the case? Those who have been with us in our study through the Old Testament know the answer: Jacob wasn't always the stellar example of living by faith and fearing the Lord. He made **a lot** of mistakes. It took him awhile to figure out who God really is. And Isaiah is saying that Jacob would be ashamed of what his descendants had come to.

But Isaiah says that YHWH is going to do something in the lives of Jacob's descendants that will totally do away with any sense of shame.

<sup>23</sup>**For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.**

<sup>24</sup>**And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction.”**

Israel is the miraculous work of God. But here Isaiah is talking about Israel as a nation regarding the name of YHWH as holy — setting it apart in their minds and hearts and lives as worthy of worship — standing in awe of YHWH (think of how that was NOT happening in Isaiah 29 — their **hearts** were **far** from God — they

were spiritually **blind** — and **so filled with pride** actually telling YHWH what to do).

Surely — this didn't happen even after God delivered them from the Assyrians. They would continue in their spiritual blindness and upside down-ness and ultimately be led off into captivity in Babylon. As a nation it didn't happen when YHWH became flesh and dwelled among them. In fact, as a nation they rejected Him.

THIS is a day yet future. In that day *those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction.*"

THAT is happening one heart at a time today. We get the privilege of being a part of that work as we proclaim the Gospel. Until that day our hearts are filled with hope

*Revelation 22:20 (ESV) <sup>20</sup>He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

**QUESTIONS from the pastors followed by DAVE GUZIK on how much the chapter deals with spiritual blindness:**

**Pastor Travis**

God has a way of exposing the real you within each of us, and one He does that is through adversity. How have you seen this to be true within your family?

What are the dangers of our worship becoming routine?

Are there warning signs that our personal worship can become routine rather than life-changing, and if so, what are those warning signs?

How would you gauge your personal worship today? (weak, strong, bored, routine, exciting, growing)

**Pastor John**

Tonight, Richard told us that there are three YOUs..." There's the you YOU think you are. There's the you OTHERS think you are. There's the You GOD KNOWS you to be!" It's usually the people closest to us that are the first to see discrepancies between these opinions.

Are you willing to ask your spouse or a close and mature friend if they see a difference? Are you willing to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any discrepancy?

Sleeping is easy...drifting is what happens without resistance and intentional effort to combat it. What areas are you prone to take the easy way? In what areas are you not fighting the good fight? What thought patterns are you not resisting?

We only have so much fight in us...what is that you're most interested in and intentional with? Does it include your spiritual worship? What do you enjoy fighting and protecting and preserving most?

### **Pastor Chris**

1. In v.1, The Lord indicated that Israel's worship was empty, it had become routine. Can that be said of you? In what way has worship become routine for you instead of a life changing reality?
2. The Israelites were trusting that Egypt would rescue them from their oppressors. Who or what are you trusting in? Are you declaring your independence from God and putting your trust in created things to save you?
3. Because of their spiritual negligence, God sent to Israel a spirit of deep sleep, closing the eyes of the prophets and covering the heads of the seers. In essence, He made them both blind and drunk; unable to see and incapable of properly responding to Him. Do you personally feel you are having difficulty hearing from the Lord? Is there a lethargy in regard to the things of the Spirit? Does the Word of God seem sealed to you? It could be a season of dryness, but could there be a deeper cause? Could negligence be the root of your experience? If so, in what ways have you been negligent?
4. In vs. 13,14 – God declares that Israel draws near to Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. God doesn't move away from His people – if you

are feeling distance, in what ways have you moved away from Him? What do you need to do to get back to Him?

5. In v.15 God indicts Israel for trying to hide from Him what is really in their hearts. The problem is that God sees everything, we are not fooling God but ourselves in our effort to hide. If God were to look into your heart, would He see things that you are keeping back from Him—things that you are trying to protect or hide from Him? What are they and Why?

6. Based upon our study in Isaiah 29, what can you do this week to recalibrate your heart toward God and ensure that what God says about Israel is not said about you?

### **Pastor Justin**

We learned tonight that pride makes us susceptible to many dangers spiritually, morally and physically. Before we can deal with our pride we must see where it comes from. What is the source of your pride?

Verse 8 describes a hungry and thirsty man that is “not satisfied” and “not quenched”. What are things that falsely promise fulfillment, but don’t?

We saw YHWH as our Redeemer when Isaiah mentions Abraham’s life (v.22) and freeing Jacob of shame (v.23). What has YHWH redeemed you from?

### **DAVE GUZIK on how much the chapter deals with spiritual blindness:**

- Spiritual blindness is caused by pride.
- Spiritual blindness will bring us low.
- Spiritual blindness leads to spiritual drunkenness.
- Spiritual blindness leads to spiritual sleep.
- Spiritual blindness leads to spiritual illiteracy.
- Spiritual blindness causes hypocrisy.
- Spiritual blindness makes men believe God cannot know what they think or see what they do.
- Spiritual blindness makes men deny God as Creator.
- Spiritual blindness is cured through humility.
- Spiritual blindness can only be healed through the Lord’s restoration.



