

Isaiah 1

Overview

This chapter is set off as a unit by the introductory formulae at 1:1 and 2:1.

Internally, there is a division between v. 20 and v. 21.

- “The Lord hath spoken” in 2a is closed off in v. 20, “for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.”
- vv. 21-27 is a clearly marked chiasm (faithful city, dross), whose center (v. 24) is then amplified in 28-31.

Thematically, there is an important shift between 2-20 and 21ff.

- 2-20 pictures the nation as a whole judged, and only “the daughter Zion,” the city of Jerusalem, escapes. This section anticipates the first 37 chapters, dealing with the Assyrian threat that culminates in the destruction of the northern kingdom and the narrow escape of Jerusalem.
- In 21-31, the “faithful city,” Jerusalem, itself is judged and then restored. It is not the remnant as in 2-20, but rather the object of judgment from which a remnant is preserved. This section anticipates chapters 28-66, describing the Babylonian captivity and subsequent restoration.

1, Heading

1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.--We considered these kings last week in our historical overview. The verse pertains to the whole book, not just the first chapter.

2-20, Judgment on Israel, Jerusalem Preserved

These verses have two main sections, each introduced by an appeal to hear, and each with two subsections. Between the two, a cry by the prophet on behalf of the people (v. 9), acknowledging their dire condition. The first main section, addressed to the cosmic witnesses of the covenant, looks back to their failure to keep the covenant conditions and the judgment that has already fallen on them. The second main section, addressed to the sinful people themselves, looks ahead, rejecting their superficial efforts to make matters right, and pointing the way toward true repentance.

2-8, Looking Back

After the appeal, the prophet describes first Israel's sin, then the judgment that comes to her for that sin. In both cases, the prophet begins with figurative images, then proceeds to a more literal description. Each of the sections contains a link to the other.

2a, Appeal to Heaven and Earth

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.--This appeal to cosmic witnesses is not uncommon in the OT, and is particularly frequent in Deuteronomy:

4:26 I call **heaven and earth to witness** against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

30:19 I call **heaven and earth to record** this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

32:1 **Give ear, O ye heavens**, and I will speak; and **hear, O earth**, the words of my mouth.

Compare Ps 50:4, "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people."

This appeal is best understood against the background of ANE legal customs dating to the second millennium before Christ, the period of Moses and the Exodus.

1. The society was basically feudal. Smaller kings derived their authority from higher ones.
2. The relation between the great lord and his vassal kings was expressed in covenant treaties. These treaties expressed the past faithfulness of the lord to his vassal, outlined the vassal's responsibilities, and proclaimed sanctions if he should disobey. They also included long lists of witnesses, in the form of pagan gods and cosmic elements.
3. The book of Deuteronomy follows very closely the outline of such a treaty. God used the culturally recognized form of the covenant treaty to express his relation to his people. While the divine witnesses are (obviously) omitted, the cosmic elements are retained.
4. Deut 32 takes the form of an accusation by the king against a faithless treaty. This literary form is known as a *rib*, from the Hebrew verb meaning "to contend," and is a very common form in the prophets. Isa 1 is one of the classic examples.

Though viewed as creatures rather than as ancient gods, the persistence and ubiquity of cosmic elements makes them fitting witnesses. Compare the prophecies of praise from the inanimate creation in Ps 96,

11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice 13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

and the Lord's statement in Lk 19:40 that "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

So this simple appeal carries a lot of meaning. It reminds the Israelites

- that they are a covenant people, bound to God by his past saving actions toward them
- that the covenant, expressed in Deut, gives them certain duties and imposes sanctions for disobedience

- that they have broken the covenant, and are now being called to account for their rebellion.

for the LORD hath spoken,--Compare v. 20.

2b-4, Summary of their Sin

First the Lord points out their sin.

2b-3, Images: children, livestock

Two images show how inappropriate Israel's conduct is. The sequence moves from the lesser example to the stronger one.

I have nourished and brought up children,--The first example is from child-rearing. Infants are unable to care for themselves. Their parents must sacrifice for them and protect them, and this recognition is the basis for the universal recognition that children should honor their parents.

The Lord cared for Israel from infancy. He chose them when they were only a single family, protected them from the nations around them, guided and nourished them, and gave them their land. Surely they owe him filial piety.

Isaiah is echoing the original *rib* of Deut 32, cf. v. 6,

Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

and they have rebelled against me.--They are not just ungrateful. They have set themselves against the Lord in active rebellion. The verb is commonly used when one nation breaks away from under the authority of another, for example, of the secession of Israel from the house of David in 1 Kings 12:19.

There is an echo here of the portion of the old covenant pattern in which the lord reminds the vassal of past acts of kindness (cf. Deut 1:6-4:49), on the basis of which he claims the vassal's allegiance. Again, Deut 32 anticipates the complaint, cf. v. 15,

But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib:--The second example is from animal husbandry. Even the dumb animals know where to go for dinner at the end of the day. The "crib" is the feeding trough where the donkey knows it can find something to eat.

The implication is that it is the Lord who has fed the nation throughout its history, and if they had the sense of an ox or a donkey, they would recognize that.

but Israel doth not know,--That is, they do not recognize the Lord's history of goodness toward them. Compare Ps 103:2, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

my people doth not consider.--They do not stop to give thought to what their own history ought to teach them.

4, Reality: sin, iniquity, evil

4 Ah-- “Ah” is Hebrew *hoy*, usually translated “Woe.” It occurs 22x in Isaiah, and only 27x in the rest of the OT. The first instance, in 1 Kings 13:30, shows its funereal context, a cry of mourning over the grave. Isaiah sees Israel spiritually in the grave, and cries out in mourning.

This is the link from the current sin section to the punishment section in vv. 5-8. It anticipates the penalty that will fall upon the nation because of its sin.

The description of the sin falls into two parts:

- four paradoxical phrases describing who they are (their character), followed by
- three clauses describing what they do (their conduct)

Paradoxical Character

As Motyer points out, all four of these nouns are elsewhere descriptive of Israel's privilege, but here are associated with wickedness. The nation is a study in lost opportunity.

sinful nation,--At Sinai (Ex 19:5-6), God told Israel,

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and **an holy nation**.

Now they are indeed a nation, but a sinful one, not a holy one. “Sinful” has the connotation of missing the mark (cf. the accuracy of the left-handed slingers of Benjamin, Jud 20:16). The nation missed the mark of holiness.

a people laden with iniquity,--David reflected in 2 Sam 7:23-24 on their position as God's unique possession, standing in a special position as the distinctive people of him as their God.

And what one nation in the earth is like thy **people**, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? 24 For thou hast confirmed to thyself **thy people Israel** to be a **people** unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.

“Iniquity” emphasizes corruption in character rather than behavior.

Now they have become “heavy with iniquity.” It had been God's pleasure to bear them on eagle's wings (Ex 19:4 “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself”). Now they have become an oppressive burden to him,

Isa 43:24 thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. (cf. 1:14).

a seed of evildoers,--It had been their claim to God's favor (Isa 41:8) that

thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the **seed** of Abraham my friend.

Abraham's faith made him righteous before God (Gen 15:6), and God promised Isaac to bless his

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offspring for Abraham sake (Gen 26:24),

I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

But now the nation shows itself to be, not the seed of Abraham the righteous, but a seed of evildoers. The implied contrast is the same as the one brought out by the Lord with the Pharisees in John 8. They claimed (v. 33), "We be Abraham's seed." The Lord replied (v. 44), "Ye are of your father the devil."

children [sons] that are corrupters:--God admitted Israel into the privileged position of his son,

Ex 4:22-23 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is **my son**, even my firstborn: 23 And I say unto thee, Let **my son** go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

This position was to motivate them to purity of life (Deut 14:1),

Ye are the children [**sons**] of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

"Corrupters" emphasizes the result of sin. It is not only a missing of the mark, a defect of character, and a violation of God's law, but it destroys what is beautiful, like the action of moth and rust (Matt 6:19). Picture a wild and undisciplined child coloring on the walls and smashing out the windows of his parents' lovely home.

Perverse Conduct

The next three clauses describe their conduct. Note that the emphasis is not on their wicked deeds per se, but on their significance.

they have forsaken the LORD,--To "forsake" implies abandoning a responsibility. Here the verb is used with God's covenant name, suggesting that Israel has walked away from the covenant.

Isaiah may be recalling the words of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in 2 Chron 24:20, under Joash, two kings before Uzziah. The people had forsaken the house of God in favor of the groves (v. 18), and Zechariah warned them, "Because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you."

they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,--Some people are not angry if you break off a relation with them. But Israel's God is jealous. Their tolerance, even preference, for other gods is an affront to his holiness, and he responds in anger.

they are gone away backward.--The verb has the sense "be estranged." They have become strangers to the Lord. This is represented as a step backward.

5-8, Description of Punishment

Now he turns from their sin to its consequences.

5-6, Image: A battered body

The images here are of a person who has been battered and savagely beaten.

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5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more:--This reference to their sin links the present punishment section back to vv. 2-4.

The adverb can have the meaning “where” as well as “why” (2 Chr 32:10; Job 38:6), and here this gives an excellent sense. He is about to describe how completely the body has been beaten. He introduces this description by saying, “Where can you still be beaten, that you continue in your revolt? Is there still some square centimeter of healthy flesh to which you are trying to attract my rod?” The rest of vv. 5-6 then answer this question in the negative.

the whole head is sick,--Every inch of the poor person's head is beaten and sore.

and the whole heart faint.--Associated with the physical wounds is emotional exhaustion. No strength remains.

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it;--The emphasis on completeness continues. Not only is the head completely beaten, but so is the rest of the body. You can search it entirely without finding any sound, unwounded part.

Now Isaiah goes on to make his point particularly graphical, revolting us with the detail of this victim's condition.

but wounds,--The result of a crushing injury, closer to what we would call a bruise.

and bruises,--An extended, stripe-like wound, such as left by a lash or a cane

and putrifying sores:--Open, running wounds. The adjective really means “fresh.”

In spite of the miserable condition of the victim, nothing has been done to lessen the suffering:

they have not been closed,--Pressed, to expel corruption and close the separation

neither bound up,--bandaged

neither mollified with ointment.--to disinfect and relieve the pain.

The imagery of these verses calls to mind the mangled servant in 52:13-53:6. In particular,

1:5,6	52-53
5 Why should ye be stricken <i>nkh</i> any more?	53:4 smitten <i>nkh</i> of God
5 the whole head is sick <i>xly</i>	52:14 his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. 53:4 surely he hath borne our griefs <i>xly</i>
6 wounds (bruises, the result of crushing)	53:5 <i>he</i> was bruised for our iniquities
6 bruises (wound, stripe)	53:5 with his stripes we are healed
6 sores (the result of smiting; open and running)	53:5 he was wounded (pierced) for our transgressions

The linkage is intentional. As the book opens, we see the nation presented as a beaten body, chastised mercilessly for its sin. By the end we will realize that God has appointed a substitute to bear this gruesome punishment in its place. But until we realize how awful is the punishment that sin deserves, we cannot appreciate the work of the redeemer.

7-8, Reality: a countryside ravaged by war

7 Your country is desolate,--An inclusio with the last clause, with details in between.

The statements here are largely drawn from the prophecies of judgment in Lev 26 and Deut 28-29. This particular statement is from Lev 26:33.

And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

“Waste” is *xorbah* “a ruin,” anticipating the next description.

your cities are burned with fire:--The enemy cannot take the houses with them, so they burn them to deny them to the inhabitants.

your land, strangers devour it in your presence,--The invading army eats up what food is available in the fields. The inhabitants can only stand and watch in horror, as prophesied in Deut 28:33-34, 51

33 The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway: 34 So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

51 And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee.

and it is desolate,--Finishing the inclusio from the start of the verse.

as overthrown by strangers.--Grammatically, “strangers” is genitive, “as the overthrow of strangers.” The word “overthrown” is everywhere else in the OT used to describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and it is likely that Isaiah is comparing the destruction of Judah with that of those wicked cities.

8 And the daughter of Zion.--Distinguish the singular from the plural. In the plural (e.g., 3:16, 17), the genitive is of place, and describes the young women who are found in the city as the weakest and most vulnerable members of the society. In the singular (as here), the genitive is appositional, and depicts Zion itself as a young woman. Note the parallelism in 10:32; 52:2.

is left as a cottage in a vineyard,--A rude structure in which watchmen spent the night to guard the vineyard from thieves during harvest. Jerusalem, pictured as a vulnerable young woman, survives the attack, but looks like a rude stone structure.

as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,--The same kind of image, a garden shed.

as a besieged city.--A city under watch, cut off from its fellows. Delitzsch compares Jer 4:16,17,

Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. 17 As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD.

Verse 8 sets Jerusalem apart from the rest of the nation in the judgment that is being described. This corresponds to the emphasis of the first half of the book, which ends (36-37) with the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian, who has conquered the northern kingdom.

9, Penitential Reaction

Now the prophet responds to the Lord's words, showing that he understands the image that has been presented.

9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant,--He recognizes that the destruction is not complete. There is a remnant, but it is very small, and it exists only because the Lord of Hosts has allowed it to remain.

we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.--He makes explicit the implication of "overthrown" in v.7.

10-20, Future: Appeal to the People

With this indication that the people recognize their dire condition, the Lord now directs his words to them, rather than to the cosmic witnesses.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom;--He starts by addressing the rulers, the kings who (like Ahab and Ahaz) so often led the people into sin. They must recognize that they are under God's authority.

give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.--But the failure of the rulers does not absolve the people of responsibility, and he addresses them as well.

11-15, Futility of Religious Show

Repeatedly in Israel's history, degeneration of their spiritual condition is associated with an increase in their confidence in the formalities of religion.

- In our race's earliest days, Cain's attempt to offer a sacrifice was not accepted (Gen 4:3-5) because it did not reflect the faith of his brother Abel (Heb 11:4).
- In an era when Eli's sons had completely corrupted the worship at the tabernacle in Shiloh, the nation insisted on taking the Ark into the battle of Aphek in the hopes that it would guarantee victory (1 Sam 4).
- Saul thought that the motive of sacrifice justified disobedience to the Lord's explicit command (1 Sam 15:20-23).
- In Jeremiah's day, as Judah tottered toward collapse, the people were confident that God would never allow his temple to be destroyed (Jer 7).
- In Isaiah's age, the people were preoccupied with the various aspects of their worship in the temple.

The rejection deals sequentially with different aspects of their worship. Throughout we can find both reasons for his rejection, and evidence that the problem is in that reason, not in the specified act of worship itself.

11, Animal Sacrifices

11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD:--The phrase “to what purpose ... to me is X” means “What good is X to me?” Compare Gen 27:46; Job 30:2. The question is rhetorical; the sense is, “Your sacrifices mean nothing to me.”

“Saith the Lord” marks this as a summary introduction to this section; compare the similar use of *ne)um YHWH* throughout Jeremiah, and see note.

This rhetorical question is the hint as to why their sacrifices are unacceptable. They present them with the expectation that God somehow needs them, and that they are doing him a favor in bringing them. For God to accept anything offered with this attitude would make him dependent on his own creatures.

Solomon had already anticipated the problem:

Prov 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD:

Their sin, which he has already documented in vv. 2-4, makes their offerings unacceptable.

I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts;--As v. 2 echoed 50:4, so these verses recall 50:7-13

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. 10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

Recall that Asaph, who wrote in David's era, is the prophetic psalmist (“the seer,” 2 Chr 29:30). In Ps 50, he foresaw the abuse of the sacrificial worship that came into full flower 250 years later.

and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.--The previous clause mentioned the burnt offerings, whose focus was worship. This clause mentions blood, the central feature of the sin offering. God will not accept their worship, nor will he recognize their superficial attempt to deal with their sin through the sin offering. In addition, does mentioning the burnt offering before the sin offering suggest that they are presenting them in the wrong order?

There is no clear evidence for this category that the Lord approves of the basic ritual, but the division between burnt offerings and sin offerings points back to the system outlined in the law.

12, Presence

12 When ye come to appear before me,--This is the language of Ex 23:17; 34:23; Deut 16:16, requiring all males to appear before the Lord three times in the year.

who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?--“My courts” indicates that the Lord still acknowledges the temple as his property, but their appearance with flocks and herds on the pilgrimage feasts now constitutes an unwelcome intrusion, nothing more than the noisy clatter of animal hooves on the pavement.

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The obvious answer to the question is, “Why, you have.” But such an answer immediately points to the problem. Their whole conduct shows a blatant disregard for what the Lord commands. It is inconsistent for them to neglect him in daily life and then three times a year come tramping through the temple and flatter themselves that they are obeying him.

13a, Vegetable Offerings

13 Bring no more vain oblations;--The term can refer to either animal or vegetable sacrifices (Gen 4:3-5), but in the Levitical law it is distinctly the grain offering (KJV “meat offering”), and that is probably the sense here. Their offerings are vain, worthless, empty. The sense is the same as 1:11a, but now he goes a step further.

incense is an abomination unto me;--Worse than meaningless and empty, these offerings are actually an abomination.

The composition of the sacred incense was prescribed in Exod 30:34-38. It formed a prominent part of the offerings of the princes of the tribes in Num 7. Each brought

Num 7:14 One spoon of ten shekels of gold, full of incense:

The incense was to be burned on the altar of incense in the tabernacle, Exod 30:1-10, under two solemn restrictions.

First, no one was allowed to compound the incense privately. It belonged only to the Lord:

Exo 30:37-38 And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. 38 Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

Second, nothing else could be offered on the altar of incense except this special incense (and the blood on the day of atonement):

Exo 30:9 Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

Isaiah's rejection of the people's incense offering suggests that they have violated these constraints.

- By offering their incense with sinful hearts, they were using it for their own purposes, not to honor the Lord.
- Thus it was “strange incense,” and defiled the altar.

Compare the role of incense in deciding the rebellion of Korah in Num 16. Though they were priests, and though they presumably used the correct incense, they were destroyed,

Num 16:35 And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

As throughout this section, the Lord insists that the substance of an offering is irrelevant if the attitude of the heart is not correct.

13b-14, Sacred Seasons

the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies,--Now he turns from the various sacrifices to the sacred seasons prescribed in the law.

I cannot away with,--An archaic phrase meaning “I cannot endure.” The Hebrew accents favor grouping this with the next phrase rather than the preceding one.

it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.--Literally, “iniquity and the solemn meeting.” Overall translation: “As for new moons and sabbaths, calling of assemblies: I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn meeting.” The sacred seasons by themselves are fine, but when they are combined with iniquity, they become an abomination to the Lord.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth.--Note the possessive pronouns. By mingling sin with holy days, they have made them unholy. Now the seasons they observe are their own, not the Lord's.

they are a trouble unto me,--Literally, “they have become a burden upon me.” Once they were not. Isa 56:2,4,6 show that he values the Sabbath.

I am weary to bear them.--Ironically, the sabbath day was to be a day of rest. Carrying of burdens was forbidden, but now the Sabbath itself becomes a burden to the Lord. (However, the Hebrew word is different—a very rare term, appearing only here and at Deut 1:12.)

15, Prayer

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you:--Rather than attracting his attention, their prayer drives him from them.

yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear:--The more they pray, the less they are heard.

your hands are full of blood.--To “fill the hands,” namely with an offering, is an idiom for consecrating someone to divine service (Exod 28:41; 29:9, 33, 35; 32:29; Lev 8:33; 16:32; 1 Chr 29:5; 2 Chr 13:9; Ezek 14:26). Having the hands full was the required position of one offering; the law of the pilgrimage feasts required that worshippers not come empty (Ex 23:17; 34:23; Deut 16:16). But look at what these bring. “Blood” is the plural *damim*. Delitzsch notes,

The plural *damim* always denotes human blood as the result of some unnatural act, and then the bloody deed and the bloodguiltiness itself.

Isaiah picks up this criticism again in ch. 59.

1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

16-18, Demand to Turn

The Lord offers nine terse commandments, then a more open invitation. The first five commandments

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are a general exhortation to depart from evil and do good, while the last four focus on the problem of social justice.

16-17a, General Exhortation to Righteousness

As in 2b and 5-6, he begins with a metaphor, then sets forth the literal teaching.

16 Wash you,--Of the 73 instances of this verb in the OT, 52 refer to ritual cleansing. In their eagerness to pursue the outward forms of temple worship, they had overlooked the meaning, if not the action, of the required lustrations.

make you clean;--The effect of washing.

put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;--Here is the true meaning of the cleansing that he requires. "Doings" *ma(alal* is from the root (*ll* that exhibits an amazing polarization. When applied to men it is almost always negative (as here), but it is also used to speak of the marvelous works of the Lord. The basic meaning appears to be "to act irresponsibly, wantonly"; the participial noun (*olel* means "child." They must stop conducting themselves as though they were their own final authority.

cease to do evil;--Stop sinning.

17 Learn to do well;--We would more likely say, "Do good." The verb in this clause is frequently used as the opposite of the verb in the previous clause. It is not enough to abstain from evil. The Lord requires people to do positive acts.

17b, Specific Exhortation to Social Justice

Now he makes the requirement more specific.

seek judgment,--The application of the verb to this object may recall Deut 17:9,

And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and **enquire** *dr\$* "seek"; and they shall shew thee the sentence of **judgment**:

The "seeking" that he requires is oriented to the sources of revelation. Cf. Ezra 7:10,

For Ezra had prepared his heart to **seek** the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and **judgments**.

In contrast to their current irresponsible deeds (*m(ll* v. 16), they are to turn to God's law, which was in the custody of the priests, for guidance in rendering judgment. This judgment will have two effects. Consider the second one first.

judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.--These are two of the three prototypes of helpless people in ancient Israel, the third being the foreigner (18x in the the OT, 11 in Deuteronomy). The Lord omits the foreigner in this verse, not because kindness to the foreigner isn't important, but because they need to start with the basics of caring for their own.

relieve the oppressed,--The AV, following the LXX, understands the word translated "oppressed" as a summary of "the fatherless ... the widow." But the word is actually active, not passive. The phrase

should be rendered, “Guide the oppressor.” In addressing social problems, it is not enough to provide welfare to those who are oppressed. One must also speak truth to power in condemning those who oppress them.

18, Invitation to Seek the Lord's Cleansing

The previous list commanded the sinful people to cleanse themselves and obey the Lord. If they try to fulfill these requirements as thoroughly as they ought, they will soon find that they are unable to meet the Lord's standards. In fact, the Lord realizes this. After giving them these simple but unattainable standards to drive them to frustration, he then invites them to turn to him, with a gracious promise to do what they could not do.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:--Are you frustrated with my demands? Come and talk to me about it. Admit your inability to please me. The general argument is the same as Gal 3:24,

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The formula marks this as an introductory summary, amplified in the next two conditional sentences. See note.

Only in the Lord can they realize forgiveness. The LXX captures this thought by translating the following verses, “I will make them white as snow,” “I will make them white as wool.”

The verses are an excellent example of synonymous parallelism. He offers two pictures of the indelibility of their sin, followed by two examples of pure cleansing.

though your sins be as scarlet, ... though they be red like crimson,-- “Crimson” is literally “worm,” and refers to the kermes insect that infests scrub oak. “Scarlet” refers to a bright red dye made from the eggs of this insect. Sin is viewed as an indelible dye that stains the person. They would realize that their own efforts to “wash” and “be clean” (v. 16) would be powerless to remove such a dye.

they shall be as white as snow ... they shall be as wool.--With these two images of brilliant red, he contrasts two images of pure white: snow, and wool.

19-20, Summary

These two verses summarize 2-20.

19 If ye be willing and obedient,--This verse recalls the invitation of 16-18.

The two verbs reflect the complementary conditions of blessing:

- **willing** reflects the attitude of the heart;
- **obedient** describes the outward result.

Their religious worship, while outwardly obedient, was not willing. Nor is the Lord pleased when someone is willing but weak and so does not obey (Matt 26:41, in the garden with the disciples).

ye shall eat the good of the land:--This promise echoes the words of Pharaoh's invitation to Joseph's

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family to take refuge in Egypt, in Gen 45:18.

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword:--This verse recalls the sin and resulting judgment described in 2-8. Judah and Jerusalem still have a chance to turn and avoid the beating that the North has suffered. But if they persist in the rebellion of the north, they will share its punishment.

The two verbs here are paired with those in v. 19.

- **refuse** is the opposite of **willing**, and expresses a heart rejection of the Lord.
- **rebel** describes their conduct in opposition to the Lord's revelation.

for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.--Compare v. 2a. This announcement rounds out the *rib*.

21-31, Judgment and Restoration of Jerusalem

This section is marked off from 2-20 by three marks:

- the inclusio of speech formulae around the former in 2 and 20,
- a strong chiasmic structure through 27,
- a shift from second person plural pronouns “you” to singular “thee” (Anita).

The *ne)um* formula at the center of the chiasm marks v. 24 as a summary, which is expanded in 28-31.

The theme of this final section is suggested by 19-20, but with two important differences.

1. There, the people were responsible; here, the Lord takes the initiative.
2. There, those condemned and called upon to repent are the same. Here, the image is rather one of purging out the wicked so that the faithful city can be redeemed, identifying and delivering a subset of the entire nation.

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment ; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.	afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness , the faithful city . 27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment , and her converts with righteousness .
22 Thy silver is become dross , thy wine mixed with water: 23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.	25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross , and take away all thy tin: 26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning:
24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:	

The basic rhythm of the chiasm is a contrast in the first panel between their calling and their actual state, the Lord's resolve at the center, and their restoration to their calling in the second panel.

21-23, Calling Corrupted

The theme of this first panel is summarized in the exhortation of 2 Pet 1:10 to “make [our] calling and election sure.” Jerusalem had a high calling, but did not make good on it. Isaiah alternates between a title indicative of their high calling, and what has become of them.

21 How.--The word is often used (Jer 48:17; Lam 1:1; 2:1; 4:1,2) to introduce a lament, a formalized cry of despair and mourning.

is the faithful city.--Zion was **called** to be a “faithful city.” “Faithful” (*nifal* ptc of *mn*) has two meanings in the OT:

- firm, steadfast, enduring, cf. Deut 28:59, where plagues are spoken of twice as “faithful” (EV “of long continuance”); 1 Sam 25:28; 1 Kings 11:38 “faithful house” (of David and of Solomon)
- worthy of trust, cf. Hos 11:12 (contrasted with deceit and lies), descriptions of people (Moses in Num 12:7; Samuel in 1 Sam 3:20)
- Both together in 1 Sam 2:35, which contains definitions of the two senses:

1 Samuel 2:35 And I will raise me up a faithful [trustworthy] priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind:

and I will build him a sure [enduring] house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

The verse in Samuel contains an important principle. If we are faithful (trustworthy in the things of the Lord), our work will be faithful (enduring).

The primary sense in Isa 1:21 is “trustworthy,” because of the contrast with “harlot,” but the rest of the section goes on to show how the city will be destroyed. As long as Zion was faithful to the Lord, she endured; when she became unfaithful, he brought her to an end.

become an harlot!--The harlot is universally despised in the OT, because her contrast with a wife makes her the model of unfaithfulness. A husband can trust in his wife, but a harlot moves from one man to another with no hesitation. The image is especially common in Jer 2-5 and Ezek 16 and 23 in describing how Judah, who had been the wife of YHWH, has become a harlot.

it was full of judgment;--Zion's next **calling** was to be the source of God's judgment, in the sense that people would go there to have their disagreements adjudicated. The next chapter makes this explicit, in 2:3,

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

righteousness lodged in it;--Not just righteous people, but righteousness itself. “Lodged” implies spending the night, as one would at an inn. Nighttime is usually when bad things happen, but righteousness itself passed the night in Jerusalem.

but now murderers.--The verb form (Piel) implies repeated activity. These are people for whom murder is a way of life, armed highwaymen, “a den of thieves.”

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22 Thy silver--Israel's **calling** was to be something valuable, like silver, as God's personal treasure (Exod 19:5, "ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me"). He now focuses not on the nation as a whole, but on some part of this treasure ("thy silver"), that ought to be particularly precious to him.

is become dross--Dross is the lead oxide that is often found mixed with silver, and must be removed to leave pure metal. When you refine silver, you keep the silver and discard the dross. Israel used to be the part that God treasured and kept; she has become that which is to be discarded.

thy wine—Israel's **calling** (ch. 5) is to be God's vineyard. "Thy wine" is the product of that vineyard, just as "thy silver" is a prominent part of God's treasure. (Note: there is some question as to the meaning of the noun, which appears only here. LXX renders it *oinos*, but cognates appear to mean "beer." But all my commentaries consider the reference to be to the finest wine.)

mixed with water--It was acceptable to mix wine with water to serve it, but one would not deliver it from the vineyard that way. Their choice wine is diluted from the start.

What is this element that was once like pure silver and good wine, but has become corrupt and adulterated? The literal truth corresponding to the figure is in the next verse (compare the introduction of truth with a figure in vv. 2-3, 5-6, 16a):

23 Thy princes—As in v. 10 he addressed the rulers of Sodom, so here he focuses on the preeminent citizens. Their **calling** originated in Ex 18:25, when at the recommendation of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses

chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

"Rulers" is Hebrew *sar*, "prince." These were "able men," *anešey-xayil*, "men of excellence." They were the best of the nation, chosen to assist Moses. In recounting their appointment in Deut 1:15-18, Moses also calls them "judges" (1:16).

are rebellious--Princes, judges, serve under authority. Moses gave them disciplined instructions:

Deut 1:16-18 And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. 17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it. 18 And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

Now they are rebellious, rejecting the solemn charge that is upon them.

and companions of thieves--They were appointed to be the companions of Moses. Now their closest associates are thieves. As "able men," they were the nation's silver. Now they are become its dross.

every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards--Judges' decisions are to be guided by the law and the facts of the case, but they had come to pursue bribes. Their wine was diluted with water.

they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them--Recall the charge in 1:17, "Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." They have abandoned this responsibility.

24, Summary of Judgment

24 Therefore saith—The Hebrew expression is used to introduce summary prophetic statements. What the Lord is about to say here is expanded in 24-31. This section is set off from the panels of the chiasm on either side by its use of the third person rather than the second to refer to the people of Judah.

The Lord introduces himself by a concatenation of titles emphasizing his authority and strength.

the Lord,--*ha'adon*, the master, the one in authority over all. These violations of his law will not go unpunished.

the LORD of hosts,--LORD is YHWH, the covenant name of God; the hosts are the armies of heaven. Yahweh sets out with a massive army to enforce his covenant.

the mighty One of Israel,--The title was original with Jacob, Gen 49:24. When blessing his sons, the only one to whom he mentioned the Lord was Joseph, and there he introduces him with several titles:

Gen 49:24-25 the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the **mighty [One] of Jacob**; (from thence, the **shepherd**, the **stone of Israel**;) 25 Even by the **God of thy father**, who shall help thee; and by the **Almighty**,

David picks the title up in Ps 132:2,5, in celebrating the coming of the Ark to Jerusalem, but Isaiah uses the title the most (here, 49:26; 60:16). In each context it emphasizes God's power in the presence of his adversaries. In other cases, the adversaries in view are the Gentiles (Egypt in the case of Joseph; the Philistines from whom the Ark was delivered in the case of Ps 132; Babylon in Isa 49 and 60), but here it is only generic, "mine adversaries," "mine enemies." How far the nation has fallen, when the one whose might protected her against Gentiles now turns his wrath against her.

Ah,--Alas, woe (as in 1:4)

I will ease me—The verb is the one translated "repent" in Gen 6:6 and often. This verse and translation is an excellent reflection of the verb's main meaning, which is the release of emotional tension. The nation has become a burden to the Lord ("laden with iniquity," v. 4), which he will now lay down.

of mine adversaries,--"Adversary" focuses on the effect of the opposition on the victim: he feels constrained, oppressed. This is why the Lord speaks of easing himself of this influence.

and avenge me of mine enemies:--"Enemy" focuses on the hatred felt by the opponent. Thus the Lord's response is one of vengeance.

25-27, Restoration to her Calling

Note that the one who acts throughout this section is the Lord. Judah cannot correct her own sin. The Lord must intervene.

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee,--Note the shift from the third person back to the second person. When the Lord spoke of "mine adversaries" and "mine enemies" in the third person, some hearers might think he was referring to the Gentiles. But now he makes clear that the Jews have put themselves in the line of his wrath.

and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:--Corresponding to v. 22, he will

remove the impurities that mar their leaders. His wrath, as unpleasant as it is, is intended to purge and cleanse, not to punish. The message here is the same as Heb 12, the benefits of chastisement.

26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning:--The “princes” of v. 23 are now described in terms of their functions:

- “judges” because they decide on actions that people have already taken;
- “counsellors” because they are wise and skilled in forming plans for the future.

As a result of the Lord's purification, they will carry out the functions for which they were intended.

afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.--He returns to the leading terms of v. 21, in particular, the title “faithful city.”

27 Zion shall be redeemed—In this last element of the chiasm, the Lord emphasizes that the change is something that is done to Zion, not something she does for herself. She will be redeemed, purchased at a great price.

and her converts—Literally, “those who turn.” Though Zion cannot redeem herself, she must turn to the Lord in order to receive the redemption that he offers.

with judgment, ... with righteousness.--Here the Lord specifies the means by which they are redeemed (*beth*, as in Ex 13:13; 34:20; Deut 9:26; Neh 1:10). Though “righteousness” is repeated from v. 21, there is an important difference. There, it is Zion's own righteousness; here, it is the Lord's. The means seem at first to conflict with the verb “redeem.” It would seem that a **righteous** God who executes **judgment** must destroy sinners, not forgive them. The resolution of this dilemma will be found in ch. 53, where the **righteous** servant (v. 11) endures **judgment** (v. 8) in the place of others. Only in this way can God be both just, and the justifier of those who believe on Jesus (Rom 3:26).

27-31, Description of Judgment

Now he describes in more detail the threat of judgment introduced in v. 24, the central point of the chiasm.

1:27 is a hinge, linked closely with both neighboring units.

- The repetition of “judgment” and “righteousness” from v. 21 links it with the chiasm.
- The contrast with the following verse links it with the description of judgment.

The three descriptions of the wicked in v. 28 bring us back to the beginning of the chapter:

28 the transgressors—The underlying verb appears in v. 2, “they have rebelled against me.” These are sins of commission.

the sinners—The corresponding participle appears in v. 4, “sinful nation,” as the first of the four paradoxical characteristics of Israel. These are sins of omission; the verb denotes missing the mark (Jud 20:16, of the southpaw slingers of Benjamin)

they that forsake the LORD—This phrase was the first of the four perverse conducts in v. 4. It describes the attitude that underlies both of the others.

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The chapter began by reminding the nation of their sin. We have just read a wonderful promise to Zion's "converts," those who turn from their sin back to the Lord. But now we are reminded of what awaits those who refuse to turn.

28 And the destruction ... shall be together,--None of these rebels will survive. Every category of opposition to the Lord will be done away.

shall be consumed.--They will be finished. Just what does this mean?

Verses like this are often quoted by annihilationists, those who hold that the wicked do not suffer eternally but are destroyed. The view is traditional with the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day adventists, but over the past 50 years has been espoused by a number of prominent evangelicals (e.g., John Stott, Clark Pinnock, Philip E. Hughes, John Wenham). J.I. Packer http://www.the-highway.com/annihilationism_Packer.html and Benjamin Warfield <http://www.the-highway.com/articleJuly04.html> have prepared reviews, Packer with detailed discussion.

It would not help our understanding of Isaiah to divert into a detailed discussion of annihilationism, but three observations are worthwhile.

1. The OT focuses on the outward, physical, earthly form of the people of God. It naturally uses language that suggests the eradication of the wicked from society, without conflicting with later revelation concerning the eternal destiny of the wicked (e.g., Rev 14:11).
2. Even in the OT there are glimpses of the eternal suffering of the wicked. Compare v. 31 of this chapter, and Dan 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."
3. The words used do not denote absolute cessation of existence. "Destruction" is literally "smashing, breaking," rendering its object useless but not non-existent. "Consumed" is used of the human spirit in Ps 143:7, of the soul in Ps 84:2 and 119:81, and of the kidneys as the seat of the emotions in Job 19:27, to refer to great psychological pain and distress, not at all a cessation of consciousness, and this is most likely how the term is meant here, as we will see in the following verse. Similar examples can be multiplied of all the words that are held to refer to annihilation.

In addition, Isaiah goes on to amplify what he means by this description of their destiny, in very non-annihilationist terms:

29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks [terebinths] which ye have desired,--The Canaanite fertility cults offered their worship in the presence of large trees:

Ezek 6:13 Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick **oak [terebinth]**, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.

Hos 4:13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and **elms [terebinths]**, because the shadow thereof is good:

Isa 57:5 Enflaming yourselves with idols [among the **terebinths]** under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?

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So closely associated were these trees with idolatry that their very name is derived from the same root, and the form here is a pun for “gods” (*'eyliyim*, cf. *'elim* Ex 15:11 “who is like thee among the gods”). The trees formed both the shaded environment where they worshiped idols, and the material from which idols were made (Isa 44:13-20).

Compare this orientation with the quasi-religious nature of the modern environmental movement.

For they shall be ashamed—This clause is an important explanation of what it means for the rebels to be destroyed. When the Lord's judgment falls on them, they will realize that the false gods of the groves where they had abandoned the Lord are powerless to deliver them. Their rebellion will be at an end. They will no longer desire the sacred groves. They are “consumed” (v. 28) in the very sense of Ps 143:7; 84:2; 119:81; Job 19:27, describing emotional hopelessness.

Note the shift from “they” to “ye.” The readers, having read of Zion's redemption in v. 27, will naturally expect to be included. Isaiah reminds them that they are “by nature the children of wrath, even as the others” (Eph 2:3), and if they do not repent, they will perish along with them. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,” 1 Cor 10:12. We must never for a moment lose sight of how sinful we were before the Lord, and how entirely we depend on his grace for our salvation.

and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.--Another description of the pagan outdoor sanctuaries:

Isa 65:2-3 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; 3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

Features of Israel's worship were intended to distinguish it from these pagan practices:

- field altars must be built of earth or unhewn stone, not manufactured material, to avoid any suggestion of a graven image:

Exodus 20:24-25 An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. 25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

- no trees could be planted near the altar:

Deut 16:21 Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee.

They will be ashamed when they realize that these sanctuaries were ineffective to protect them from judgment.

30 ... an oak [terebinth] whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.--It should be obvious to them that sacred trees and gardens, far from meriting reverence, are themselves dependent on the Lord for care. Terebinths are broad-leaved trees that drop their leaves each year; a garden without water dries up. The rhetoric here is much as in 44:13-20, which mocks those who cut down a tree to make an idol, then burn part of it in the fire.

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Contrast this warning with the promise of Ps 1:3 to the one who meditates in the law of God day and night,

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Preoccupation with the Word of God is a strong protection against falling into sin.

Ps 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Prov 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

For ye shall be as ...--The worshiper become like that which he worships. Of idols, the Psalmist says, "they that make them are like unto them," 115:8; 135:18). Conversely, as we focus our attention on the Lord Jesus,

2 Cor 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

31 And the strong—This is a rare word, appearing elsewhere only in Amos 2:9, where it is applied to oak trees. The AV's rendering of *po(alo* later in the verse as a participle rather than a noun suggests that the translators understand the word here as well to refer to the sacred trees, then to the idols that were made from them. (Thus Calvin, *contra* all modern expositors, who miss the allusion to Amos.) Amos ministered to the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Uzziah (Amos 1:1), thus very early in Isaiah's ministry, and they may have known of one another's work.

shall be as tow,--Tow is the lint that falls from flax during processing, and was gathered for use as tinder in starting fires. Even a majestic tree will burn.

and the maker of it as a spark,--Either the person who planted the tree, or the one who carved an idol out of it. The idolatry of the people is the spark that starts the conflagration. Don't blame the idols!

and they shall both burn together,--Idolater and idol will both suffer the punishment of fire.

and none shall quench them.--There is no hope for those who fall under God's judgment. This expression is an interesting anticipation of the doctrine of eternal hell. Fire ordinarily goes out when its fuel is consumed, but there is no end to this fire. They burn, but they never burn up.

Summary

This chapter has sounded four themes that we will hear repeatedly throughout the book.

1. Sin: the nation has violated God's word. 2-4, 11-15, 20a, 21-23
2. Punishment: God's wrath will come upon them for their sin. 5-8, 20b, 24, 27-31
3. Command: the Lord expects the people to respond to this revelation by changing their behavior. 16-17, 19a
4. Promise: the Lord promises to restore them to fellowship and blessing. 18, 20b, 25-27.

Notes

(al meh in 1:5

There are two exegetical questions:

1. Should the adverb be translated “why” or “where”?
2. What is the relation between the two clauses?

Sense of the Adverb

The expression occurs 18x in the OT (not 14, as KD assert). Most instances mean “why” (including one with the same verb as here, Num 22:32), but there are some with locative meaning:

2 Chr 32:10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem? (note conjoined circumstantial clause)

Job 38:6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?

In addition, cf. the rather different sense, “for what,” not purpose but object of request,

Neh 2:4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?

Relation between the Clauses

Other instances with conjoined clauses show that the force of the interrogative can extend over both clauses:

2 Chr 32:10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem?

Job 13:14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand?

Jer 9:12 for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness,

y)mr YHWH, 1:11, 18

The usual prophetic formula uses the perfect, not the imperfect. Isa uses the perfect 12 times (not counting 30x in the phrase “thus saith the Lord”), but he is the only prophet to use the imperfect (5x, and the only other instance is Ps 12:6 (ET 7)). Its few uses are consistent with the hypothesis that the imperfect serves the same function as *ne)um YHWH* in Jer and elsewhere, of marking a summary statement to be expanded further. The durative sense of the imperfect would be consistent with this: <summary>, the Lord is saying: <detail>. But Isa also uses *ne)um YHWH*, so we don't have complementary distribution.

1:24, Adversary *car* vs. enemy *Joyeb*

This is a frequent parallel pair. Both etymologically and by complementary distribution, we can detect

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a difference between these terms.

	<i>cr</i>	<i>joyeb</i>
Etym	straitness, narrowness, tightness; focuses on the inconvenience experienced by the victim	a sense of enmity or hatred on the part of the adversary
1:24	God eases (comforts) himself of this kind of opponent—focus is on relief from the suffering	God avenges himself of this kind of opponent—focus is on punishment for the bad intentions
Deut 32:27	Misunderstands	Shows wrath
<i>smx</i>		Always associated with this verb, never the other: 2 Chr 20:7; Ps 30:1; 35:19; 89:42; Lam 2:17; Mic 7:8 (but note the other with <i>gyl</i> , Ps 13:4)
<i>Gyl</i>	Ps 13:4	Pr 24:17
<i>Nqm</i>	Deut 32:43; Nah 1:2; Jer 46:10	Jos 10:13; 1 Sam 14:24; 18:25; Est 8:13; Isa 1:24

Nevertheless, there are texts where they appear indistinguishable:

- Nah 1:2, *nqm* used with *cr*
- Ps 13:4, both rejoice in his sorrow