

ISAIAH 1 vs 1

The book of Isaiah has two great divisions; **first**: chapters 1–39; God’s Criticism of both rebel houses **Israel** and **Judah**, thereby affecting all the local neighbors in the hood; and **second**: chapters 40–66; God’s Consolation to both houses who have separate histories. The great Isaiah scroll found in the Qumran caves, dated from the 2nd century BC has put to rest many wild speculations about prophet Isaiah.



Isaiah lived around 740 BC, when the Assyrian invasion took captive the House of Israel, the northern 10 tribes who carried with them all the birthright promises of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Of the 3 major prophets, Isaiah mentions **Ephraim** 14 times, he was 2nd son of Joseph, heir of those birthright promises in chapters 7, 9, 11, 17 and 28. Isaiah wrote till around 680 BC... through the reign of 4 different kings. This book has been carefully preserved through the centuries: chapters 1 – 39 speak to judgments on the nations – including Israel headed by Ephraim, and Judah, the southern 2 tribes; chapters 40 – 66 speak to the glorious work of the Messiah.

¹ The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem / Isaiah primarily, was sent a prophet to the southern 2 kingdoms

in the days of Uzziah / a good king who reigned during the zenith of Judah’s power and prosperity since the days of Solomon, tragically he overstepped his assignment to think he could do the work of the high priest offering incense and interceding for the people; the LORD struck him with leprosy the final days of his life though he continued to reign. The prophets Amos and Hosea let us know all was not well of the peace and power during this time; as there was also social, moral and spiritual decay among the people,

Jotham / son of Uzziah, who began as a co-regent probably after the king acquired leprosy,

Ahaz / the most wicked and faithless of the kings,

and Hezekiah / who promoted some reforms; who died prior to Assyria reaching Jerusalem,

kings of Judah.

² Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth / so this vision isn’t merely addressed to people living 2,700 years ago; Isaiah definitely is speaking to you and me, too... **he wants heaven and earth to pay attention:**

for the LORD speaks, I have nourished and brought up children / so the LORD God has done his fatherly duties to provide for and train His children; He knows they are children, so He hasn’t asked them to walk on water, or speak and create things out of nothing, His children are no match for this glorious Father; but I bet He wants them at least to grow up, right? I mean, I can’t imagine heaven will be populated with a bunch of whiny 2-year olds, can you?

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and they rebelled against Me / so these children were still doing 300 years later... what they did in the time of king David who was *a man after God's own heart*... and doing nearly 800 years after the time Moses repeatedly warned them of their rebellious nature; so they had fair warning.

³The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's manger / in other words, God's own creation of brute oxen and dumb asses have more sense than His own people; in the NT we learn: Jesus *came to His own, but His own did not receive Him* -- **John 1**; Paul wrote: *all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible were made by Him and for Him* -- **Colossians 1**. Isaiah wants heaven and earth to consider: who created whom, who is Boss... and who isn't, but who is at least as smart as an ox or an ass:

but Israel does not know, My people do not consider / understand; C.S. Lewis said, *our little error might not look so little after 1 million years*; obviously God is preparing people to enjoy His eternity forever.

⁴Ah sinful nation! people laden with iniquity / weighed down with inequities; with physically and morally rigged scales of disparities and injustices,

a seed / offspring, descendants... **of evildoers,**

children who are corrupt / they are rotting:

they have forsaken the LORD / they abandoned the LORD, their only hope to make it home safely,

they provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger / not a good thing,

they are gone away backward / in Hebrew: *ahor*, they are walking backwards through life... with their *ahor*... leading the way. Can you imagine only driving your car in reverse your entire life? Well, how about your carcass in reverse?

⁵Why should you be stricken anymore? / Do you need your butt paddled again?

as you rebel more and more / again and again:

your whole head is sick, your whole heart faint / diseased... and weakened.

⁶From the sole of your foot to your head there is no soundness in it / from head to toe;

only wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores: they are not closed, nor bandaged, nor softened with ointment / remember: this vision is concerning **Judah** and **Jerusalem**.

⁷Your country is desolate / wasted and destroyed, **your cities are burned with fire:**

your land -- strangers devour in your presence / foreigners attacked from all sides; from **Israel**... from Syria, Edom, Philistia, and Assyria... all carving up the southern territory of **Judah**,

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and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

⁸ And the daughter of Zion / Jerusalem,

is left as a cottage in a vineyard,

as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers / as a broken-down shed or dilapidated shack in the garden,

as a besieged city.

⁹ If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors,

we would be as Sodom, we would be as Gomorrah / totally annihilated, just a fading, cautionary... worthless recollection of shameless depravity in history.

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD,

rulers of Sodom / wannabe wanton leaders in Jerusalem;

give ear to the law of our God / the law of God is not a bad thing; having no other gods before the One who is Creator of all makes lots of sense. Laws create order; lawlessness, disorder. In God's heaven, I bet it's completely orderly... they don't need people with weapons standing on the street corners, or even securing the borders; they have folks who seek God first with all their mind and heart and all their strength; their freeways aren't clutter with traffic during peak travel periods.

give ear to the law of our God...

people of Gomorrah / budding hopefuls of depravity; citizens in Jerusalem.

¹¹ To what purpose... are all your sacrifices to Me? says the LORD:

I have enough of your burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of well-fed cattle;

I do not delight in the blood of bullocks, or lambs, or goats / in the NT we read: *for the law made nothing perfect... it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin — Hebrews 7, 10.*

¹² When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this stampede in My courts?

¹³ Bring no more worthless offerings;

no more... incense / designer incense... all the way from Arabia and India – apparently some had missed the point... is an abomination to Me;

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your new moons and sabbaths, your calling of assemblies, your solemn meeting, I cannot endure; iniquity / that one word describes it all; in other words, your religious veneer is all sheer evil. Your pretentious traditions and practices are fruitless and insignificant.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates / notice, the LORD does not say... He hates **His new moons**... the LORD is **NOT** talking about **His 7 appointed feasts... 7 specific days** fulfilled in the Messiah... Moses repeatedly told us all about them. He does **not** hate His appointed days... *shadows of things to come:*

Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates...

to Me they are a burden; I am weary to bear them / Wow! When the LORD... *who never sleeps*, who tirelessly cares for His own... when He gets exhausted... then Houston, we have a problem.

15 You may stretch out your hands, but I will not look:

yes, you may abundantly / amply and eloquently... **pray, but I will not hear:**

And we might wonder: why? But quickly Isaiah is given the answer...

your hands are full of blood / covered in blood; in Hebrew: *dam*... **a-dam** literally means: *first blood*. The word first appears in the Bible... when the LORD confronts Cain asking him: *What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to Me from the ground* -- **Genesis 4**.

your hands are full of blood / covered in blood... so it's not their blood; obviously wrong place for blood to be found. *What have you done?* Jeremiah tells us they had degenerated to murdering children as a sacrifice to heathen gods due to their alliances with the neighbors. Jesus told us, if you hate in your heart you are a murderer.

16 Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean / what? I thought we are supposed to... sit on our butts and wait around... for the LORD to do everything;

remove your evil deeds from My sight.

[1] Cease to do evil / and how do we do that? By changing our focus... looking to Him;

17 [1] Learn to do good; [2] Seek justice, [3] reprove the oppressor, [4] defend the fatherless, [5] plead for the widow / so we learn to stop doing **one thing**... and replace it with doing **a handful of things**... and isn't it interesting? None of them requires: walking on water, or leaping tall buildings.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD:

though your sins are as scarlet / the color of our blood and our brothers... which is interesting, isn't it? because most sin is against those closest to us,

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they will be as white as snow;

though they be **red** like **crimson**, they will be as wool.

(An aside: it's interesting, in the 1800s, it was the Grimm's brothers who recorded the ancient stories of the various tribal people that populated northern Europe... who taught their children stories cloaked in scriptural truths... in this verse, the origin of the name: Snow White; or building your life on a solid foundation... so the big bad wolf cannot destroy -- 1 Corinthians 3)

19 If you are willing and obedient / if you consent and obey,

you will eat the best of the land:

20 But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword:

for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

21 How the faithful city has become a harlot / a whore, the epitome of disloyal faithlessness!

She was full of justice; righteousness lodged in her; but now murderers / and is that why Jesus said, *he who hates his brother is a murderer* -- Matthew 5.

22 Your silver has become dross / junk;

your fine wine diluted with water:

23 Your rulers are rebels, and companions of thieves:

Everyone loves a bribe, and chases after rewards / so they were no different than most now days... in our genius 21st century:

they do not defend the orphan,

nor does the widow's request come to them.

24 Therefore the LORD God of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, says;

Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries, I will avenge Myself on My enemies:

25 I will turn My hand on you / Judah and Jerusalem,

and smelt your junk,

and take away all your tin / which only happens by turning up the heat:

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²⁶ Then I will restore your judges as at the first,

and your counselors as at the beginning:

after that you will be called, **The city of righteousness, the faithful city.**

²⁷ Zion will be redeemed with justice,

and her converts / in Hebrew: *shub*, those who turned around...

with righteousness / one day, they will do right, what vows they make they will perform.

²⁸ But transgressors and sinners will together be destroyed,

those who forsake / abandon... **the LORD will cease to be.**

²⁹ For you will be ashamed of the oaks which you desired / oaks came from Palestine and Lebanon; their towering alliances with foreigners which they were fond of and wedded to, like hardy oaks signifying strength and permanence,

and you will be embarrassed by the gardens that you chose / *oaks and gardens* indicating where their cagey and faithless rendezvous took place.

³⁰ For you will be like a withered oak leaf, or like a garden that has no water.

³¹ The strong will be as tinder, and his work like a spark;

both will burn together / the worker and his work,

and none will extinguish them.

In every generation, in every nation the LORD calls people to return to Him.