

# Isaiah 1:2-4 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission  
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Isaiah 1:2 [Listen](#), O [heavens](#), and [hear](#), O [earth](#); For the [LORD speaks](#), "[Sons](#) I have [reared](#) and [brought](#) up, But they have [revolted](#) against Me. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**English Translation of the Greek** (Septuagint): Hear, O heaven, and hearken, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, saying, I have begotten and reared up children, but they have rebelled against me.

**Amplified:** Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: I have nourished and brought up sons and have made them great and exalted, but they have rebelled against Me and broken away from Me. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

**NET:** Listen, O heavens, pay attention, O earth! For the LORD speaks: "I raised children, I brought them up, but they have rebelled against me! ([NET Bible](#))

**NJB:** Listen, you heavens; earth, attend, for Yahweh is speaking, 'I have reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. ([NJB](#))

**NLT:** Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! This is what the LORD says: "The children I raised and cared for have turned against me. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Young's Literal:** Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, For Jehovah hath spoken: Sons I have nourished and brought up, And they -- they transgressed against Me.

## JEHOVAH'S INDICTMENT OF JUDAH & JERUSALEM

**Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth:**

- Dt 4:26; 30:19; 32:1; Ps 50:4; Jer 2:12; 6:19; 22:29; Ezek 36:4; Mic 1:2; 6:1,2
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Listen... hear** - Both are commands. God Himself is speaking and he want to be taken seriously! God presents His indictment against Judah and Jerusalem...

**Webster** defines **indictment** as..

2 : a formal written statement framed by a prosecuting authority and found by a jury (as a grand jury) charging a person with an offense

3 : an expression of strong disapproval an *indictment* of contemporary morality (1996, c1993 Edition)

1. A written accusation or formal charge of a crime or misdemeanor, preferred by a grand jury under oath to a court. Blackstone.

2. The paper or parchment containing the accusation of a grand jury. (1828 Edition)

**Barnes** comments that...

**This is properly the beginning of the prophecy.** It is a sublime commencement; and is of a highly poetic character. The **heavens** and the **earth** are summoned to bear witness to the apostasy, ingratitude, and deep depravity of the chosen people of God (Ex 6:7, 19:6, Dt 7:6, Lv 11:44). The address is expressive of deep feeling — the bursting forth of a heart filled with amazement at a wonderful and unusual event. (Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament - Volume VII) (Bolding added)

The prophet **Hosea** (who prophesied primarily to the Northern Kingdom - the 10 tribes ["Israel" = "Ephraim"] and was a contemporary of Isaiah who was prophesying to the Southern Kingdom of Judah) had a **similar indictment** against Israel (10 Northern tribes)...

**Listen (not a suggestion but a command! - verbs in red on this website** virtually always identify a **command** or the imperative mood in either Hebrew or Greek [imperative mood in Greek]) to the word of the Lord, O sons of Israel, for **the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land (Why? What is the Lord's "evidence" in His case against Israel?)** because there is no **faithfulness** or **kindness** or **knowledge of God** (knowledge here is not just "head" knowledge but a knowing of God in one's heart [experiential knowledge of God] which awakens in our heart a love that is motivated to obey God [cp Jn 14:15, 21] and live righteously) in the land. 2 There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed (cp Isa 1:15b). 3 Therefore the land mourns, and everyone who lives in it languishes (**Who languishes? Think of America's rejection of God in prayer and Bible reading in**

schools, removal of His name where it is in any form associated with government at the city, state or national level [even taking "In God We Trust" from coins! Just Google "*remove in God we trust from currency*"], removing Christ from \_\_\_\_\_mas, ignoring God's teaching on the sanctity of life, etc! Woe! Who languishes? Everyone!) along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, and also the fish of the sea disappear. 4 Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof; for your people are like those who contend with the priest. 5 So you will stumble by day, and the prophet also will stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother. 6 **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.** Because you have **rejected knowledge**, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (NET version of verse 6 = *You have destroyed My people by failing to acknowledge Me! Because you refuse to acknowledge Me, I will reject you as My priests. Because you reject the law of your God, I will reject your descendants.*) (Ho 4:1-6)

**Comment:** To know God and experience Him in the way Hosea describes was the greatest blessing any ancient Jew could have desired to receive. And yet what a tragedy that they turned from the knowledge of the Holy One of Israel and sought to "know" the unholy idols of the pagans, a sin of unfaithfulness to God which is hard for us to imagine today. Indeed they were guilty of blatant spiritual harlotry (cp Isa 1:21). **We are right to be appalled and yet do we not see the same exchange of "gods" by so many today who claim to know God? We do well to recall that idolatry can be practiced without literal idols - Col 3:5 and Eph 5:3 (cp Lk 12:15) show that Paul linked idol worship with covetousness, that "inordinate desire for more and more well beyond any reasonable assessment of what is needed. Idolatry need not entail a statue of Buddha or genuflecting in a pagan temple. Idolatry is any tendency in the human heart to dethrone God for the sake of something else, whether that be money, sex, ambition, power, pride, or something as seemingly innocuous as respectability. To the extent that we give our affections to anything other than God on the assumption that it can do for our souls what he can't, we are guilty of idolatry."** ([Sam Storms - see his meditation on "Idolatry Without Idols!"](#))

As one **Bible dictionary** explains

In modern times the name **Christian** has been somewhat emptied of its true meaning as a follower of Christ. To some today, **Christian** means little more than a European or American who is not Jewish, while others have sought to make its proper use the name of a particular denomination. However, its original meaning is a noble one, of which any **follower of Christ** can rightly be proud. (Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary)

**Listen** (08085) (**shama'**) is one of the most frequent Hebrew verbs in the OT (over 1000 uses) and can mean simply to hear or perceive a message. In many contexts **shama'** conveys the sense of hearing with reverence, attention and/or obedient assent (eg, **shama'** is translated "obeyed" in Ge 22:18, cp Dt 18:19, Jdg 2:20). The idea is to give one's undivided attention as one listens. This is especially important when the speaker is the living God! **Do you "speed" through your reading of the Word in the morning or do you really listen?!** In the original Hebrew **shama'** is in the imperative mood as also in the Septuagint (LXX) (present imperative) where the **present tense** signifies a command to **continually listen**, implying that listening is their (and our) continual need, for **fallen flesh** is ever prone to wander. Judah and Jerusalem were wandering spiritually as the Lord's indictment goes on to explain in general terms (**revolt**).

**THOUGHT** - Stop for a moment and try to imagine how Isaiah's audience must have felt as they heard the Lord's righteous indictment piercing through their facade of self-deception, self-rationalization and self-justifying religiosity. Let all who read Isaiah's powerful pronouncement against Judah do so with trembling hearts that it might expose the residual corruption in each of our own hearts (cp Jer 17:9, Ps 139:23, 24, He 4:12-note, He 4:13-note, Jn 16:8)

As **Harry Ironside** writes "ABRUPTLY the voice of the Lord breaks in upon the ears of men who prided themselves upon their religiousness and trusted in their formal observance of the legal ritual. There is something sublime in the very simplicity of this challenge to obedience. **Heaven and earth**, ever subject to His will, are called to witness the base ingratitude of the Lord's people. The objects of His solicitous (full of concern, meticulously careful, full of desire) care from their childhood in Egypt (cp Ex 19:4, Dt 4:33, 34, 35, 36) to the moment then present, they had never, as an entire nation, given Him that loving obedience which was His due. Individual faithfulness there ever was (**Ed**: i.e., there was always a believing **remnant**); but nationally, as later in the case of the Church viewed as a collective body, failure had come in almost at the very beginning (cp Ex 32:1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6,7, esp Ex 32:8) and there had never been recovery. ([Expository Notes on the Prophet Isaiah](#))

HEAVEN & EARTH

## CALLED AS WITNESSES

**Heavens... earth** - J Vernon McGee writes "This is God's general judgment against Judah. He is calling the world, if you please, to come into the courtroom and listen to the proceedings as He tries His people. God does not do anything in a corner or in the dark."

The **Creator** frequently summons His **creation (heaven... earth)** to the "witness stand" or the "jury box" in the Old Testament...

**Deuteronomy 4:26** I call **heaven** and **earth** to **witness** against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed. (**Comment:** In this context, the heavens and the earth witness to an oath.)

**Deuteronomy 30:19** "I call **heaven** and **earth** to **witness** against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,

**Deuteronomy 32:1** "**Give ear**, O **heavens**, and let me speak; And let the **earth** hear the words of my mouth. (**McGee:** When God put the nation Israel in the land, having taken them out of the land of Egypt, He put down the conditions on which He was "homesteading" them in the Promised Land. He called the created intelligences of heaven and earth to witness these conditions.)

**Psalms 50:4** He summons the **heavens** above, and the **earth**, to judge His people

**Spurgeon comments:** Angels and men, the upper and the lower worlds, are called to witness the solemn scene. The whole creation shall stand in court to testify to the solemnity and the truth of the divine pleading. Both earth beneath and heaven above shall unite in condemning sin; the guilty shall have no appeal, though all are summoned that they may appeal if they dare. Both angels and men have seen the guilt of mankind and the goodness of the Lord, they shall therefore confess the justice of the divine utterance, and say "Amen" to the sentence of the supreme Judge. Alas, ye despisers! What will ye do and to whom will ye fly?

(**John Trapp**) That these dumb creatures may be as so many speaking evidences against an unworthy people, and witness of God's righteous dealings against them.

**Jeremiah 2:12** "**Be appalled**, O heavens, at this, and **shudder, be very desolate**," declares the Lord.

**Jeremiah 6:19** "**Hear**, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their plans, because they have not listened to My words, and as for My law, they have rejected it also.

**Jeremiah 22:29** "O land, land, land, **Hear** the word of the Lord!

**Micah 1:2** **Hear**, O peoples, all of you; Listen, O earth and all it contains, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple.

**Micah 6:1, 2** **Hear** (not a suggestion but a command! - **verbs in red on this website** virtually always identify a **command** or the imperative mood in either Hebrew or Greek [imperative mood in Greek]) now what the LORD is saying, "**Arise, plead** (Heb rub = to conduct a lawsuit or legal case and all that it involves, cp use of **contend** in Isa 3:13 and the merciful use in Isa 57:16) your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. "**Listen**, you mountains, to the **indictment** (Heb = rib, riyb = primarily means a quarrel or dispute between 2 parties, often with a focus on the feelings between the parties, cp over land rights in Ge 13:7, a controversy with sinners Je 25:31, a legal dispute or lawsuit - Ex 23:2, 1Sa 24:16) of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, because the LORD has a case against His people; even with Israel He will dispute. (Lxx = dielegcho = to argue a case, engage in a dispute, refute utterly).

**Spurgeon** adds that...

**Heaven and earth** might well be called to witness such strange ingratitude as this of which the Lord had to complain. It is an appeal of God to inanimate creation to bear witness to the ingratitude that He had received, as if it was of no use any longer to speak to men. The appeal is stated very solemnly and impressively "**Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children,**" cared for them, loved them, fed them, "**and they have rebelled against me.**" The ingratitude of a child is something shocking; and the ingratitude of man to God is of that character. (Exposition of Isaiah 1)

**A B Simpson** writes that...

The first chapter of Isaiah was probably the first of the prophet's public messages, and it is a good sample of many others. It may be described generally as a message concerning sin and salvation. Its form is most dramatic. Suddenly appearing in the temple court or the public square, with impressive gestures he calls the

attention of the multitude by repeating the very words with which Moses had begun his last message to Israel. "Hear, oh heavens," he cries, "and give ear, oh earth, for the Lord has spoken."

Then he arraigns the nation before the bar of heaven and calls as his witnesses the heavens and the earth and the very dumb brutes of the lower order of creation (Isa 1:3), whose fidelity to their masters is a silent reproof to the disobedience of God's people. Then follows the arraignment of the sinful nation as he proceeds to characterize the unnaturalness, ingratitude and fearful wickedness of the people, declaring at last that their wickedness has almost brought them to the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa 1:9).

Then there seems to have come some voice of protest or defence from some one in the multitude, calling attention to their costly worship and offerings as a proof of their loyalty to God (Isa 1:10). But this only calls forth a more vehement denunciation of their wickedness, and the prophet proceeds to tell them that the very worst thing about them is their religion, inasmuch as it is a cloak of hypocrisy to cover their sins, and that their prayers and sacrifices are not only rejected (Isa 1:11, 12, 13, 14, 15a), but are an abomination to God so long as their hearts are corrupt and their "hands are full of blood." (Isa 1:15b)

At last the voice of denunciation is changed to one of mercy (Isa 1:16, 17, 18). The loving heart of God seems to grow weary of reproof and longs to pour itself out in mercy and compassion. One is reminded of the time when the Lord Jesus Himself on earth had upbraided the cities of Galilee for rejecting His message and had begun to say to them, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which had been done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." (Mt 11:22, 23, 24) But at that moment the Master's heart seemed unable longer to endure the pain of His own reproof, and suddenly He breaks out into an appeal of unspeakable tenderness as perhaps He sees in the multitude before Him some weeping face or penitent heart. "Come unto Me," He cries, "all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Mt 11:28, 29, 30).

There is a similar revulsion of feeling a little later in His ministry, when after He had pronounced upon the Pharisees the fearful woes of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, He suddenly pauses again and breaks out with an appeal of divine compassion, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone them that are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered you together, even as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not." (Mt 23:37, cp Lk 13:34).

Such a change comes over the prophet's message here. Suddenly his denunciations close, and turning to the people with tones of tenderness he cries, "Come now and let us end our reasoning; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool; if you be willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land, but if you refuse and revolt, you shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Isa 1:18, 19) (Christ in the Bible - Isaiah)

**Spurgeon** observes that...

It is not the heathen nor strangers that the Lord here upbraids, but His own highly-favored people, his lovingly-nurtured children, in **sin was doubly sinful**.

**MacDonald** writes that...

The whole universe is summoned to attend a trial with God as the Judge, and with Judah and Jerusalem as defendants. The indictment charges the people with being intractable sons who have rebelled against God and fail to show the natural gratitude and devotion that could be expected of a domestic animal! ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Gingrich** introduces this section noting that...

Chapter one presents Isaiah's introductory prophecy... It contains all of the major themes elaborated in the remainder of the book: (1) a denunciation of sins; (2) a warning of judgment; (3) a call to repentance; and (4) a promise of ultimate restoration and blessing. (Gingrich, R. E. The Book of Isaiah. Memphis, TN.: Riverside Printing)

**Ewald** called this first chapter "the great Arraignment"; and that certainly is an apt description.

**Peter Grainger** introduces his message on Isaiah 1 this way...

The scene is a courtroom. The universe is called to attend, the Judge is the Lord, and His people are in the

dock. The charges are very serious, a deadly cocktail of outright rebellion and outward religion. (Morgan, R. J.. Nelson's Annual Peacher's Sourcebook : 2004 Edition. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers)

#### For the LORD speaks:

- Isa 16:14, Jer 10:1, Jer 13:15; Amos 3:1; Mic 3:8; Acts 4:20
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JEHOVAH LAYS OUT THE CHARGES

The psalmist gives us wise words...

Let all the earth fear the LORD. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. (Why?) For He spoke, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast (He 11:3-note). (Ps 33:8,9)

**Spurgeon:** Creation was the fruit of a word (Jn 1:1, 2, 3). Jehovah said, "Light be," and light was (Ge 1:3). The Lord's acts are sublime in their ease and instantaneousness. "What a word is this?" This was the wondering enquiry of old, and it may be ours to this day. He commanded, and it stood fast. Out of nothing creation stood forth, and was confirmed in existence. The same power which first uplifted, now makes the universe to abide (He 1:3-note, "in Him" = in Christ = Col 1:17-note); although we may not observe it, there is as great a display of sublime power in confirming as in creating. Happy is the man who has learned to lean his all upon the sure word of Him who built the skies! (Ed: When He speaks, let us listen!)

**For** - Explains why they were to listen listen. **Why listen?** It's not E F Hutton, but Jehovah Himself! Yes, Isaiah says **Jehovah speaks** but remember that from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, Jehovah is speaking to men, ever calling His rebellious creation to be redeemed and to return to Him!

**LORD** ([03068](#)) (Yhwh = YeHoWaH = Yahweh = Jehovah) (see study on **Jehovah**) is always identified in the NAS (not NIV, ESV, NLT) by being in all caps. Jehovah is derived from **hayah** a verb which means to exist, to be, to become and at its core denotes "being" or the fountain head of being, which ultimately can be applied only to the one true and living God, the ultimate "Cause" of all other "being." In Exodus 3:14 we read God's own "definition" of Himself as "I Am (hayah) that I Am (hayah)". Recall that Jehovah is frequently combined with other names, even Isaiah's name which means "the salvation of Yahweh". The Jews never pronounced this name, not even in reading their own Scriptures. So sacred did they deem it, that when it occurred in their books, instead of the word Yahweh, they substituted the word **Adonai** ([0136](#)), a masculine noun which is used some 459 times in Scripture only as a name for God.

**Jehovah speaks** - Don't go by this phrase too quickly. To be sure Isaiah penned the words originally (cp 2Pe 1:20, 21-note), but ultimately these are God's very own supernatural words. Yes, they seem to appear as only black print on white pages, but they are unlike any other book and are **infinitely** superior to the sum total of all the other greatest masterpieces ever penned by mortal men! When God speaks, all other words pale in comparison!

The **indictment** that follows is from the great "I Am" Himself. These are His words and as the writer of Hebrews reminds us (also in the context of a strong **warning** to the predominantly Jewish readers to enter His **rest** [He 4:1-note] found ultimately in their crucified and now risen Messiah)...

The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do ("we must give account" He 4:13NIV. (He 4:12, 13-notes)

#### Related Resource:

- [Music - Word Of God Speak - MercyMe](#)

## THEIR PRIVILEGES

## Sons I have reared and brought up:

- Isa 5:1,2; Isa 46:3,4; Dt 1:31; 4:7,8; Jer 31:9; Ezek 16:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; 20:5-32; Ro 3:1,2; 9:4,5
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Isaiah** emphasizes in chapter 5 again that Jehovah had cared for His people Israel just as any loving father would for his own dear children...

Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard (Isa 5:7). My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones. (Isaiah 5:1, 2)

And again in chapter 46 **Jehovah** reaffirms His covenant (see Abrahamic vs Mosaic and Abrahamic vs Old vs New Covenants) lovingkindness and faithfulness commanding them...

**Listen** to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the **remnant** of the house of Israel, you who have been borne by Me from birth, and have been carried from the womb (Dt 1:31), even to your old age, I shall be the same, and even to your graying years I shall bear you! I have done it, and I shall carry you; and I shall bear you, and I shall deliver you. (Isa 46:3,4)

**Paul** in his explanation of God's plan for the Jews (and specifically that He is NOT finished with Israel -s see also study of the phrase Israel of God) in Romans 9-11 enumerates the incredible advantages Israel has always possessed as a people group...

For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,<sup>4</sup> who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,<sup>5</sup> whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Ro 9:1, 2, 3-notes)

**THOUGHT:** Beloved, if you are a believer, then you are a **son (daughter)** who Jehovah has begat (Jn 1:12, 13) by the new birth (Jn 3:3, 4, 5, 6). Just as He did for his sons in the OT, He has also provided us everything necessary for life and godliness (2Pe 1:3-note). Let us therefore be careful not to think lightly of the kindness of our Lord (cp Ro 2:4-note). Let us be wary, forewarned and forearmed by the sad example of Judah, remembering that there but by the grace of God (in moment by moment need and dependence) go each of us. Yes, we are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God, but that does not change the nature of our fallen **flesh** which still indwells us, ever lurking to trip us up and cause us to stumble and even to forsake the Lord our God (cp Mt 26:41, Mk 14:38).

**Sons** - In Exodus we see this truth about Israel's divine sonship - Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, "Israel is **My son**, My first-born. So I said to you, 'Let **My son** go, that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.'"(Ex 4:22, 23)

God had been as a Father to Israel but in spite of His lovingkindness, they rebelled and fell away from Him as described in Isa 1:3. Israel was His wayward son (Ex. 4:22, 23; cp. Deut. 14:1; 32:20).

**Barnes** - They were the adopted children of God; and they are represented as being weak, and ignorant, and helpless as children, when he took them under his fatherly protection and care; Hosea 11:1 (Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament - Volume VII)

**Richards** - God seeks an intimate personal relationship with His worshipers, the kind children have with a much-loved father. No wonder Judah's rejection of a personal relationship repelled the Lord. (The Bible Readers Companion)

## JUDAH'S REARING & RAISING UP

**Reared** ([01431](#)) (**gadal**) means to become great (or to make great [Piel stem]) or to grow up (cp of hair = Nu 6:5, trees = Isa 44:14), and refers to the natural process of a person's development as natural process of a person's development or a child's **growing up** ("Grew" =Ge 21:8, 20; 25:27; Ex 2:10, 11) and of sons **reared** ("reared"= Isa 49:21). **Gadal** - All uses in Isaiah - Isa. 1:2; 9:3; 10:15; 23:4; 28:29; 42:21; 44:14; 49:21; 51:18

One could read this **sons I have reared** as

## "Sons I have made great"!

**Brought up (07311) (rum/ruwm)** literally means something elevated or raised up high, and in this context speaks of the process of persons growing up. In the Piel stem, **rum** means to bring up, nourish, educate (cp Is 23:4). These words, though applied often to the training up of children, are used here also to denote the elevation to which Judah and Jerusalem had been raised. He had not merely trained them up, but he had trained them up so that they attained an elevated station, one of special honor. The Septuagint (LXX) underscores their place of honor, for the LXX translates **rum** with the Greek verb **hupsoo** meaning literally to lift up or to raise high and figuratively speaks of one who is honored and given an uplifted or exalted position (cp "exalted" in Lk 1:52). The point is clear - **Judah and Jerusalem** had been reared like children in a rich home with all the advantages (spiritually speaking) one could possibly desire! This truth makes the last part of this passage even more vivid and tragic! The **privileged** sons had become **rebellious** sons!

Oh, beloved saint, child of the living God, how we need to read and weep and be warned, for we in the New Covenant have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:3-note) and yet we all too often surrender to the will of "King Sin" and rebel against King Jesus (cp Ro 6:11-note, Ro 6:12, 13, 14-note, Ro 6:19-note) and grieve the indwelling Spirit of Christ (cp Ep 4:30-note, 1Th 5:19-note). Those who should be "Princes" in Christ (see study of in Christ and in Christ Jesus and in Christ), too often seek to be "Paupers" in the **flesh**. Let us learn from Jehovah's words of warning to rebellious Judah and Jerusalem (1Cor 10:6, 11)!

**Jeremiah** also alludes to Israel's have privileges as God's peculiar **treasured** (peculiar Dt 26:18KJV) **possession** (Dt 26:18, cp Dt 26:18NLT)...

And they did not say, 'Where is the Lord Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, Who led us through the wilderness, Through a land of deserts and of pits, Through a land of drought and of deep darkness, Through a land that no one crossed And where no man dwelt?'<sup>7</sup> "And I brought you into the fruitful land, To eat its fruit and its good things. But you came and defiled My land, And My inheritance you made an abomination."<sup>8</sup> "The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me, And the prophets prophesied by Baal And walked after things that did not profit. (Jer 2:6-8)

**Paul** records Israel's lofty spiritual privileges in Romans 9 writing...

For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Ro 9:3, 4, 5-notes)

**Comment:** And yet in spite of these many advantages, they choose to rebel. This recalls Jeremiah's words that "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Je 17:9, 10)

**Charles Simeon** summarizes their privileges observing that...

God had truly "**nourished them, and brought them up as children.**" He had chosen them to Himself, as His peculiar people (Dt 26:18KJV); He had brought them up out of Egypt with **a mighty hand and an out-stretched arm** (Dt 4:34, 5:15, 7:19, 9:29, 11:2, 26:8, 1Ki 8:42, 2Ki 17:36, 2Chr 6:32, Ps 136:12 [Surgeon's note](#) Je 27:5, 32:17, 21 **contrast** Je 21:51, see also Ezek 20:33 = Great Tribulation or Time of Jacob's Distress and Ezek 20:34 = God's deliverance of the believing remnant at the end of the time of Jacob's distress - Je 30:7, 8, 9, 10): He had fed and supported them forty years in the wilderness (Dt 2:7, 8:2, 3, 4, 29:5, Neh 9:21, Ex 16:35); He had given them a revelation of His mind and will; and He had planted them in that good land which He had promised to their fathers (Dt 1:25, 6:18, 8:7, **God's grace** [unmerited favor] = Dt 9:6 **His warning not to forget** Dt 8:10, 11; **His other warnings concerning the good land** = 1Chr 28:8, Dt 11:16, 17, Josh 23:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 1Ki 14:15). In all this He had acted towards them with all the care and tenderness of a most affectionate Parent (Dt 1:31, 32:9, 10, 11, 12) (**Ed:** Scripture references added - these Scriptures are worth taking a moment and pondering, for we too like Judah are so prone to forget our Father's bestowal of such lofty privileges and promises on us His children by grace through faith.)

**Barnhouse** rightly observes...

What depths of sin there are in the human heart that we can see such love and then doubt its reality and permanence. (Romans).

**Motyer** comments that...



Unlike contemporary pagans, who considered themselves children of their god by some quasi-physical act of begetting, Israel was the Lord's son by historical divine choice and by the exodus as a work of redemption. Redemption initiated a process of divine providential care. The picture of the attentive parent and the growing child covers the whole historical period from Exodus to Isaiah. The grace which saved and the love which cared were alike rebuffed when they ... rebelled. 'They' is emphatic—'they of all people!', the heirs of redemption, the recipients of parental care. (Motyer, J. A. The Prophecy of Isaiah: An introduction & commentary. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press)

In Deuteronomy God asks rhetorical questions to cause His Jewish readers to ponder their **privileged upbringing**...

For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:7, 8)

**Keil and Delitzsch** sum up this section...

Israel was Jehovah's son (Ex 4:22, 23). All the members of the nation were His children (Deut. 14:1; 32:20). Jehovah was Israel's father, by whom it had been begotten (Dt.32:6, 18). The existence of Israel as a nation was secured indeed, like that of all other nations, by natural reproduction, and not by spiritual regeneration. But the primary ground of Israel's origin was the supernatural and mighty word of promise (cp Josh 23:14) given to Abraham, in Ge 17:15, 16; and it was by a series of manifestations of miraculous power and displays of divine grace, that the development of Israel, which dated from that starting-point, was brought up to the position it had reached at the time of the exodus from Egypt. It was in this sense that Israel had been **begotten by Jehovah**.

And this relation between Jehovah and Israel, as His children, had now, at the time when Jehovah was speaking through the mouth of Isaiah, a long and gracious past behind it, viz., the **period of Israel's childhood** in Egypt; the **period of its youth** in the desert; and a **period of growing manhood** from Joshua to Samuel: so that Jehovah could say, "I have brought up children, and raised them high."

The piel (giddel - [01431][gadal]) used here signifies "to make great;" and when applied to children, as it is here and in other passages, such as 2Ki10:6, **it means to bring up, to make great, so far as natural growth is concerned**.

The pilel (romem - [07311][rum]), which corresponds to the piel in the so-called verbis cavis, and which is also used in Isa 23:4 and Ezek 31:4 as the parallel to giddel, **signifies to lift up, and is used in a "dignified sense," with reference to the position of eminence, to which, step by step, a wise and loving father advances a child**.

These two verbs depict the state of Israel in the times of David and Solomon, as one of **mature manhood and proud exaltation**, which had to a certain extent returned under **Uzziah and Jotham**. ([The Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

### But they have revolted against Me:

- Isa 63:9,10; Dt 9:22, 23, 24; Jer 2:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; Mal 1:6
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE DRAMATIC CONTRAST: "PRIVILEGED SONS REBEL"!

**Spurgeon** paraphrases God as if He was saying "If they were simply My subjects, I could bear their rebellion better than I can now, for they are My children. I have nourished them, and brought them up; and after long and persevering kindness towards them, I might have expected some affection from them in return: but **'they have rebelled against Me.'**"

Israel was sinning against a flood of light. **What would God say about the modern day evangelical church dear saint?** (cp 1Co 5:1)

**Warren Wiersbe** comments that "Unlike Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah did not begin his book with an account of his call to ministry. This he gives in chapter 6. Instead, he started with a probing examination of Judah's present situation and gave a passionate plea

for God's people to return to the Lord. **As you read his analysis, note how closely it parallels our situation in the Western world.** (Wiersbe, W. W. Be Comforted. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books) (Bolding added)

**Ortlund** writes that...

Paul Tournier, the Swiss psychiatrist, observed, "A diffuse and vague guilt feeling kills the personality, whereas the conviction of sin gives life to it." Isaiah begins with life-giving conviction of sin. It's our first step back to God. We need a sense of sin. We shouldn't fear it or resent it. It is not destructive. It is life-giving, if we have the courage to let Christ save us. We are often told—or just whispered to—that what we need is more self-esteem. That is false. What we need is more humility and more Christ-esteem. (Ortlund, R. C., Jr, Isaiah: God Saves Sinners. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

**Comment:** Ortlund's commentary is part of an excellent series edited by R. Kent Hughes [[Preaching the Word](#)] and as a literary work Ortlund's commentary on Isaiah is quite eloquent, but unfortunately he seeks to apply Isaiah's teaching primarily to the church (albeit his application points as demonstrated by this present quote are generally good) and for the most part (exceptions include prophecies of Messiah) does not approach Isaiah's prophecy to Judah and Jerusalem literally (e.g., there is no mention of the glorious millennium [see Millennium for a veritable plethora of passages prophesying of the covenant promises of Jehovah to Judah and Jerusalem {and Israel}] -- take for example a section where Ortlund completely ignores the literal interpretation of Isaiah 1:26 concluding that it is primarily addressed to the church {a mystery in the OT! cp Ep 3:4, 5-note, Ep 3:6-note} writing primarily again from an applicational perspective -- "*The discipline of God achieves just what He intends, in purification and in restoration, both at the same time. We can expect the goodness of God to show up in unlikely experiences. When He turns His hand against us to purify us, let's trust him to restore us.*", page 45 - Read Isa 1:26 remembering to whom it was addressed in Isa 1:1! We cannot ignore the obvious lest the thrust and gist of much of Isaiah's prophecy becomes muddled and misunderstood!] and so it cannot be given a high recommendation as one which rightly divides the word of truth - 2Ti 2:15+ especially regarding the prophecies given to the nation of Israel.

**A W Tozer** sounds a similar note of sound (healthy) doctrinal clarification writing that...

In our time we have overemphasized the psychology of the sinner's condition. We spend much time describing the woe of the sinner, the grief of the sinner and the great burden he carries. He does have all of these, but we have overemphasized them until we forget the principal fact—that the sinner is actually a rebel against properly constituted authority! That is what makes sin, sin. **We are rebels.** We are sons of disobedience (Ep 2:2-note, Ep 5:6-note). Sin is the breaking of the law and we are in rebellion and we are fugitives from the just laws of God while we are sinners.

By way of illustration, suppose a man escapes from prison. Certainly he will have grief. He is going to be in pain after bumping logs and stones and fences as he crawls and hides away in the dark. He is going to be hungry and cold and weary. His beard will grow long and he will be tired and cramped and cold—all of these will happen, but they are incidental to the fact that he is a fugitive from justice and a rebel against law.

So it is with sinners. Certainly they are heartbroken and they carry a heavy load. Certainly they labor and are heavy-laden. The Bible takes full account of these things; but they are incidental to the fact that the reason the sinner is what he is, is because he has rebelled against the laws of God and he is a fugitive from divine judgment.

It is that which constitutes the nature of sin; not the fact that he carries a heavy load of misery and sadness and guilt. These things constitute only the outcropping of the sinful nature, but the root of sin is rebellion against law, rebellion against God. Does not the sinner say: "I belong to myself—I owe allegiance to no one unless I choose to give it!" That is the essence of sin.

But thankfully, salvation reverses that and restores the former relationship so that the first thing the returning sinner does is to confess: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called Thy son. Make me as one of Thy hired servants." (Lk 15:19)

Thus, in repentance, we reverse that relationship and we fully submit to the Word of God and the will of God, as obedient children (cp 1Pe 1:3-note; 1Pe 1:14-note). (The Tozer Pulpit. Volume 2) (Bolding added)

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Louis Blanc, French socialist and historian, said shortly before his execution, "When I was an infant, I rebelled against my nurse."

When I was a child, I rebelled against my teachers. When I was a young man, I rebelled against my mother and father. When I reached a mature age, I rebelled against the state. When I die, if there is a heaven and a God, I'll rebel against them!"

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**They have revolted** - This is not just an accusation of rebellion in general but that which is specifically against the rule and reign of the sovereign God of the universe, the Holy One of Israel.

**Revolted** (06586) (**pasha**) means to transgress, to sin, to rebel. The idea is a willful flouting of authority by willfully violating a law! **Pasha** means to , be in open defiance of an authority or standard of an agreement. **Pasha** was used in treaties to speak of a vassal state's disobedience to the covenant made with it by the suzerain (a dominant state controlling the foreign relations of a vassal state but allowing it sovereign authority in its internal affairs) nation. A **rebel** is one who who revolts from the government to which he owes allegiance, either by openly renouncing the authority of that government, or by taking arms and openly opposing it.

**Pasha** - 37v in OT and 8x in Isaiah - 1 Ki. 8:50; 12:19; 2 Ki. 1:1; 3:5, 7; 8:20, 22; 2 Chr. 10:19; 21:8, 10; Ezr. 10:13; Ps. 37:38; 51:13; Prov. 18:19; 28:21; **Isa. 1:2, 28; 43:27; 46:8; 48:8; 53:12; 59:13; 66:24**; Jer. 2:8, 29; 3:13; 33:8; Lam. 3:42; Ezek. 2:3; 18:31; 20:38; Dan. 8:23; Hos. 7:13; 8:1; 14:9; Amos 4:4; Zeph. 3:11

**Pasha** in this verse thus conveys the idea of breaking a contract, and as it relates to Israel speaks of breaking the solemn covenant entered at Mt Sinai (Ex 19:5,6, 7. Note carefully Israel's response Ex 19:8, cp their response when Moses told them the "ten commandments" - Ex 24:3, 7; How quickly did they break the covenant? Ex 32:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). They subsequently repeatedly broke this covenant through unbelief and worship of idol rather than worship of the one true God. In short, they rebelled and thus sinned against Jehovah. Notice that a key aspect of sin is rebellion against divine authority (Isa 66:24; Je 2:29; 3:13, cp Isa 30:1, 9).

**Vine** - The basic sense of **pasha** is "to rebel." There are two stages of rebellion. First, the whole process of rebellion has independence in view: "Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab" (2Kings 1:1). Second, the final result of the rebellion is the state of independence: "In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves" (2Kings 8:20). A more radical meaning is the state of rebellion in which there is no end of the rebellion in view. The process is no longer goal-oriented. The state thus described refers to a status quo: "So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day" (1Kings 12:19).

**Keil and Delitzsch** has this note on **pasha**...The radical meaning of the verb **pasha** is to break away, or break loose... The idea is that of dissolving connection with a person with violence and self-will; here it relates to that inward severance from God, and renunciation of Him, which preceded all outward acts of sin, and which not only had idolatry for its full and outward manifestation, but was truly idolatry in all its forms. From the time that Solomon gave himself up to the worship of idols, at the close of his reign (**Ed**: circa 931BC, 1Ki 11:9, 10, 11, 12, 13), down to the days of Isaiah (**Ed**: ministry began circa 739BC), **idolatry** had never entirely or permanently ceased to exist, even in public. In two different reformations the attempt had been made to suppress it, viz., in the one commenced by **Asa** and concluded by **Jehoshaphat**; and in the one carried out by **Joash**, during the lifetime of the high priest Jehoiada, his tutor and deliverer. But the first was not successful in suppressing it altogether; and what **Joash** removed, returned with double abominations as soon as **Jehoiada** was dead. Consequently the words, "**They have rebelled against Me,**" which sum up all the ingratitude of Israel in one word, and trace it to its root, apply to the whole history of Israel, from its culminating point under David and Solomon, down to the prophet's own time. (**Ed**: I agree but remember that Isaiah is speaking primarily to Judah and Jerusalem, Isa 1:1).

**Barnes** comments that "God had shown them special favors. He recounted his mercy in bringing them out of Egypt; and on the ground of this, he demanded obedience and love; compare Ex 20:1,2,3. And yet they had forgotten him, and rebelled against him. The Targum of Jonathan, an ancient Chaldee version, has well expressed the idea here. 'Hear, O heavens, which were moved when I gave my law to my people: give ear, O earth, which didst tremble before my word, for the Lord has spoken. My people, the house of Israel, whom I called sons — I loved them — I honored them, and they rebelled against me.' The same is true substantially of all sinners; and alas, how often may a similar expostulation be made with the professed people of God! (Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament - Volume VII)

**Revolt and rebellion** against the Lord, Isaiah said, was a part of the character of Israel from its birth and throughout its history (Isa 48:8; 59:13, 63:10). Amos 4:4 describes Israel's insistence to worship at the unapproved sanctuaries at Bethel and Gilgal as revolt and rebellion. It is noteworthy that in spite of their gross rebellion against His authority, Jehovah did promise that He would restore

His people one day and forgive their sin of rebellion (Je 33:8).

**Isaiah** alludes to this spiritual revolution and its effect on His Holy Trinity in chapter 63...

Isaiah 63:10 But they rebelled (marah - were contentious; cp Dt 9:23, 24, Ps 78:8, Je 5:23; Lxx = apeitheo = were disobedient, a manifestation of their refusal to believe God!) and **grieved** (Hebrew = 'atsab = to hurt, pain, vex, grieve, used in Ge 6:6, Ps 78:40, Isa 54:6; Lxx = paroxuno = literally means to sharpen, figuratively to cause a state of inward arousal, provocation or irritation) **His Holy Spirit**; Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.

As we study Isaiah's record of Israel's rebellion, we need to treat his forthtelling as a "mirror" by which can examine our relation with God, for as Paul wrote centuries later...

Now these things happened to them as an example (tupos - word study), and they were written for our instruction (admonition, warning - nouthesia - word study), upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1Co 10:11)

How we need to take heed lest we as believers grieve God our Father as Israel did and suffer loss (not of salvation but of rewards) not only in this age but in the age to come (cp 2Cor 5:10, 1Co 3:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 2Jn 1:8, Re 22:12, Ps 62:12, Isa 3:10, 11, Jer 17:10).

**McGee** makes an interesting point in drawing a parallel with passages in Deuteronomy which refer to how a "prodigal son" was to be treated...

As His children, they had rebelled against the Mosaic Law in this connection. In the Book of Deuteronomy note the law concerning an incorrigible son:

If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, 19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town. 20 "And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 "Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear of it and fear. (Deut. 21:18, 19, 20, 21).

**Tozer** describe rebellious people explaining that...

Because man is born a rebel, he is unaware that he is one. His constant assertion of self, as far as he thinks of it at all, appears to him a perfectly normal thing. He is willing to share himself, sometimes even to sacrifice himself for a desired end, but never to dethrone himself. (The Knowledge of the Holy)

**Alexander Maclaren** adds that...

A true prophet's words are of universal application, even when they are most specially addressed to a particular audience. Just because this indictment was so true of Judah, is it true of all men, for it is not concerned with details peculiar to a long-past period and state of society, but with the broad generalities common to us all. As another great teacher in Old Testament times said, 'I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me.' (Ps 50:8) Isaiah has nothing to say about ritual or ceremonial omissions, which to him were but surface matters after all, but he sets in blazing light the foundation facts of Judah's (and every man's) distorted relation to God. And how lovingly, as well as sternly, God speaks through him! That divine lament which heralds the searching indictment is not unworthy to be the very words of the Almighty Lover of all men, sorrowing over His prodigal and fugitive sons.

Nor is its deep truth less than its tenderness. For is not man's sin blackest when seen against the bright background of God's fatherly love? True, the fatherhood that Isaiah knew referred to God's relation to the nation rather than to the individual, but the great truth which is perfectly revealed by the Perfect Son was in part shown to the prophet. The east was bright with the unrisen sun, and the tinted clouds that hovered above the place of its rising seemed as if yearning to open and let him through. ([Isaiah 1:1-9, 16-20 The Great Suit: Jehovah Versus Judah](#))

**Matthew Henry** comments that God...

charges them with base ingratitude, a crime of the highest nature. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse. Let heaven and earth hear and wonder at, 1. God's gracious dealings with such a peevish provoking people as they were: "I have nourished and brought them up as children; they have been well fed and well

taught" (Dt 32:6); "I have magnified and exalted them" (so some), "not only made them grow, but made them great-not only maintained them, but preferred them-not only trained them up, but raised them high."

Note, We owe the continuance of our lives and comforts, and all our advancements, to God's fatherly care of us and kindness to us.

2. Their ill-natured conduct towards him, who was so tender of them: "They have rebelled against me," or (as some read it) "they have revolted from me; they have been deserters, nay traitors, against my crown and dignity." Note, All the instances of God's favour to us, as the God both of our nature and of our nurture, aggravate our treacherous departures from him and all our presumptuous oppositions to him-**children, and yet rebels!**

**Application** - Don't go to the next verse without at least being open and willing to personally apply this passage. What is it that God has clearly told me to do (either recently or in the distant past) but which I have failed to carry out and/or which I have willfully rebelled against? (cp Pr 28:13, 1Jn 1:9)

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**Unruly Children** - READ: Isaiah 1:1-9,16-20 - I once had a pet raccoon by the name of Jason. Having affectionately cared for this "little bandit" for several months, I was amazed and frustrated when he forgot my friendship and turned on me. In fact, there were occasions when he sank his teeth into the very hands that fed him.

The prophet Isaiah emphasized the unruly behavior of the people of Israel in the first chapter of his book. He said that a dumb ox recognizes his owner, and the stubborn donkey knows enough to come home to his own stall (Isa 1:3). But Israel ignored God's tender care and eventually provoked Him to anger (Isa 1:4).

The people of Israel turned away from the Lord like rebellious children. Their worship and sacrifices became a stench in the nostrils of God, for their hearts were far from Him. They resisted His gracious warnings and finally experienced divine judgment. The land of milk and honey was looted and ransacked before their very eyes.

As believers, we should tremble at the thought of spurning the grace and mercy of God. By yielding to Christ and heeding the warning of the Spirit when we sin, we can avoid His chastening and instead enjoy the blessings reserved for His repentant children. — Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

"We love You, Lord Jesus," we often may say,  
But are we as ready His will to obey?  
Let's heed what God's Spirit would have us to do,  
For that's how we show Him a love that is true. --DJD

**Respond to undeserved blessing with unreserved obedience.**

**Isaiah 1:3** An **ox knows** its **owner**, and a **donkey** its **master's manger**, but **Israel** does not **know**, my **people** do not **understand**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**English Translation of the Greek** (Septuagint): The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know me, and the people has not regarded me.

**Amplified:** The ox [instinctively] knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib, but Israel does not know or recognize Me [as Lord], My people do not consider or understand. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

**NET:** An ox recognizes its owner, a donkey recognizes where its owner puts its food; but Israel does not recognize me, my people do not understand." ([NET Bible](#))

**NJB:** The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; Israel does not know, my people do not understand.' ([NJB](#))

**NLT:** Even the animals--the donkey and the ox--know their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still do not understand. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Young's Literal:** An ox hath known its owner, And an ass the crib of its master, Israel hath not known, My

people hath not understood.

## An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand

- Proverbs 6:6; Jeremiah 8:7
- Isa 5:12; 27:11; 44:18; Deuteronomy 32:28,29; Ps 94:8; Jeremiah 4:22; 9:3, 4, 5, 6; 10:8,14; Matthew 13:13, 14, 15,19; Romans 1:28; 2Peter 3:5
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**An ox knows its owner** - The ox recognizes and/or is submissive to the owner. Remember that this is **God Himself** making this pithy assessment. God's indictment of Judah's rebellion is made all the more striking with a vivid illustration (cp Is 8:7) which contrasts His own people with "dumb" animals who are actually "smarter" than Judah. He says that even these dumb animals know their owner or their master's manger because of the owner's care for the animal. God says with what seems a sense of amazement that His people have behaved worse than these dumb brute beasts of burden! How sad that Judah did not have as much devotion to their Holy Master as animals do for their human masters!

**Jeremiah** makes a similar allusion (speaking of **Judah**) writing that "Even the stork in the sky knows her seasons; and the turtledove and the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration, but **My people** do not know the ordinance of the LORD (to not know His ordinance is not to know Him). (Jeremiah 8:7)

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, do you know your Owner? Do your choices validate or substantiate your answer? Do your thoughts, words and deeds demonstrate who is your real master? (cp Mt 6:24-note) If you are a believer, are you daily denying self (Mk 8:34, saying "No" to your will) and seeking to live in submission to the will (good and acceptable and perfect - Ro 12:2-note) and authority of Jehovah? We rebel against the Lord's authority when we refuse to submit every area of our life to His Lordship. Is there some area you have reserved just for you? Then beware and remember Judah's example which demonstrates that it's only a matter of time, unless there is recognition and repentance, that sons become rebels and rebels become harlots!

**Spurgeon** remarks that "Men are more brutish than the beasts that perish. The lower animals, as men contemptuously call them, acknowledge the hand that feeds them; but men receive the bounty of God through long years, and yet live as if there were no God at all, and feel no gratitude to him whatsoever. Israel was God's peculiar people, highly favored, and greatly indulged, and this made it all the worse for the Lord to be able to contrast them and the brute creation: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Exposition of Isaiah)

The late renowned expositor **James Montgomery Boice** once made an interesting observation that relates to the spiritual declension in Judah and much of the modern church...

It is important to understand two steps in the spiritual decline of nominally religious people. Such people do not live for God, though they think they do. They live for self, and the first stage of their decline is to put off the day of reckoning. At this stage they know what is right and expect to do the right someday. But in the meantime they want the imagined benefits of a life of sin. The second stage comes when sin has so trapped them and distorted their thinking that they lose sight of what is right or wrong and imagine their sin to be right conduct. At this point, far from putting off the day of reckoning, they actually desire it. They imagine that their deeds will be vindicated and that the people they have wronged will be shown to be deserving of their conduct. (From *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary*. Page 196. Baker Books. 2002)

**Harry Ironside** asks...

Do we really know it? Does hunger ever drive us to it; or, are we often found foolishly sniffing the desert air, following the wind like the wild donkey, our backs on God's well-filled storehouse, vainly seeking a satisfactory portion in the world we have professed to judge? Solemn questions these, not to be evaded or ignored, but faced in the presence of the Lord: lest a day come when, of us too He shall have to say, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (Isa 1:4, cp Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22-note, Mt 7:23-note)

**Surgeon** concludes that...

Men are more brutish than the beasts. They receive all at the Lord's hands, and they utterly forget Him. Alas,

Lord God, that Thou should thus be treated! (Ed: And don't we as believers do a similar gross injustice when we sin against the light of His Word and the enabling power of His grace in Christ Jesus?! Beloved let us read and study Isaiah as if it were a mirror, showing us through Judah rebellion, our own spiritual imperfections, that we might seek rest in repentance and a holy walk of obedience.)

**Donkey** ([02543 - חמור](#)) (**chamowr**) is the well known beast of burden common in the Middle East and proverbial for dullness and stupidity.

**Master** ([01167 - בעל](#)) (**baal**) depending on the context can mean husband (used this way about 15x) or lord, but some 50 times refers to the pagan deity **Baal**. In the present context **baal** refers to one who possesses something (animate or inanimate) and controls their movement and/or activities. There is a play on words or more accurately on roles (whether intended or not) for later in Isaiah we see baal used of God, Isaiah recording...

(God is speaking these words of promise and hope to Israel) Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your **husband (baal)** is your Maker, Whose name is the Lord of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth. 6 "For the Lord has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," says your God. 7 "For a brief moment I forsook you (God speaking to Israel), but with great compassion I will gather you. 8 "In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness (this reflects God's faithfulness to keep His unconditional covenant with Abraham) I will have compassion on you," Says the Lord your Redeemer. (Is 54:4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

**Jeremiah** uses **baal** explaining that the New Covenant will not be...

like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a **husband (baal)** to them," declares the LORD. (Jer 31:32, cp the new covenant in Jer 31:33, 34)

**Manger** ([018 - אבוס](#)) (**ebus** from **abas** = to fatten) refers to the stall, barn, or crib, where cattle are fed or fattened.

**Jamieson** feels that the **manger** refers "spiritually (to) the word and ordinances." That is possible but one is always well advised to be very cautious when interpreting figurative language, he stray too far from the Author's intended meaning.

**Barnes** offers a more straightforward interpretation writing that "The **donkey** has sufficient knowledge to understand that his support is derived from that. The idea is, that the **ox** was more submissive to laws than the Jews; and that even the most stupid animal better knew from where support was to be derived, than they did the source of their comfort and protection. The **donkey** would not wander away, and the **ox** would not rebel as they had done. This comparison was very striking, and very humiliating, and nothing could be more suited to bring down their pride. (Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament - Volume VII)

The brutes obey their God,  
And bow their necks to men;  
But we more base, more brutish things,  
Reject his easy reign.  
--Watts

Judah (and Israel) should have been willing to submit to the Lord's loving leadership, Hosea describing His gentle care for them...

I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; and I bent down and fed them. (Ho 11:4)

**Comment:** Despite such divine watchcare, Israel choose to rebel! How often I imitate their stupidity because every sin is a rebellion against my God!

**Henry Morris** draws a parallel with this passage and the New Testament birth of Messiah writing that...

"**Crib**" is the same as "**manger**." Although the animals could recognize their Maker when His parents "**laid him in a manger**" (Luke 2:7), the leaders of the nation ignored Him and then sought to kill Him (Matthew 2:16). ([Morris, Henry: Defenders Study Bible. World Publishing](#))

**McGee** writes that

This verse is a splendid piece of satire. The two animals that are used for illustrations do not have a reputation for being very intelligent. Neither the ox nor the long-eared donkey has a very high I.Q. The expression "dumb

as an ox" is still often used. The donkey does not wear a Phi Beta Kappa key. I should qualify that statement: I admit that I have met a few who do! However, even these animals have intelligence enough to know who feeds them.

**Motyer** writes that...

The Lord's dealings with His people are designed to develop true spiritual instincts, a mind-set of attachment to the Lord as automatic and spontaneous as that seen in the animal creation. (Ibid)

**Alexander Maclaren** adds that...

Man's neglect of God's benefits puts him below the animals that 'know' the hand that feeds and governs them. Some men think it a token of superior 'culture' and advanced views to throw off allegiance to God. It is a token that they have less intelligence than their dog.

There is something very beautiful and pathetic in the fact that Judah is not directly addressed, but that Isa 1:2, 3, 4 are a divine soliloquy. They might rather be called a father's lament than an indictment. The forsaken father is, as it were, sadly brooding over his erring child's sins, which are his father's sorrows and his own miseries. ([Isaiah 1:1-9, 16-20 The Great Suit: Jehovah Versus Judah](#))

**Illustration** - A Haifa policeman, who knew his Bible, got on the trail of a gang of smugglers. They used an donkey-drawn caravan to escape. The policemen managed to capture some of the donkeys, though the smugglers got away. The clever officer let the beasts of burden go without food for several days and then he turned them loose. And just as he predicted from Isaiah 1:3, "the ox knoweth his owner, and the donkey his master's crib," the starving animals led the police directly to the smuggler's hide-out! —World Christian Digest

**But Israel does not know** - In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translates this phrase with a negative (ou) which signifies absolute negation - "Israel absolutely does not know" (cp **lack of knowledge** in [Hosea 4:1-6 above](#))

**Barnes** notes that "The Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint ("*Israel does not know me*"), and the Arabic, add the word **Me.** The word **know** is used in the sense of recognizing Him as their Lord; of acknowledging Him, or submitting to Him. (Ibid)

Compare the following passage...

Now the sons of Eli were worthless (belial = good for nothing, unprofitable, the name used for Satan in 2Co 6:15) men. They did not **know** (**yada'**) Jehovah (1Sa 2:12).

**Comment:** Eli was the priest of Israel and yet what were his sons? From this context why were they described as worthless? Of whom did they not have an intimate knowledge? Corollary: If we want our life to count, we do well to spend our days growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2Pe 3:18-note)!

**Know** ([03045](#)) (**yada'**) does not mean simply to have knowledge of something, but also speaks of an intimate acquaintance with someone. For example, **yada'** was the verb used to describe a man knowing an woman in an intimate way as when "Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived..." (Ge 4:1) In Hebrew thought "knowledge" means more than information so that knowledge was seen in fundamentally relational terms. To know God then is to be in a right relationship with Him, and involves intimacy and experience. Isaiah is saying to his Hebrew audience that for the most part, most of them did not have an intimate relationship with Jehovah. Lxx = **ginosko** = know by experience and modified by the negative "ouk" signifying absolute negation! They do not have a clue is the idea! Woe!

The OT repeatedly records Israel's **lack of a genuine knowledge of God**..

For My people are foolish, **they know Me not**; They are stupid children and have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good **they do not know**. (Jeremiah 4:22)

They bend their tongue like their bow; lies and not truth prevail in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and **they do not know Me**," declares the Lord... Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit; through deceit **they refuse to know Me**," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 9:3, 6)

Every man is stupid, **devoid of knowledge**. Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his molten images are deceitful, and there is no breath in them. (Jeremiah 10:14)

**My people** - What divine longsuffering we see here for God still calls them **My people**, despite their repeated rebellion against Him and not acting like **His people**.



God's possession is emphatically signified by this little phrase which is so important that we find it repeated 26 times in Isaiah (Is 1:3; 3:12, 15; 5:13; 10:2, 24; 19:25; 22:4; 26:20; 32:13, 18; 40:1; 47:6; 51:4, 16; 52:4, 5, 6, 14; 53:8; 57:14; 58:1; 63:8; 65:10, 19, 22) **My people** emphasizes their choice by God to be His very own and His desire to comfort them. Not only had Jehovah created them as a nation (cp Ge 32:27, 28) but then redeemed them from bondage to Egypt (Ex 6:6,7).

**Spurgeon** - See how the Lord still owns the children of Israel as His people, though He contrasts their conduct with the behavior of the ox and the donkey. So we see that, however far God's people may have gone into sin, they are His people still, and He does not deny their relationship to Him.

**Keil and Delitzsch** - An ox has a certain knowledge of its buyer and owner, to whom it willingly submits; and a donkey has at least a knowledge of the crib of its master, i.e., it knows that it is its master who fills its crib or manger with fodder... Israel had no such knowledge, neither instinctive and direct, nor acquired by reflection... This nation, bearing as it did the God-given title of a hero of faith and prayer, this favourite nation of Jehovah, had let itself down far below the level of the brutes.

**Understand** (0995) (bin/biyn) means to have insight and is not just mere accumulation of data but an understanding that results from comparative study. Biyn also conveys the idea of having the capacity to **discern** (To distinguish, discriminate or see the difference between two or more things. NAS translates biyn discern, discerning or discernment some 25 times) between what is good and what is evil (cp "**discern**" in Ps 19:12). Judah lacked this vitally important ability. Lxx = suniemi = means to bring together "to put the pieces of the puzzle together" so to speak again modified by the negative "ouk" signifying absolute negation! They do not have a clue how "the pieces of the puzzle fit together" is the idea! Woe! This is what sin will do to us beloved! Beware! When you sin you become senseless! Even the redeemed cannot be sinless in this fallen world with our fallen flesh but we should "sin less" lest we become senseless! **Biyn** - 20x in Isaiah - Isa. 1:3; 3:3; 5:21; 6:9, 10; 10:13; 14:16; 28:9, 19; 29:14, 16; 32:4; 40:14, 21; 43:10, 18; 44:18; 52:15; 56:11; 57:1

Judah did not know or understand that Jehovah was their Owner and their Master and that as such they belonged solely to Him and were to always be dependent upon Him as a loving Father to supply all of their needs. But sadly they yearned for the "leeks... and the garlic" (Nu 11:5) of this fallen world and that is what they ran after. When we loose sight of the truth that God is to be our sufficiency, we begin to seek other sources to supply our needs and greeds and the result is usually sin. We do well to read and heed, dear fellow believer!

Through an earlier prophet **Moses**, Israel was instructed to guard and live out the statutes and judgments of Jehovah...

So keep and do them, (**why?**) for that is your wisdom and your **understanding** (biynah from biyn) in the sight of the peoples (those who were not Jews, i.e., Gentiles - Israel was to be a light unto the Gentiles, a witness of the one true, living God) who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and **understanding** (biyn) people.' (Dt 4:6)

**Comment:** A person who is wise and **understanding** (who has the ability to discern between good and evil) is one who characteristically knows the best goals for which to strive and the best paths to take. God is saying through Isaiah, that His people failed in this area of **understanding**. In the remainder of Isaiah 1, the prophet will explain in more specific terms how their failure to know and understand God and His Word led to bypaths rather than the "highway of holiness".

**Moses** later writes

they are a nation lacking in counsel (Heb = 'etsah = way of thinking and refers to a mental attitude, a state of mind, or viewpoint that determines the decisions one makes), and **there is no understanding** (Heb = tebuna [from root biyn] - capacity for discerning a right course of action) **in them**. Would that they were wise, that they understood (act with insight, to be prudent) this, that they would **discern** (biyn) their future! (Dt 32:28, 29)

**Ed Young** commenting on **do not understand** writes that this means...

Does not engage in conscious reflection either upon its own true interests or upon its immense obligations. The animals which did not have the ability to consider (understand), did at least know whence came their sustenance. Although endowed with capacities not possessed by the animals, Israel did not employ these divinely given capacities and so appears as less understanding than the beasts. (Young, E. The Book of Isaiah: Volume 1: William B. Eerdmans)

The psalmist writes that...

Psalm 49:20 Man in his pomp, yet without **understanding** (biyn), is like the beasts that perish.

**Stedman** comments that...

Isaiah lived in a time of national stress, when man's true nature was visible and was exposing itself for what it was just as in our day. He was terribly bothered over man's innate rebelliousness, as he cries out in the opening chapter. The nation has deliberately forsaken the ways of God and their stupid obstinacy is simply beyond his understanding. "Why," he says, "even the ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib..." (Isa 1:3) Even an animal knows where its bread is buttered, where it gets blessing and help. But he says, "Not Israel. They don't know where to go." They are wandering off stupidly, ignorantly, and this amazes him. He simply cannot understand their stubborn refusal to turn back -- and the other nations around are just as bad. ([Reference](#))

## PARALLELISM IN PROPHETIC WRITINGS

Isaiah and other Hebrew prophets utilized a grammatical tool known as **parallelism** ([description](#)) which is a manner of comparison. Collins English Dictionary says parallelism is

the repetition of a syntactic construction in successive sentences for rhetorical effect.

Example of **parallelism** in Scripture...

But let judgment *run down as waters*, and righteousness as *a mighty stream*. (KJV, Amos 5:24)

**Achtemeier** writes that...

parallelism is a rhetorical device involving one or more linguistic repetitions or correspondences (grammatical, lexical, semantic, or phonetic) in adjacent lines or phrases. While present in prose, parallelism is more prominent in biblical poetry, where it often appears to be a basic structuring device. An example is Ps. 103:10: 'He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities.' In this verse the syntactic, semantic, and lexical correspondences between the two phrases are many and obvious (e.g., 'deal with'/'requite'; 'sins'/'iniquities'; 'according to'/'according to'). Other verses may have fewer correspondences but may still be considered parallel. (Achtemeier, P. J. Harper's Bible Dictionary. San Francisco: Harper & Row)

**The Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies** explains that...

The characteristic of parallel lines in Hebrew poetry. Parallelism has the effect of saying the "same in the other" (C. S. Lewis) as a thought or an image in the initial line is taken up in the subsequent line(s). In the eighteenth century Robert Lowth identified three forms of parallelism: synonymous, where the second line reproduces the first; antithetical, where the second line is in contrast to the first; and synthetic, where the second line carries the thought of the first forward. Hebrew poetry is deceptively simple to translate because of this parallelistic feature, yet the various ways of balancing one line with another can work on the level of sound, form and even grammatical structures. Recent studies have focused more on the subtlety of balancing that takes place between the lines and the necessity of taking into consideration all the linguistic features, not just the thought that is paralleled. For example, Job 5:14 reads:

They meet with darkness in the daytime,

And grope at noonday as in the night.

"Daytime" and "night" are a common contrasting word pair, and here they occupy the same position in the Hebrew (first, not last, as in the translation above). However, the other word pairs—"daytime" and "noonday," "darkness" and "night"—occupy opposite positions in the lines but are similar in meaning (the verbs actually occupy the middle position in each line, and each line is comprised of only three Hebrew words). The poem begins with "daytime" and ends with "noonday" but in between lie "darkness" and "night." Thus the poem is very tightly and artfully constructed around similar and contrasting images that parallel one another. (Patzia, A. G., & Petrotta, A. J. Pocket dictionary of biblical studies. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press)

**Radmacher** explains that

The Hebrews used parallelism in poetry and prophecy as a literary technique to emphasize a particular thought. Here is an example:

The ox knows its owner  
And the donkey its master's crib;  
But (contrast) Israel does not know,  
My people do not consider  
(Isaiah 1:3)

In the first part of this verse, both the ox and the donkey intuitively know the objects that they depend on, the owner (provider) as well as the "master's crib" (provision). The second part of the verse contrasts the intuition of animals with the behavior of the Israelites. Israel does not know "its Owner," and even though they are God's "people," they "do not consider" God's provision. Thus the second half of the verse creates the analogy in parallel with the first half. ([Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

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**THE TEACHER IS AN ANIMAL** - "The ox knows its owner... ; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." -- Isaiah 1:3

Animals sometimes seem to have more sense than people. Because of their alertness to natural phenomena, they have at times helped us to avoid disaster.

In northeastern China, officials were able to warn and evacuate people from high-risk areas hours before a killer earthquake struck. They were alerted to the disaster by cattle that mooed more than usual and chickens that refused to roost. And in Japan, 20 small quakes within a few months were accurately forecast because observers noted that catfish swam frantically, as if chased by sharks.

From the prophet Isaiah we learn that observing animals can even teach us how to prevent a ruined

life (Isa 1:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). He noted that an ox knows its owner, and a donkey knows where its food comes from (Isa 1:3). These animals know who takes care of them.

God's people, however, often aren't smart enough to remember their Owner. Hundreds of years after

Isaiah, the apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that they were not their own. They had been bought with a price and were to honor God in all they said and did (1Cor. 6:19, 20).

Take a lesson from the animals and remember your Owner and Provider. Live wholeheartedly for Him. -- Martin R. De Haan II [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I am Yours, Lord, yet teach me all it means,  
All it involves of love and loyalty,  
Holy service, absolute surrender  
And unreserved obedience to Thee. -- Anon.

**Live so that others know whom you belong to.**

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**Isaiah 1:4** [Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly!](#) They have [abandoned](#) the [LORD](#), they have [despised](#) the [Holy One of Israel](#), they have [turned away](#) from Him. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**English Translation of the Greek** (Septuagint): Ah sinful nation, a people full of sins, an evil seed, lawless children: ye have forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel.

**Amplified:** Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised and shown contempt and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they have become utterly estranged (alienated). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

**NET:** The sinful nation is as good as dead, the people weighed down by evil deeds. They are offspring who do wrong, children who do wicked things. They have abandoned the LORD, and rejected the Holy One of Israel. They are alienated from him. ([NET Bible](#))

**NJB:** Disaster, sinful nation, people weighed down with guilt, race of wrong-doers, perverted children! They have abandoned Yahweh, despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from him. ([NJB](#))

**NLT:** Oh, what a sinful nation they are! They are loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil and corrupt children who have turned away from the LORD. They have despised the Holy One of Israel, cutting themselves off from his help. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Young's Literal:** Ah, sinning nation, a people heavy with iniquity, A seed of evil doers, sons -- corrupters! They have forsaken Jehovah, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have gone away backward.

### Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity:

- Isa 1:23; 10:6; 30:9; Genesis 13:13; Matthew 11:28; Acts 7:51,52; Revelation 18:5
- **Weighed down** - Isa 57:3,4; Numbers 32:14; Psalms 78:8; Jeremiah 7:26; 16:11,12; Matthew 3:7; 23:33
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Observe that this indictment began (Isa 1:2, 3) with God Himself pronouncing the charge against His people. In this verse, its as if Isaiah like all true prophets can no longer hold the words within and so he begins his denunciation of the spiritual sickness of chosen people by crying out "**Woe**"! Never pass over a "woe" in the Bible too quickly. **Ask God if Isaiah's century's old "woe" might also be uttered over the majority of the modern day church in America!**

**Keil and Delitzsch** comment that in this verse...

there commences a totally different rhythm. The words of Jehovah are ended. The piercing lamentation of the deeply grieved Father is also the severest accusation. The cause of God, however, is to the prophet the cause of a friend, who feels an injury done to his friend quite as much as if it were done to himself (Isa 5:1). The lamentation of God, therefore, is changed now into violent scolding and threatening on the part of the prophet; and in accordance with the deep wrathful pain with which he is moved, his words pour out with violent rapidity, like flash after flash, in climactic clauses having no outward connection, and each consisting of only two or three words.

**Alas** ([01945](#)) (**hoy**) (pronounced {hoh'ee} - you've probably heard a Jewish person express this exclamation) is an interjection (word used in an exclamation) meaning Ho!, Oh!, Ah! or Woe! **Hoy** is not just an exclamation, expressing astonishment or pain, but is also an interjection denouncing threatening or punishment. Our English word **alas** is an exclamation expressive of sorrow, grief, pity, concern, apprehension of evil, unhappiness, or concern. Woe expresses grief, regret, great sorrow or distress ("Woe is me!") **Hoy** - 47 OT uses - These uses are almost completely confined to the prophetic writings! Note the major usage is in Isaiah (21x) - 1Ki 13:30; **Is 1:4, 24; 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 10:1, 5; 17:12; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9, 10; 55:1**; Jer. 22:13, 18; 23:1; 30:7; 34:5; 47:6; 48:1; 50:27; Ezek 13:3, 18; 34:2; Amos 5:18; 6:1; Mic 2:1; Nah 3:1; Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19; Zeph 2:5; 3:1; Zec 2:6, 7; 11:17

The **Septuagint (LXX)** translates **hoy** with the Greek article of interjection **ouai** which expresses extreme displeasure even calling for retributive pain on the subject, in this case Judah! Uses of ouai in Septuagint - Nu 21:29; 1Sa 4:7f, 21; 1Ki. 12:24; 13:30; Pr 23:29; Eccl. 4:10; 10:16; Isa. 1:4, 24; 3:9, 11; 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 10:1, 5; 17:12; 18:1; 24:16; 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; Jer. 4:13; 6:4; 10:19; 13:27; 22:18; 46:19; 48:1; 50:27; 51:2; Lam. 5:16; Ezek. 2:10; 7:26; 13:3, 18; Hos. 7:13; 9:12; Amos 5:16, 18; 6:1; Mic. 7:4; Nah. 3:17; Hab. 2:6, 12, 19; Zeph. 2:5; 3:18

**Young** comments that "Isaiah is a true evangelist, for a true evangelist must ever be grieved by sin and by the lost condition of the sinner to whom he speaks. Such grief flows from a true love for those who need his message. The condition of the nation brings forth upon Isaiah's part a cry of pity that things are as they are, a cry mixed with indignation against those who could so sin, together with wonder that men who had received so much from God could so easily turn against Him in forgetfulness. Words are not sufficient to express Isaiah's feelings; he must break forth into an agonizing cry.

Isaiah first mentions the unrighteous **effects** (sinful, etc) and then he identifies the root **causes** (abandoned Jehovah, etc). Their evil actions were the fruit of their willful rejection of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel and His Holy Word! (Gal 6:7, 8).

**Sinful nation** - Literally this reads the "sinning nation", and the following three clauses (weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly) repeat the sense of the first in different words thus emphasizing Judah's degree of sinfulness. The

point is that the corruption Isaiah describes has "infected" the entire nation, not just a part of it. The evil humors had become generalized! Woe to such a nation.

**Proverbs** could not be more clear and direct stating that "Righteousness exalts (morally, ethically, not economically) **anation**, but sin is a disgrace to any (don't miss that word "any") people." (Pr 14:34)

Notice that the charge is against the entire **nation**. God obviously holds individuals responsible for their sins and He also holds **nations** responsible!

Literally **sinful** ([02398](#)) (**chata'**) means to "miss the mark" so to speak. Specifically Judah missed God's target for them which was to be a holy or separated people (Lev 11:44,45, 19:2, 20:24, 25, 26, Dt 7:6, 26:19, 28:9) which would be a light to the godless, polytheistic, idolatrous nations who would be drawn to the one true and living God.

The essence of the Hebrew word **chata** is brought in a literal use in Judges...

Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not **miss** (**chata**). (Jdg 20:16)

**Israel** was to be unique from all the godless, pagan nations of the world...

And what one nation on the earth is like Thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for Thee and awesome things for Thy land, before Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed for Thyself from Egypt, from nations and their gods? For Thou hast established for Thyself Thy people Israel as Thine own people forever, and Thou, O Lord, hast become their God. (1Sa 7:23, 24)

What a tragic picture Isaiah presents in this passage to contrast what Israel **should have/could have been** if only they had followed the Master's plans (**cp our potential as believer's** Ep 2:10-note, 2Pe 1:4-note; **Beloved are you redeeming the time** Ep 5:16-note **or wasting your life?**)...

THEIR PRACTICE	THEIR POTENTIAL
Sinful nation	A holy nation (Ex 19:6)
A people weighed down with iniquity	A people for His own possession (Dt 14:2)
Offspring of evildoers	Seed of Abraham (Ps 105:6, Is 41:8, 44:1,2)
Sons who act corruptly	Sons of the LORD your God (Dt 14:1)

**Vine** applies this passage to the modern day church (and to so-called Christian nations like America) writing...

All this is again admonitory for us upon whom the very "end of the ages" has come. The description given concerning us in 1Pe 2:9 (note) is similar to that given to Israel as God's people just mentioned: (Ex 19:6). We should therefore take heed lest we fall as they did, lest there be in any of us "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from (or that falls away from) the living God." (Heb 3:12-note)"

**Weighed down** (03515) (**kabed**) is an adjective which usually conveys a negative connotation describing something as heavy and figuratively as burdensome (cp Moses' cry in Nu 11:14) or grievous. Sometimes **kabed** describes a great degree of intensity.

SIN IS ALWAYS A HEAVY BURDEN TO CARRY

Picture the entire nation of Judah walking around with heavy burdens of sin like a yoke around their neck, bowed down, crushed and oppressed by the enormous weight of their accumulated crimes against God! What a striking picture of sin... like a heavy load on our backs making it difficult to get around.

Sin is never a "free ride" but always results in a heavy burden (Pr 28:13 Ps 32:4-note Ro 3:9-note Mt 11:29) As you may have heard it said "**Sin sits "heavy" on my conscience.**" Praise God that He provided a **'Sin Bearer'** who could handle the heavy load of sin as described in 1Peter...

and He Himself (Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Jn 1:29) bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to Sin (speaks of the penalty and the power of sin) and live to righteousness (speaks of the power to be holy as He is holy 1Pe 1:15-note) for by His wounds you were healed (not physical healing as some incorrectly teach, but spiritual healing of our soul). (1Pe 2:24-note).

**Kabed** - 3 uses in Isaiah - Isa. 1:4; 32:2, 36:2

The Septuagint translates **kabed** with **plethes** an adjective that means full, filled up (as opposed to empty), as one would fill up a hollow vessel. In the NT **plethes** is used to describe one's soul as thoroughly permeated (of the Holy Spirit filling us - Lk 4:1, Acts 6:3, 7:55, 11:24). **Plethes** was used to describe fully ripened grain (Mk 4:28), which suggests Judah's iniquities were "full" or "fully ripened" (and ready to be "harvested" - cp Gal 6:6,7).

**Motyer** adds that this sinful people

became 'heavy with iniquity', as if the Lord who carried them (Isa 46:3, 4; Ex. 19:4) Himself felt the burden.

**McGee** observes that...

Israel is described as "**a people laden with iniquity.**" This phrase throws a world of light upon the personal invitation that the Lord Jesus gave in the New Testament. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are **heavy laden**, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Now we know what He meant—"**laden with iniquity.**" The people of Israel were laden with sin. Today His invitation goes out to those who are laden with sin to bring that burden and load to Him and find rest, the rest of redemption. ([McGee, J. V.: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Iniquity** (05771) ('**avon**) describes perversion, from a verb meaning "to bend or twist." Thus the idea is a twisting of the standard or deviation from it. '**Avon** describes sin as crookedness and perversity in contrast with **chata** which is missing the mark.

Isaiah uses 'avon later in describing the "sin solution" for Judah and for all sinful mankind because...

**All** of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the **iniquity** ('avon) of us all To fall on Him.

**Alexander Maclaren** comments that...

In Isa 1:4 the black catalogue of the prodigal's doings begins on the surface with what we call 'moral' delinquencies, and then digs deeper to disclose the root of these in what we call 'religious' relations perverted. The two are inseparably united, for no man who is wrong with God can be right with duty or with men. Notice, too, how one word flashes into clearness the sad truth of universal experience—that '**iniquity**,' however it may delude us into fancying that by it we throw off the burden of conscience and duty, piles heavier weights on our backs. The doer of iniquity is '**laden with iniquity.**' ([Isaiah 1:1-9, 16-20 The Great Suit: Jehovah Versus Judah](#))

#### Offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly!:

- Jeremiah 2:33; Ezekiel 16:33
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Offspring of evildoers** - Children (literally **seed**) of evil parents (**Ed**: Note the redeeming power of the gospel to redeem us from the sinful legacy inherited from our forefathers! Hallelujah! - 1Pe 1:18-note)

In his first and last (Acts 7:58, 59, 60) great sermon **Stephen** speaking to the Jews addressed them in essence as the seed of evildoers declaring...

You men who are stiff-necked (literally hard neck = obstinate = fixed and unyielding in course or purpose implying usually an unreasonable persistence) and uncircumcised in heart (yes they had physical circumcision but that was useless in regard to salvation - see Ro 2:28, 29-note, Col 2:11, 12-note) and ears are **always** (this means what it says = continually including in Isaiah's time) resisting (strictly, fall against, rush against; hence, strive against, oppose: resist by actively opposing pressure or power) the Holy Spirit; **you are doing just as your fathers did. (offspring of evildoers)** Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One (Isaiah prophesied more concerning the Messiah than any other OT prophet and yet tradition says he was sawn in two!), whose betrayers and murderers you have now become (Acts 7:51, 52)

**Comment:** Throughout the centuries, the majority of the Jews (except the small believing remnant) had refused to submit to God's will and way and obey the truth He had revealed to them in His divine acts and Holy Word. Their ears did not hear the truth, their hearts did not receive the truth, and their necks did not bow to the

truth. As a result, they killed their own Messiah!

**Offspring** ([02233](#)) (**zera**) means seed, issue, progeny, posterity, family. How sad that this same Hebrew word was used to describe them at their genesis as the **seed of Abraham** (eg, see Ge 12:7), but in this verse as being born to parents who commit evil.

**Evildoers** ([07489](#)) (**ra'a**) means be harmful, to be injurious, to do harm or do hurt.

Remember that neither God nor His mouthpiece Isaiah found joy in calling the chosen people rebels, evildoers, etc, but desired that in the hearing of this reproof, they might come under conviction of their sins and repent and be healed.

**C H Spurgeon**, as God's mouthpiece in the late 1800's sought a similar outcome from his preaching...

When Spurgeon preached, hearts broke. Even the proud, the self-righteous, and hardened rebels couldn't resist coming to hear him preach. And then it wasn't long before many of them surrendered to his Lord. One afternoon Spurgeon went to test the acoustics in the Crystal Palace, where he was to preach the next day. He thundered forth the words of John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Little did he realize that a custodian up in one of the balconies heard those words as a voice from heaven. He came under such conviction that he had to leave his work and get alone with God. After a brief season of spiritual struggling, he found peace and life by beholding the Lamb of God (C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography, The Banner of Truth Trust)

**Spurgeon** - What a terrible picture! A nation burdened with iniquity, as full of sin as their fathers were, and their offspring growing up like themselves. By hereditary transmission (Ro 5:12-note) they have received a predisposition to evil that cannot be taken out of the blood except by divine power.

**Sons who act corruptly** - Young's Literal says "**sons -- corrupters!**" What a picture of the horrible effect of sin. Do not be deceived my beloved brethren by the deceitfulness of sin (He 3:13-note, Pr 28:26 Isa 44:20 Obad 1:3 Ro 7:11-note Ep 4:22-note Jas 1:14-note Je 49:16 Titus 3:3-note 2Pe 2:13-note) even the passing "pleasures" of sin (He 11:25-note). The Lord's charges against Israel are both dramatic and specific.

**Act corruptly** ([07843](#)) (**shachath**) means to cause to spoil, putrefy, decay, pervert, come into a state of ruin. It was used to describe Israelites who worshiped the golden calf (Ex 32:7; Dt 9:12; 32:5, Hos 9:9). The idea is so to act as to become destructive to one's self and to others! This is the very reason God destroyed the world by a flood!

Now the earth **was corrupt** in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it **was corrupt**; for all flesh **had corrupted** their way upon the earth. (Ge 6:11-12).(**shachath** is used 3x)

**Shachath** - Uses in Isaiah - Isa 1:4; 11:9; 14:20; 36:10; 37:12; 51:13; 54:16; 65:8, 25

Judges uses this word to describe Israel's downward progression (sinning is not a static process but inevitably a downward spiral - Pr 5:22-note) during the days of the Judges...

But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more **corruptly** (**shachath**) than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways. (Jdg 2:19)

What the Torah (Pentateuch, first five books of OT) had predicted would come to pass in God's chosen people had begun to ripen fully into fruit of putrefaction (in moral/ethical sense) (see predictions of corrupt behavior - Dt. 4:16, 25; 31:29).

**Alexander Maclaren** calls us to ...

Notice, too, how the awful entail of evil from parents to children is adduced—shall we say as aggravating, or as lessening, the guilt of each generation? Isaiah's contemporaries are '**a seed of evil-doers,**' spring from such, and in their turn are '**children that are corrupters.**' The fatal bias becomes stronger as it passes down. Heredity is a fact, whether you call it original sin or not. ([Isaiah 1:1-9, 16-20 The Great Suit: Jehovah Versus Judah](#))

**They have abandoned the LORD:**

- Dt 29:25; 31:16; Jdg 10:10; Jer 2:13,17,19

- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Israel and Judah's **forsaking** of God is unfortunately a common theme in the OT. We all, like Judah, are either moving toward God (seeking Him) or away from God (abandoning Him). To **abandon** God is the opposite of **seeking** Him. God Himself predicted that His chosen people would forsake Him but also warned them that if they did He would forsake them...

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot (literally the idea of illicit sexual activity, but figuratively of describing spiritual unfaithfulness ~ "playing the harlot", cp Ho 4:10, 11, 12, 18, Ex 34:16, 17, 2Chr 21:11, 12, 13) with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and **will forsake ('azab)** Me and break My covenant which I have made with them (she was His "wife" - Je 31:32, Ho 2:19, Isa 54:5). Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I **will forsake ('azab)** them (cp Dt 28:20, 29:25, Josh 24:20; Who will He not forsake? Ps 9:10, 37:25, 28, Pr 9:6, 28:13) and hide My face from them, and they shall be consumed, and many evils and troubles shall come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' (Dt 31:16, 17)

**Moses** as God's prophet also warned their abandonment of God would happen

But Jeshurun (means "upright one" and is a term of endearment and refers ironically to Israel Dt 33:5, 26) grew fat and kicked-- You are grown fat, thick, and sleek-- Then he **forsook ('azab)** God who made him, and scorned (nabel = faded away from, lightly esteemed, dishonored) the Rock of his salvation. (How did the forsake and scorn Him?) They made Him jealous with strange gods; with abominations (tow'ebah = that which is loathsome) they provoked Him to anger. (Dt 32:15, 16)

**Abandoned (05800)** ('azab) basically means to depart from something or leave. The prophets used 'azab to describe Israel's relationship God's covenant noting that like an unfaithful wife she "forsook" God and His covenant by turning to lifeless idols (Jdg 2:12, 13, 14, 15-note, Jdg 10:6, 7, 10, 13, 14, When they ask Samuel for a king = 1Sa 8:8, What happens when we forsake God? = 1Sa 12:10 and 1Ki 9:9, Why were the 12 tribes divided, esp v33? = 1Ki 11:31, 32, 33, Elijah = 1Ki 19:10, Jer 22:9; Ezek 20:8) As noted above Moses warned God's chosen people of the danger of breaking God's covenant (she was His "wife" - Je 31:32) and forsaking Him (Dt 31:16, 17). Jeremiah indicates the divine threat of God forsaking His people had become a reality for Judah (Jer 12:7). All uses of 'azab in Isaiah - Isa 1:4, 28; 7:16; 10:3, 14; 17:2, 9; 18:6; 27:10; 32:14; 41:17; 42:16; 49:14; 54:6, 7; 55:7; 58:2; 60:15; 62:4, 12; 65:11

To help understand the meaning of 'azab see...

Ge 2:24 man shall **leave ('azab)** his father and his mother

Ge 39:12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he **left ('azab)** his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

Ru 1:16-note But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to **leave ('azab)** (cp who she had left - Ru 2:11) you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

Ps 22:1-note My God, my God, why hast Thou **forsaken ('azab)** me?

The Septuagint translates 'azab with the verb **egkatalaipo** a Greek verb used often in the OT and which means to desert, to utterly forsake, to totally abandon, all of these definitions presenting a dramatic picture of Judah's movement away from God. It was not just a little minimal degree of easily correctable backsliding but a total abandonment of the Holy One of Israel! (See quotations on **Backsliding or Drifting**)

**Alexander Maclaren** - But the bitter fountain of all evil lies in distorted relations to God. **They have forsaken the Lord**; that is why they 'do corruptly.' They have '**despised the Holy One of Israel**'; that is why they are '**laden with iniquity**.' Alienated hearts separate from Him. To forsake Him is to despise Him. To go from Him is to go 'away backward.' Whatever may have been our inheritance of evil, we each go further from Him. And this fatherly lament over Judah is indeed a wail over every child of man. Does it not echo in the 'pearl of parables,' and may we not suppose that it suggested that supreme revelation of man's misery and God's love? ([Isaiah 1:1-9, 16-20 The Great Suit: Jehovah Versus Judah](#))

**Spurgeon** - the prophet spoke to the people of his day, and we may say much the same to the people of our own time. The professing church of God has gone away backward, forsaken the doctrines of truth, and turned aside from the purity of its life. God have mercy upon the world when the church itself becomes thus defiled!



## They have despised the Holy One of Israel

- Isa 3:8; 65:3; Deut 32:19; Ps 78:40; Jeremiah 7:19; 1Co 10:22
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

2Ki 19:22 'Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you raised your voice, And haughtily lifted up your eyes? Against the **Holy One of Israel!**

Ps 78:41-[note](#) Again and again they tempted God, and pained the Holy One of Israel.

We see a similar description of Israel again in **Isaiah 5**...

Isaiah 5:24 Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; (**Why?**) For they have rejected (refused, abhorred, as in 1Sa 10:19, Je 8:9) the law of the LORD of hosts and **despised** (**naats** = spurned, treated contemptuously) the word of the Holy One of Israel.

**Comment:** Israel rejected the Holy One and the Holy One eventually rejected them in Hosea 4:6 as well as their worship in Amos 4:6! Beware of "dwelling" (wallowing would be a better description) in sin. It's like the poor children in third world countries playing in the sewage infested streams that run through the villages! Let us confess and repent lest we experience the same fate as Israel!

**Motyer** writes that "Just as '**seeking**' (God) is not looking for Him as though He were lost but showing a determination to be with Him where He is to be found (cp Je 29:13, He 11:6-note), so **forsaking** is deliberately distancing ourselves from Him. It arises from a change of heart whereby He who should be loved is rather spurned/'treated with scorn. (Motyer, J. A. The Prophecy of Isaiah : An Introduction & Commentary. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press)

**Despised** ([05006](#)) (**na'ats**) signifies the action or attitude whereby the former recipient of favorable disposition and/or service is consciously viewed and/or treated with disdain (cp Dt 31:20). It means to abhor which in turn means to regard with extreme repugnance. Ponder that thought... this is how God's very own people were interacting with the Holy One of Israel! When we turn away from God, it's amazing how far we can slide! Have you despised the Holy One of Israel by your unholy behavior? Are you trifling with some "little" sin even now as you read these notes? If you are, then you had better beware that you are on the proverbial "slippery slope" and you need to repent and return and experience God's restoration and rest. **Na'ats** also conveys the idea of spurning (men spurning God) which means to reject something disdainfully or contemptuously. **Na'ats** equates with **unbelief** in Numbers 14 (Why is their spurning God all the more shocking? What had they witnessed? = Nu 14:11, 23).

The **Septuagint** translates **na'ats** with the verb **parorgizo** which means to provoke to anger and usually describes God's reaction (cp parorgizo in Dt 4:25, 31:29, 32:21)

**The Theological Wordbook** has this note on **na'ats**...God's longsuffering (Ro 2:4-note) overlooked repeated rejections and scorning of His **person** (Nu 14:11; Ps 10:3-[note](#)), **sanctions** (Ps 10:13-[note](#)), **counsel** (Ps 107:11-[note](#)), and **word** (Isa 5:24). To the "despiser" nothing that is God's is considered holy (Isa 52:5; cf. Isa 1:4; Deut 31:19). Thus, he not only "deprecates God's power and ability to carry out his threats" but his contemptuous view of God leads him to prefer sin to God and to express this contempt in conscious contempt of God (Isa 1:4). ([Harris, R L, Archer, G L & Waltke, B K Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Page 543 Moody Press](#))

### TO NOT BE HOLY IS TO DESPISE THE HOLY ONE!

**Keil and Delitzsch** write that "There was apostasy in heart: "**They have forsaken Jehovah.**" There was apostasy in words: "**They blaspheme the Holy One of Israel.**" The verb (blaspheme, spurn, despise = [na'ats](#)) literally means to sting, then to mock or treat scornfully; the use of it to denote blasphemy is antiquated Mosaic (Dt. 31:20; Nu 14:11, 23; 16:30).

Despite such unholy behavior against the **Holy One** note His longsuffering...

For neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken by his God, the Lord of hosts, although their land is full of guilt before the **Holy One of Israel.** (Je 51:5)

**Holy One of Israel** - This phrase is used 25 times in Isaiah (2Ki 19:22; Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa. 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14; Jer. 50:29; 51:5) and clearly

points to the Messiah. Furthermore this title for God occurs 12 times in the first division of Isaiah and 13 times in the second division. This and other similarities in usage of distinctive Hebrew words or phrases adds further proof to the unified authorship of the entire book.

What a contrast this name of God brings out in this verse where the holiness of God stands in the sharpest possible contrast to human sinfulness.

**Keil and Delitzsch** add that...

It is with intention that God is designated here as **"the Holy One of Israel,"**—a name which constitutes the keynote of all Isaiah's prophecy (see Isa 6:3). It was sin to mock at anything holy; it was a double sin to mock at God, the Holy One; but it was a threefold sin for Israel to mock at God the Holy One, Who had set Himself to be the sanctifier of Israel, and required that as He was Israel's sanctification, He should also be sanctified by Israel according to His holiness (Lev 19:2, etc.).

**Vine** writes that...

as the Holy One He was Israel's Sanctifier, and they should have sanctified themselves in response; He had said "ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2). ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Motyer** adds that...

Holiness is the heart of the nature of God. Thus, in the full reality of all that makes him divine and marks him out as unique he had drawn near to and in a real sense become the possession of Israel, he was 'Israel's Holy One'. This was the one they had treated with scorn. (Ibid)

#### They have turned away from Him:

- Ps 58:3; Jer 2:5,31
- [Isaiah 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Literally this verse reads that they **"have be-stranged themselves backward"** or as Motyer phrases it they had **"turned themselves back into strangers."**

**Spurgeon** - What a description this is of the state of the unregenerate, — even of God's elect among them who are still crushed under the ruins of the fall! Peradventure, as I am reading this chapter, some poor soul here is saying, "That just describes me." Well, let it describe you; and lament, and mourn, and humiliate yourself before the Most High as you realize what is your sad condition. You have acted worse to God than an ass does to its master; you have behaved shamefully to him, and thus you have provoked him to anger. Do not think lightly of your sin, but let it weigh heavily upon your spirit; as you are "laden with iniquity," God grant that it may be a heavy burden to you! The Lord next goes on to exhibit the sin of the people in the light of his chastisement (Isa 1:4b). When a child sins, and does wrong, a wise parent uses correction to see whether he cannot overcome the evil tendencies; but, alas! there is no correction that will ever get sin out of the sinner. See what God did with these people, and what came of it.

**Keil and Delitzsch** add that " lastly, there was also apostasy in action: **"they have turned away backwards;"**... The niph'al (**Ed**: This Hebrew stem is often reflexive), which is only met with here, indicates the deliberate character of their estrangement from God; and the expression is rendered still more emphatic by the introduction of the word **"backwards"** (achor). **In all their actions they ought to have followed Jehovah; but they had turned their backs upon Him, and taken the way selected by themselves.** (**Comment:** Cp Acts 7:51 where Stephen describes the unregenerate Jews - "resisting" in Greek means to resist by actively opposing or rush against or upon in a hostile manner, assault, resist by force and violence - in Ac 7:51 "the Holy Spirit")"

**Turned away** - The KJV renders it "gone away backward" (Back side of something, backward, behind = Hebrew word - **achor** =[0268](#)), a good description of "backsliding" (See quotations on **Backsliding or Drifting**).

The noun **'achor** is used by Jeremiah to picture backsliding which pertains to a state of little or no association compared to a prior association...

"You who have forsaken Me," declares the Lord, "You keep going **backward**. So I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am tired of relenting! (Jer 15:6)

**Turned away** ([02114](#)) (**zur**) actually means to be a stranger and thus the idea in the present context is to

become alienated or utterly estranged from God. God's people had become as if they were now aliens, foreigners or non-Israelites. **Motyer** says "God's chosen people have 'reverted to alien status'." The Hebrew uses the **Niphal stem** here which can be reflexive which could be rendered "They turned themselves away". Their turning away was no accident and they had no one to blame but themselves. We all need to beware of the "victim mentality" and remember that God never tempts us to sin, but when we sin, it is because we have made a personal decision to sin rather than to obey.

This verse describes every person ever born for we are all born into Adam (Ro 5:12-note), Paul explaining that the result is that we...

were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death (2Co 5:18, 19, Ep 2:14-note, Ep 2:15, 16-note), in order to present you before Him holy (Ep 1:4-note) and blameless (1Co 1:8, Jude 1:24, 25) and beyond reproach (Ro 8:33-note) (Col 1:21, 22-note)

Paul describes the mind that is alienated to God...

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; (Ro 8:6, 7-note)

What happens when we **turn away from** God? Jeremiah writes "Thus says the LORD, "What injustice did your fathers find in Me, That they went far from Me and walked after emptiness and became **empty** (Hebrew verb **habal** = they became filled with false hopes, became vain or void [**How would you like God to examine everything you've ever lived for, everything you've ever accomplished and after assessing it, stamp it "Void"!?**], cp 2Ki 17:15, Ps 62:10)?" (Jeremiah 2:5)

**McGee** notes that here in Isaiah 1:2, 3, 4 - God spells out Israel's condition. They are backslidden, they have turned away from God, and they are a people laden with iniquity. Now He is going to spell out in detail the charge that He has made against them.