

Isaiah 1-12 Overview

A Chapter 1
The Vision and Call to Repentance

B Chapters 2-4
Glorious Mt. Zion — Judgment — Righteous Branch

C Chapter 5
Vineyard Parable and Assyrian Threat

Chapters 6-9:7
Glory of Yahweh/3 Sons

C' Chapters 9:8-10:34
Extended Woes and Divine Judgment

B' Chapter 11
The Righteous Branch and Peaceful Kingdom

A' Chapter 12
Songs of Salvation and Praise

Isaiah 1:2-31 — Overview

Verses 2-9: Rebellious Children

- Israel has rebelled against God despite His care for them
- Their land is consumed like Sodom and Gomorrah

Verses 10-17: Empty Religion

- God rejects their sacrifices and festivals that lack true justice and righteousness

Verses 18-20: A Choice

- Obedience leads to blessing
- Rebellion leads to judgment

Verses 21-26: City of Faithfulness

- True justice and righteousness makes the city faithful

Verses 27-31: Fire of Justice

- Those who repent will be redeemed through justice and righteousness but those who don't...
- ...their land is consumed like Sodom and Gomorrah

Isaiah 1:2-9

Rebellious Children (2-4)

² **Hear**, O heavens, and **give ear**, O earth;
for the LORD has spoken:
“Children have I reared and brought up,
but they have rebelled against me.
³ The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master’s crib,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.”
⁴ Ah, **sinful** nation,
a people laden with iniquity,
offspring of evildoers,
children who deal corruptly!
They have **forsaken the LORD**,
they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
they are utterly estranged.

Totally Wounded (5-6)

⁵ (a) Why will you still be **struck down**?
(a’) Why will you continue **to rebel**?
The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.
⁶ From the sole of the foot even to the head,
there is no soundness in it,
but bruises and sores
and raw wounds;
they are not pressed out or bound up
or softened with oil.

Desolate Land (7-9)

⁷ Your country lies desolate;
your cities are burned with fire;
in your very presence
foreigners devour your land;
it is desolate, as **overthrown** by foreigners.
⁸ And the daughter of Zion is left
like a booth in a vineyard,
like a lodge in a cucumber field,
like a besieged city.
⁹ If the LORD of hosts
had not left us a few survivors,
we should have been like **Sodom**,
and become like **Gomorrah**.

Cosmic Introduction

The summoning of the heavens and the earth to witness the LORD's case is a callback to the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. It was here where Israel was about to enter the promised land and Moses communicates all of the potential blessings and curses if they obey or disobey the LORD.

Isaiah is calling out that what is happening/about to happen to Israel is the fulfillment of his prophecy.

Deuteronomy 32:1

¹ "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak,
and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

This isn't the only comparison between Deuteronomy 32 and Isaiah 1 either, Isaiah pulls a ton from that passage to prove this point further.

Deuteronomy 32	Isaiah 1	Notes
¹ "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.	^{2a} Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:	Cosmic Witnesses
⁵ They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation.	^{2b-4} "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me... they are utterly estranged."	Estranged Children
²² For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.	³¹ And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.	Consuming Fire
³² For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah;	⁹⁻¹⁰ "we should have been like Sodom ... you rulers of Sodom! you people of Gomorrah!"	Sodom and Gomorrah
⁴¹ Behold, I will repay. Vengeance is mine, and recompense,	^{24b} "Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.	Vengeance on enemies

Sodom and Gomorrah

The whole of verses 7-9 set up for the punchline of verse 10. We can get hints that Isaiah is making the comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah through "burned with fire" and "overthrown". "Overthrown" is only ever used elsewhere in the Bible with reference to God overthrowing Sodom and Gomorrah.

If this is the case, what is that saying about Israel? What is that saying about the about the "foreigners"?

Isaiah 1:10-17

- ¹⁰ **Hear** the word of the LORD, you rulers of **Sodom** !
Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of **Gomorrah** !
- ¹¹ "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of well-fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.
- ¹² When you come to appear before me,
who has required of you this trampling of my courts?
- ¹³ Bring no more vain offerings;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—
I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.
- ¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
- ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not **listen** ;
your hands are full of blood.
- ¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
- ¹⁷ learn to do good; seek **justice** , correct oppression;
bring **justice to the fatherless** ,
plead the widow's cause .

Bad Sacrifices

The LORD is saying that he's burdened by their sacrifices and who even asked them to do so, when there's a decent bit of Scripture pointing to *Him* being the one who commanded it in the first place!

There's something more needed than just their sacrifices and it all culminates in verses 16-17. None of their sacrifices or festivals mean anything to the LORD if they are devoid of social justice.

Bloody Hands

Pretty cool poetry on line 15. The "hands full of blood" refers to prayerful hands that either could have:

- been covered in blood from all of the sacrifices they were making
- been covered in blood from murder (Gen. 4:10-11)

Justice	מִשְׁפָּט	<i>mish.pat</i>
Definition: God's right order in the world.		

People treated as equal before his eyes. The oppressed and poor are lifted up. The proud and murderers brought low.

So how are God's children supposed to clean themselves? Removing evil, doing good, seeking justice for orphans and widows

Isaiah 1:18-20

- ¹⁸ “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your **sins** are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
- ¹⁹ If you are willing and **obedient**,
you shall eat the good of the land;
- ²⁰ but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be eaten by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Isaiah 1:21-26

- ²¹ How the faithful city has become a whore,
 A she who was full of **justice** !
Righteousness lodged in her,
 but now murderers.
- ²² Your silver has become **dross** ,
 B your best wine mixed with water.
- ²³ Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves.
 C Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.
 (a) They do not bring **justice to the fatherless**,
 (a') and **the widow's cause** does not come to them.
- ²⁴ Therefore the Lord declares,
 C' the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:
 "Ah, I will get relief from my enemies
 and avenge myself on my foes.
- ²⁵ I will turn my hand against you
 B' and will smelt away your **dross** as with lye
 and remove all your alloy.
- ²⁶ And I will restore your **judges** as at the first,
 A' and your counselors as at the beginning.
 Afterward you shall be called the city of **righteousness** ,
 the faithful city."

Righteousness

צְדָקָה

tse.da.qah

Definition: Right relationships with God and others

"The meaning of tsedegah is an ethical standard of right relationship. Biblical scholar J. Alec Motyer defines its use as "right with God and therefore committed to putting right all other relationships in life," and "to do right by someone."

Tsedegah is the standard of right relationship between all people. And mishpat is the action you take to create the standard of tsedegah. Biblical righteousness is about right

relationships in day-to-day conduct in family, work, and community”

— Bible Project, *Justice Study Notes*, <https://bibleproject.com/videos/justice/>

Isaiah 1:27-31

- ²⁷ Zion shall be redeemed with **justice**,
A and her converts with **righteousness**.
²⁸ But rebels and **sinners** shall be broken together,
and those who **forsake the LORD** shall be consumed.
B ²⁹ For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired;
and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen.
B' ³⁰ For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers,
and like a garden without water.
³¹ And the strong shall become tinder,
A' and his work a spark,
and both of them shall burn together,
with none to quench them.

Desirable Trees

Only one other time in the whole Hebrew Bible does the word for "desire" (חָמַד – kha.mad) appear in reference to desiring trees. It is in Genesis 3:6 when Eve saw that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was desirable to make one wise.

Just like the root of all sin is a desire to ignore God's Words (not "shema" to Yahweh) and take our own wisdom for ourselves, so is Israel's sin here. As highlighted in prior sections, they're giving vain sacrifices that might seem good in their eyes, but they're missing the whole point – true worship requires justice and righteousness – right relationships between both God and others.

Conclusion

So if this is the state of Israel, what hope do they have? How can this Israel be redeemed as Isaiah says will happen in v27?

In Chapter 2, we get a picture of what the result of this redemption and judgement will look like.

THE SAUCE

Deep dives & rabbit holes

In v6, there is no "soundness" in Zion. The Hebrew word מְתוֹם me.tom has the same root for "unblemished" or "whole". This is the same word used of the spotless lamb sacrifice needed for their coverings. How could we compare the "blemished" nature of Israel in light of their "blemished" sacrifices?

In v13, just about every other time the word "convocations" is used in the Hebrew Bible, it has the word "holy" before it. Not these convocations! Could look into other usages in the Scriptures or even read more of the Levitical laws showing how they're supposed to be done.

There's a lot of "courtroom" language in this passage. It's almost as if Yahweh is pleading His case. He picks this theme back up in chapter 5 as well – "What more could I have done?"

We'll probably end up touching on this later in Isaiah, but the concept of a "city" is usually not thought of in the way we do today. The very first city mentioned in the Bible was built by Cain after his sin and exiling.

