

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 43:22-28, ISRAEL'S SIN AND REDEMPTION, PART 1

Immediately after once again revealing the eschatological redemption and restoration of Israel, the nation's current sinful, rebellious condition becomes the focus of the revelation, but even that ends in more revelation of blessing.

"Isaiah now clarified that the reason for this great blessing that God promised the Israelites lay in Himself, not in them. Their salvation would come out of His grace; it would not be a reward He owed them for their obedience" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel, 4:122*]. While this is truth for Israel and the Israelites, it is also truth for everyone. Salvation is granted because God is gracious and bestows His saving grace on all who believe. When Israel as a nation finally believes in the Messiah, God's grace will be poured out on the nation and it will be redeemed to enter the Messianic Kingdom and realize the covenant promises God made to the nation through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob so very long ago.

Israel had rejected their God. Now, that is not to say that there was not a believing remnant in existence at the time; there is always a believing Jewish remnant. It may be quite small, but it exists at all times. Israel as a nation, however, has rejected and continues to reject their God. Until Israel as a nation accepts their God, they will remain in rebellion. Isaiah has been revealing Israel's rebellion and Israel's eschatological redemption. The fact that the nation has not believed the truth, does not mean it will not come to pass just as God has planned it to happen; it will come to pass. The nation will come to faith and be redeemed at the very moment it seems all hope is lost and the nation will be completely wiped out. The God-man, the Davidic King, the Messiah will rescue them just in time (Rev. 19:11-21) in response to their cry for Him to return and deliver them from the antichrist (Mt. 23:39).

Isaiah 43:22 <sup>22</sup>"Yet you have not called [קָרָאתָ] on Me, O Jacob; But you have become weary [יָגַעְתָּ] of Me, O Israel.

This is a sorry testimony on the state of Israel's relationship with Yahweh at the time Isaiah was penning this revelation and, in reality, throughout the history of the nation. Their history is a history of disobedience and rebellion that began immediately after their liberation from slavery in Egypt. They started complaining as soon as they got to the Red Sea (Ex. 14:10-12), and they have been in rebellion against God and His relationship with them up to the present time. That history will be replaced by faithfulness, but only after Israel has experienced all the curses for disobedience promised them in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 culminating in the purging of the rebels from the nation in the crucible of the Tribulation wrath God will cause to pour out on them (Ezek. 20:33-38).

All the previous Scriptures in Isaiah that refer to an eschatological deliverance and restoration of Israel say that the people will deliver praise to God, be restored to the land, etc., but that has yet to happen on a national level. These verses are dealing with issues that will only be solved in the future.

To call upon the name of the Lord is to engage in public worship [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis: Exposition from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, 246, commenting on Genesis 12:8]. "To 'proclaim' the Lord is to declare his character and the worshiper's dependence on that character ..." [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 158]. However, this verse in Isaiah is probably not a charge of complete failure to participate in the Mosaic Law and its rituals, but it is a charge that their heart was not in it. They were participating to some extent in the rituals of Temple worship, but they had no real regard for God's character and they certainly were not depending on His character to guide their national day-to-day life. Their public worship according to the Law of Moses had become meaningless. By the time the Lord allowed Babylon to destroy the Temple, the Temple had become so defiled that paganism was rampant on the Temple Mount and even in the Temple itself (Ezek. 8:1-18).

We know that public worship at the Temple did at least seem to cease at times, or was at least seriously marginalized, and at other times it was a matter of degree—sometimes more and sometimes less. This was obvious during Manasseh's reign (2 Kings 21) when Temple worship apparently ceased, and we know that Isaiah lived into that wicked king's reign because legend has it that Manasseh had Isaiah put to death by sawing him in half. During the reign of Josiah, Manasseh's son, the book of the Law was found and Temple worship was reinstated (2 Kings 22-23). It is possible that Yahweh is referring to a cessation of worship according to the Mosaic Law, but we also know that the primary problem addressed here is the spiritual issues; the matters of rebellion and a lack of faith are of primary importance. The Mosaic sacrifices were little more than an exercise in futility. Furthermore, the Temple has not been in existence for nearly 2,000 years; therefore, the sacrificial rituals have ceased until the Kingdom is inaugurated, but the spiritual issues the Lord addresses still remain. These verses are a reflection of the history of the nation.

Isaiah had addressed this issue earlier in his book. God's intentions for Israelite worship were always matters of the spirit and not the ritual. He takes no pleasure in the sacrifices that are performed without the appropriate spiritual mindset. Motyer linked these verses with ritualistic religion void of spiritual meaning.

"By the exodus the Lord brought his people out of slavery and gave them his law, both moral and cultic, as a sign they were no longer slaves but could walk at liberty. As we saw in [Isaiah] 1:10-15, however, they had brought themselves into a new bondage, a religion of incessant observance. But ritual for its own sake, observance divorced from moral and spiritual commitment, neither satisfies God nor brings blessings to people. Indeed, to the contrary, for they had made ritual a technique for manipulating blessing, putting the Lord at their beck and call. Thus enslaving themselves all over again, they sought also to make him their slave! [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 272].

In fact, their religion had become a superstitious activity; they reasoned that because they were God's people and because they had the Temple that they could not be completely subjugated or destroyed by pagan, alien forces. That was the basis for the rebuke John the Baptist laid on the Pharisees and the Sadducees when he said to them, "do not suppose you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'" (Mt. 3:9).

They also made the very foolish remark that “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone” (John 8:33). That conveniently ignores what happened to Israel at the hands of Assyria and to Judah at the hands of Babylon. One can imagine that some Roman soldiers, enemy occupiers of Israel charged with keeping them subservient to Rome, were strolling by when they were making that statement to the Lord!

Isaiah 1:11–15 <sup>11</sup>“What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says the LORD. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. <sup>12</sup>“When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? <sup>13</sup>“Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. <sup>14</sup>“I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing *them*. <sup>15</sup>“So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

Isaiah 29:13 <sup>13</sup>Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*,

Samuel also addressed the spiritual issues involved in the Mosaic rituals when King Saul usurped the role of priest in violation of the Law.

1 Samuel 15:22–23 <sup>22</sup>Samuel said, “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup>“For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being king*.”

Some theologians relate the situation revealed in these verses to the time when the nation was in Babylonian exile because they could not access the Temple to perform the Mosaic sacrificial rituals required to be held there. However, the Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonian Army and the people were not in the land to access it anyway making that situation a moot point, and that is not a possible interpretation of these verses. These issues were ongoing before the exile, and they continued after the return, albeit sometimes more and sometimes less. The context here relates to eschatological issues, these verses are talking about the state of the heart and the mind, not the religious rote required by the Mosaic system of ritual. As we have discovered in the studies we’ve already done on Isaiah, much of what he writes concerning the times in which he lived is a type of the end times that have yet to take place on a much larger scale.

Called, קָרָא, means to cry out, to call, to summon, to be invoked, or to be named referring to having recourse to, to make an appeal to, present a request for help to, or for information. Usually, calling on God has to do with resolving a need of some sort. The implication is that if Israel had been calling on God, He would have answered. God’s response for their failure to call on Him is the imposition of temporal disciplinary judgment.

Weary, *יָגַע*, means to toil, to labor, to grow weary referring to being or becoming weary with work, tired, or sleepy. Primarily, it means to work until one is tired or exhausted. Israel had lost the energy and the spirit to properly worship Yahweh. Another point being made here is that Israel had worked at her idolatry and, at the same time, had grown weary of the God commanded work of obeying the Mosaic Law.

Isaiah 43:23–24 <sup>23</sup>“You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored [*כָּבַד*] Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened [*עָבַד*] you with offerings, Nor wearied [*יָגַע*] you with incense. <sup>24</sup>“You have bought Me not sweet cane with money, Nor have you filled [*רָחַף*] Me with the fat of your sacrifices; Rather you have burdened Me with your sins [*הִטְאָאתָ*], You have wearied Me with your iniquities [*עָוֹן*].

Sacrifice was such an integral part of ancient religion, not just for Judaism but for paganism as well, that it is improbable to think that the Temple sacrifices stopped, but the manner in which they were offered became a significant way of dishonoring Him. It would probably be a mistake to presume that the sacrifices stopped altogether as some seem to think. Some of the people and the priests certainly remained faithful, but how many and to what extent is unknown, and presumably they would want to participate in the Mosaic sacrificial system. To what extent even the faithful could participate in the Mosaic Law on the Temple Mount is not known either, because the Temple had been overrun with paganism even among the priests (Ezek. 8). These Scriptures sound like the faithful adherence to the various offerings and sacrifices was paltry at best, but we will see that they must have continued participating in the sacrificial system as a ruse to try and fool God concerning their spiritual rebellion. However, He who knows what is in a man's heart (Luke 16:15) can never be fooled by the actions of sinful men.

Honor, *כָּבַד*, means to be heavy, weighty, honored referring to bestowing honor or rewards upon someone. The verb form used here refers to intensity. It should be understood as, “Nor have you (intensely) honored me with sacrifices.” This suggests that the attitude of the people is being questioned; even the sacrifices that were offered were not being offered with the appropriate spiritual mindset that was properly honoring Yahweh. It was not just a question of presenting sacrificial offerings to the Lord, it was also a question of the spiritual attitude of the one presenting the offering to the Lord.

The Lord made it clear that His worship requirements were not excessive; the Israelites were not burdened, or enslaved, nor were they wearied with the requirements concerning the ritual involved or the sacrifices themselves. For example, if a person could not afford a lamb or a goat for the sin offering, two turtledoves or pigeons could be substituted (Lv. 5:6-7). If even that was beyond the means of the worshiper, a tenth of an ephah of fine flour could be substituted for the birds (Lv. 5:11).

Burden, *עָבַד*, means to labor, to do work, and this word may indicate enslavement. This verb form is causative referring to causing one to worship a deity which is conceived of as causing to serve the deity. In terms of labor for the Lord, it is a religious service to worship God and that is not thought of as heavy labor, but as an experience of joy and freedom. “When the service is offered to God, it will consist of obedience. The performance of this service is found in the OT ritual and worship, e.g., the people's

bringing sacrifices and the service of the Levites and priests" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "עָבַד," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 640]. The verb form indicates that God has not caused a heavy burden to fall on the people in terms of worshiping Him by means of the sacrificial system of offerings.

Weary, נִגַע, is the same word used in verse 22. God did not weary the people with unreasonable demands for incense. That probably represents the fact that He did not place any unreasonable demands on them for anything regarding their worship of Him. What He wanted was faithful, believing hearts who worshiped Him in obedience to His commands. He wanted people who presented sin offerings because they were convicted about their personal sins and wanted to restore fellowship with God by means of their sacrificial offerings. He didn't want faithless ritual; He wanted heartfelt, faithful worship. In terms of application, that is just as applicable to the people in our churches today. This is timeless truth. We also have to remember that the sacrificial system set up under the Mosaic Law was a type of the person and work of Christ Jesus who is the substitutionary sacrifice that solves mankind's sin problem once and for all.

The sweet cane was an ingredient of the anointing oil used in the Temple (Ex. 30:23), and the fat was the most desirable part of the sacrificial animal (Lv. 3). We know that this unfaithfulness of heart was never corrected, because just before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Jeremiah warned the Israelites about the same issues.

Jeremiah 6:20 <sup>20</sup>"For what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba And the sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable And your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me."

The Lord was not filled with the fat offerings. Filled, רָחַץ, means to be saturated, to drink one's fill, to be drenched. In this context, it has the sense of to satiate, i.e., to fill to satisfaction on food or drink. The point here is not that God ate the sacrifice, but the sacrifices properly offered would have been filled Him with satisfaction. That was not happening.

"The purpose of God's sacrificial instructions was not to enslave his people, but to enable them to serve him free from the guilt of their sins. It was an exalted position to be God's specially chosen servants; this was not intended to be a burden that wearied the people with heavy demands of incense offerings of frankincense. The prophet was not saying that God made no demands on his people or that he did not care how they worshipped him. God cared about their worship because the positive impact of the sacrificial system was tied to the symbolic nature of their understanding of the ritual. Their involvement with various rituals brought to mind key principles of salvation that were illustrated in the ritual. The ritual was not an automatic mechanism for getting a reward from God but presented an opportunity to internalize and experience the theological principle illustrated concrete action. When the real purpose and meaning of the ritual was ignored, the joyful service of worship could quickly turn into a dreadful performance of enslaving burdens. This perversion of the sacrificial system was not God's doing, but the result of the people twisting God's plan" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 214-215].

What the Israelites were really bringing to God, which is an indication that Temple ritual had not ceased, were their sins and their iniquities. They brought what the Law commanded, but in addition to those required sacrifices, their wicked, rebellious hearts were really presenting God with sin and iniquity. That is as though they were bringing no sacrifice at all, and by so doing, Israel was a burden to Him.

Sin, חַטָּאת, means sin, transgression, or a sin-offering. The sense of the word refers to an act or a feeling that transgresses something forbidden or ignores something required by God's law or character, whether in thought, feeling, speech, or action.

Iniquity, עֲוֹן, means iniquity, guilt, perversity, depravity, a crime or misdeed. It is essentially a synonym for sin carrying the same sense which refers to an act or a feeling that transgresses something forbidden or ignores something required by God's law or character, whether in thought, feeling, speech, or action.

The fact that God had not burdened, or enslaved, and wearied the people with His worship requirements, is contrasted with the Israelites who had burdened, or enslaved, and wearied God with their religious ritual that was actually a religious mask for their sins and iniquities. They had a veneer of religious piety, but they also had a dark heart of pagan worship and rebellion against Yahweh that dominated and denied their religious activities. The nation continually broke fellowship with God and the sacrifices were intended to keep them in fellowship with God. When they refused to properly, spiritually participate in the rituals God established to maintain fellowship, they were continually out of fellowship. The more they were out of fellowship, the more they rebelled against God and the further they spiritually removed themselves from His presence. Remember, the presence of God was in the Temple's Holy of Holies with the Israelites in Jerusalem until just before the Babylonian destruction of the Temple (cf. Ezek. 10). Performing the religious rituals of the Mosaic Law was worthless under these conditions and may as well have not been done at all—which possibly happened at some times.

What God wanted was a people of His own who would obediently serve Him and answer the call for which they were specifically created, which was to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” to Him (Ex. 19:6). Israel never fulfilled their calling, and their rejection of that calling only grew as time has gone on.

Once again, after expressing His dissatisfaction with the sin and rebellion of the Israelites, Yahweh displays His amazing grace towards the nation and the people. God's grace is such an incredible truth.

Isaiah 43:25 <sup>25</sup>“I, even I, am the one who wipes out [מִקְהָה] your transgressions [פְּשָׁעֵי] for My own sake, And I will not remember [זָכַר] your sins.

It is no one but God who can wipe out transgressions and He does that for His own reasons. He does not do it because the Israelites deserved forgiveness in any way. This is applicable to individual Israelites who must individually come to faith throughout the generations, and it refers to national Israel who must come to faith and ask the Messiah King to save them at the end of the Tribulation.

Wipes out, *מָחָה*, means to wipe, to wipe out, to wipe clean referring to destroying something by blotting out. It pertains to no longer being in existence as an extension of washing impurities off an object. This word is used as a participle resulting in the meaning, “one who (continually) wipes out your transgressions.” Motyer suggested that the ability to wipe one clean thereby removing the defilement of sin is a divine attribute [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 274], and it certainly is something only God can do. The Jews thought that only God can forgive sins; they accused Jesus of blasphemy for forgiving the sins of a paralytic man and healing Him.

Matthew 9:2–3, 6-8 <sup>2</sup>And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.” <sup>3</sup>And some of the scribes said to themselves, “This fellow blasphemes.” ... <sup>6</sup>“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—then He said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.” <sup>7</sup>And he got up and went home. <sup>8</sup>But when the crowds saw *this*, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

The concept of a written record being blotted out of a book is the concept being presented here. Once removed from the book, it no longer exists in that book. Once God wipes our sins away, they no longer exist as they pertain to the saved individual.

Transgression, *פְּשָׁע*, means rebellion, crime, transgression, defection with the primary sense of evildoing resulting from the violation of a law or a duty or a moral principle, whether the standard is human or divine, and with the focus on the rebellious nature of the sin. In terms of rebellion or revolt, it refers to rising up in clear defiance of authority. The emphasis on rebellion perfectly fits with Israel's disobedient relationship to Yahweh throughout the history of the nation.

“Just as in the opening chapter of Isaiah, the prophet continues to wrestle with the false notions that in order to obtain forgiveness from God, animal sacrifices and other ‘religious’ rites are indispensable. In reality it is the LORD Himself, who for His own sake alone, forgives sins, irrespective of man's so-called pious acts. The Lord cannot be bribed with sacrifices” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 354].

Remember, *זָכַר*, means to remember in the sense of recalling knowledge from memory or to have a recollection.

God's failure to remember sins once they are forgiven is a consistent and wonderful theme throughout Scripture. This is a good thing for every believer to remember: do not dwell on your personal sins—they have been forgiven from the moment of belief. Seek restoration of fellowship (1 John 1:9) as required and continue on. The Messiah died on the cross for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2).

Psalms 103:12 <sup>12</sup>As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Micah 7:19 <sup>19</sup>He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

The concept that God no longer remembers the saved one's sins is kind of a startling truth since God is omniscient and knows everything at all times and He therefore can forget nothing. "It is clear that when God forgives our sins, he does not 'forget' them, for he is omniscient and cannot forget anything. On the contrary, all things—past, present, and future, real and potential—are simultaneously and permanently present to his consciousness. When he forgives our sins, he chooses not to remember them in the sense that in his divine accounting he no longer reckons them to our account" [Murray J. Harris, "Navigating Tough Texts: Forgive and Forget? Matthew 6:14," *Bible Study Magazine* 13, no. 2 (January/February 2021): 6.

The concept of not holding people to account for their sins, which was a divine blessing which we now know was accomplished in Christ Jesus and activated upon belief in Him, is present throughout the Word of God. The Old Testament was looking forward to the cross and the New Testament looks back upon it, but it is singularly the work of the God-man that accomplishes this grace truth.

"Since God is omniscient he never forgets anything, but in this promise He compared Himself to a person who does not forget things (an anthropomorphism) to illustrate the fact that He would not hold their sins against them. He would not call their sins to mind with a view to punishing them. It was sin, not captivity, that was the root trouble that needed dealing with. Later, Isaiah revealed that God would deal with it through His Servant's ministry ([Is.] 53:10-12)" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:123].

2 Corinthians 5:19 <sup>19</sup>namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Psalms 32:1–2 <sup>1</sup>How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! <sup>2</sup>How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

"[T]he context makes clear by its condemnation of the nation's sins that this blotting out was not done at the expense of justice and honor. The debt those transgressions incurred has been fully paid, and God's blotting out is an act of justice and mercy, for He does it of His own good pleasure; and it is just, for the debt has been paid. From later revelation we learn that this debt was paid by the Servant of the Lord, whose vicarious sacrifice rendered satisfaction to God's justice upon the basis of which He might pardon our transgressions" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:162].

This verse is not grammatically connected to the immediately preceding verses that detail the sins of the nation and the rebellious motives of the people regarding their participation in the Mosaic rituals. The emphasis of this verse is on Yahweh and His role in the wiping out of transgressions.



The verse begins with the Hebrew first person personal pronoun repeated twice, אָנֹכִי אָנֹכִי literally "I, I [am] He who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake ..." This is a Hebrew grammatical clue denoting special emphasis; it is Yahweh alone who forgives transgressions as they have been expressed in the continual rebellion of the nation throughout history.

Isaiah 43:25 <sup>25</sup>—I am He who is blotting out Thy transgressions for Mine own sake ...

God does this for His own sake, that is, He is doing this for His glory. He will be glorified by means of the redemption and restoration of not only rebellious Israel and the individual Israelites as they come to faith, but also mankind. Gentiles are included in this ultimate redemption program. This reinforces the doxological purpose of God in His supervision of human affairs and the Kingdom program He intends to bring about in His creation. God does this because of who He is; it is not about us. We are not worthy of this great salvation, we don't deserve this great salvation, and we can do nothing to earn this great salvation. It is all of Him—who He is and what He did on our undeserving behalf. "Nothing Israel [or mankind] has done or can do qualify them for forgiveness like this. If God did not wish to do it, no court could require him to do so, and no power could compel him. It is purely an expression of the gracious character of him who is at the center of all things, encompasses all things, and is beyond all things" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 160-161].

The next three verses resemble a courtroom proceeding. "The simplest way to understand these verses is as a brief court scene in which the accused is given the opportunity to establish *innocence* (26), the prosecution case is stated (27) and divine judgment justified (28)" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 274].

Isaiah 43:26 <sup>26</sup>"Put Me in remembrance, let us argue [שְׁפֹט] our case together; State your cause, that you may be proved right [צָדִיק].

God is saying "Refresh My memory Israel; tell Me why you are innocent." Argue, שְׁפֹט, means to judge, to decide. The verb form here is passive and it is a request or a command to come together and the sense is to allow the presentation of the case between the two parties. The point to be made here is that God is just. Whether He is commending or condemning, whatever He does is always and only just. Proved right, צָדִיק, means to be just, righteous, to be in the right. Israel is being afforded the opportunity to make the case that they have indeed been righteous, but the Lord will prove that they have been unrighteous, they have no case to be presented proving their righteousness, and judgment is due and must be imposed for their unrighteousness.

"Here God offered His people the opportunity to correct Him if what He had said was false, or to remind Him of something that He may have forgotten. This heavily ironic offer would have drawn a silent admission of guilt from honest Israelites. Their sin was the root of their troubles, and all their goodness could not get them out of their difficulties" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:123].

The problem for Israel is that the nation simply will not admit its guilt. They have experienced God's temporal discipline for centuries, and they are still experiencing it. Only the crushing crucible of the Tribulation will finally cause them to turn to God and cry out for salvation. They cannot enter into a right relationship with God until that happens. To this point in history, national Israel is unwilling to admit and be convicted of the sin of rebelling against God. Unless and until Israel is willing to come to God on His terms, their temporal disciplinary program is going to continue. This is not a bargaining session; God is not on trial. Israel's stubborn refusal to turn back to God is going to result in judgment.

Israel has always had a rebellious streak that predates even the formation of the nation.

Isaiah 43:27 <sup>27</sup>“Your first [ראשון] forefather sinned, And your spokesmen [ליין] have transgressed against Me.

This rebellious streak goes all the way back to Abraham; Abraham was not without sin. He went into Egypt during a famine when he should have stayed in Canaan (Gen. 12:10-20) and lied to the Egyptians by claiming Sarai to be his sister which placed the future of Israel in jeopardy. He doubted God's promise of a son and listened to his wife counsel him to provide her a son through her servant Hagar (Gen. 16:1-2). He lied to Abimelech when he said Sarah was his sister and that too placed the future of Israel in jeopardy (Gen. 20:1-17).

Some theologians believe the first forefather could also be Adam, or Jacob, or Aaron, but Abraham seems to be the most logical reference in this verse. Adam is unlikely because “he was the forefather of the human race, not of Israel; and the debt of Adam was the debt of mankind, and not of Israel. The reference is to Abraham as the first of the three from whom the origin and election of Israel were dated; Abraham, whom Israel from the very first had called with pride ‘our father’ (Matt. 3:9). Even the history of Abraham was stained with sin, and did not shine in the light of meritorious works, but in that of grace, and of faith laying hold of grace” [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:431].

First, ראשון, means first, former, with the sense of being the beginning unit in a series, and Abram was the first person in the Bible to be called a Hebrew (Gen. 14:13). However, Jacob could be considered the forefather referenced here as the first forefather of Israel since he is the father of the nation in the sense that his name was changed to Israel and his twelve sons became the founding tribes of the nation. We also know that the nation was frequently referred to as Jacob or Israel together suggesting that those names are intimately associated with the nation in general. The truth being presented here is that the guilt of the succeeding generations of Israelites keeps piling up and until there is a faithful generation that faithfully submits to the Mosaic Law, the nation will continue to be subject to divine temporal discipline.

Spokesman, ליין, in this context, suggests either an arrogant scoffer or a mediator, spokesman, or envoy. The latter seems most likely, although some combine the two to come up with an “arrogant spokesman.” This could be a reference to unfaithful kings, disbelieving, evil priests, or false prophets, anyone who represents the nation. There was no shortage of sinful people filling any of those positions in Israel.

Once guilt is established, the judgment is rendered.

Isaiah 43:28 <sup>28</sup>“So I will pollute [הָלַל] the princes of the sanctuary, And I will consign [נָתַן] Jacob to the ban [הֶרֶם] and Israel to revilement [גְּדוּף].”

The “princes of the sanctuary,” which could have also been translated “princes of holiness” are not a reference to royalty, but rather a reference to the priests. Pollute, הָלַל, means to pollute, defile, profane. In this context, it has the sense of shaming or bringing dishonor upon or to fail to respect. The reality is the Lord is simply returning on their own head what the priests themselves had been doing to God in the sanctuary for much of their history. The Aaronic priesthood should have been the most holy reflection of Israel’s status as God’s appointed people; they were supposed to be a light to the world. Instead, from the very start, beginning with Nadab and Abihu (Lv. 10:1-2), some of the priests, sometimes more and sometimes less, have exhibited unrighteous, God dishonoring, unholy behavior. By the time the Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C., most of the priests were probably pagans whose very presence defiled God’s house and denigrated His holy name (Ezek. 8).

Consign, נָתַן, means to give, to cause to receive. It is God who will impose the ban on Israel and allow the revilement Israel will experience at the hand of the world, then and now. This is consistent with the warnings God gave the Israelites about imposing curses on Israel for disobedience (Lv. 26; Dt. 28).

Ban, הֶרֶם, means a devoted thing or things devoted to destruction referring to an object (or person) that is devoted to the God of Israel, whether for cultic [religious] use or for destruction. In this case, Israel is being set aside to be destroyed for their disobedience and rebellion particularly their adoption of idolatrous, pagan worship. “Usually *haram* means a ban for utter destruction, the compulsory dedication of something which impedes or resists God’s work, which is considered to be accursed before God” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “הֶרֶם,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 324]. “*Destruction (herem)* is not ‘destruction’ pure and simple but the utter ‘separation’ from the face of the earth of that which the Lord abhors. What a verdict! – not pardon (26) but the divine curses (28)” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 275]. Of course, Israel is not going to be wiped off the face of the earth, but they have suffered enormous damage throughout history as they have suffered the disciplinary action God has imposed on them for their rebellion.

Revilement, גְּדוּף, means reviling, defamation, insult, scorn referring to the treatment Israel will experience at the hands of the world once God imposes His judgment on them.

This level of destruction, imposed by hostile enemy armies, has happened to Israel and Jerusalem several times because Israel has a hard time learning what God has been trying to tell them. It happened to the Northern Kingdom at the hands of Assyria in 722 B.C. and to Judah at the hands of Babylon in 586 B.C. Rome destroyed the nation in A.D. 70, and the antichrist will ravage the nation during the Tribulation.