

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 48:1-5 STUBBORN ISRAEL, PART 1

One of the things to note in this chapter is the recognition of Israel's deliverance from the captivity in Babylon, but that it brought no respite for the nation. Even though the nation rebuilt the Temple, God never took up residence in it again. The blessings that are to be found in Israel's restoration and reconciliation with God have not materialized yet, because the nation has not yet been restored and reconciled to God. That did not happen when Cyrus freed the Israelites to return to the land of Israel, and it will only happen when Israel is saved at the end of the Tribulation.

Israel may be the "poster child" nation for stubbornness in terms of a relationship with God. They were the people who were supernaturally created to be a people distinct from all others, and who were supernaturally formed into a nation and delivered by means of signs, miracles, and wonders. They are a people who continue to be supernaturally protected by God to this day, and for proof of that we need look no further than the miraculous survival of the nation since 1948 in the face of overwhelming, deadly opposition to their existence. They are the people who received the Word of God, recorded it for mankind, and were entrusted with safeguarding and perpetuating it. The problem for Israel is that the majority of the Israelites throughout history have rejected their heritage in Yahweh and have instead tried to rely on false gods in the past, on legalistic, Rabbinic Judaism in the present, and, for those who are not religious Jews today, on their own intellectual, rational abilities to navigate Satan's world system. No one can do that because all are fallen, and the Israelites should have realized that better than anyone else, but they did not and they do not.

God gave the Israelites special revelation that no other people were privileged to receive. He related to them in terms of their origin as a people and a nation; He had a personal relationship with Israel. He created them to be a nation apart from all other nations of the world. They made commitments to Him at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:7), and He expected them to obediently respond to those commitments, but the sad fact is that the nation has a history of disobedience. They received revelation concerning blessing and cursing for obedience or disobedience (Lv. 26; Dt. 28), and those promises should have guided them throughout their history—but they did not.

Isaiah 48:1-2 ¹"Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel And who came forth from the loins [מִיָּדָם] of Judah, Who swear [שָׁבַע] by the name of the LORD And invoke [זָכַר] the God of Israel, *But* not in truth nor in righteousness. ²"For they call themselves after the holy city And lean on the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is His name.

Hear, or some variation thereof, is used 10 times in the first 16 verses of this chapter which emphasizes the importance of hearing what God has to say. The command to hear has connotations of understanding and obeying. Disobedience is evidence that hearing, in the sense this Hebrew word conveys, has not taken place. "Implicit here is the central idea of the OT: the living God has spoken, revealing himself in the medium of human speech. Such an astounding fact carries with it its own imperative. If it is true that God

has spoken, then he must be listened to" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 260]. "Hear this" or something similar is a common method of introducing a subject in Hebrew that is considered to be important and needs to be heard; therefore, careful attention to it is necessary. This is in the reflexive voice, "You yourselves hear this house of Jacob ..." which holds the house of Jacob responsible for the failure to do what Yahweh called them to do. If it was passive, which this verb form can also represent, the door is open to understanding this clause to be saying that the house of Jacob was subjected to operating in other than truth or righteousness by an influence operating outside of themselves, but that would be incorrect. They were operating outside the bounds of truth and righteousness of their own volition.

One problem for Israel is that the nation has been deaf in terms of its relationship with God throughout its history. If they had been hearing and obeying His Word all along, there would be no need to command them to hear at any time. One would think that they do not need to have a command issued to get them to listen to what God has to say to them, but they did need it, and they still need it.

Jacob, Israel, and Judah are all names intimately associated with the nation, and they identify the nation with the God of special revelation. Jacob, later named Israel, is the father of twelve sons who became the founding fathers of the twelve tribes. The name Israel became the name that united and identified the twelve tribes as a nation. A literal reading of this is, "... house of Jacob, the ones being called by [the] name of Israel ..." Israel identifies the people and the nation with Jacob, the patriarch.

Judah was the territory that eventually housed the capital, Jerusalem, which was the capital of the unified nation making it the seat of the Davidic throne, and it was the site of the Temple. They acknowledged the city as the holy city of God, but they defiled it with abominations and unrighteousness, and not only in the city, but in the Temple located on the Temple Mount in the city as well (cf. 2 Kings 23:24; 2 Chron. 36:14; Ezek. 5:11). The city has historical as well as eschatological significance.

Judah is also a reference to lineage and descendants. In other Scriptures, "the fountain of Judah" represents the same truth (Dt. 33:28; Ps. 68:26). "This is in keeping with the preeminence given to Judah throughout the Old Testament history" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:246].

The Israelites did, in fact, swear by the name of Yahweh, and they recognized Him as the God of Israel. The problem was the nation in general didn't really believe it. They performed the religious rituals, but their hearts were far from God. They did not acknowledge Him in truth and righteousness. We might characterize them as orthodox in appearance, but apostate concerning the true objects of their worship which was pagan idols. They were not operating in the truth because their true worship was being given to idols (cf. Ezek. 8), which is an overt rejection of the truth that is found only in Yahweh. They were not operating in righteousness because they rejected being holy, or set apart, for Yahweh's purposes. They were not simply being insincere about their relationship with God, they were rebelling against having the relationship with Him that they were created to have in the first place. They went their own way, and they were in nearly constant

rebellion against Him. Israel is, in fact, a holy nation by virtue of the fact that God has set the nation apart as His own possession, but the nation's experience does not match its position. In Israel's experience, they are very unholy, unrighteous, and operating in untruth, but in their position, they, as a nation, are holy, or set apart, to God.

Israel thinks very highly of being just another nation among all the other nations of the world. They are not, of course. Israel was not listed as a nation after Babel (Gen. 10:1-32), and Balaam proclaimed them "a people who dwells apart, and will not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). They reject their divinely granted station among the nations, and they continue to suffer divine temporal discipline, in part, because of that attitude. They thought, based on their physical descent from the patriarchs, that they were privileged in the sight of God, and therefore immune to divine temporal discipline simply by means of ancestry (cf. Mt. 3:9; John 8:39).

Swear, שָׁבַע, means to swear an oath which is a solemn promise, usually invoking a divine witness, regarding future acts or behavior on the part of the one swearing the oath and which often included penalties for failure. It is a serious offense to swear by the name of Yahweh and subsequently fail to carry out the oath, and there were divine prohibitions on such behavior. It was not forbidden to swear an oath in Yahweh's name, but it was to be done in the context of fidelity to the Mosaic Covenant.

Leviticus 19:12 ¹²"You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

Deuteronomy 10:20 ²⁰"You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

Invoke, זָכַר, means to remember or recall, to mention, to think about, or to acknowledge referring to a process of mentioning or recalling either silently, verbally, or by means of a memorial sign or symbol. I could be wrong about this, but I think that "invoke" is not the best English translation of this word (NASB, NET Bible, LEB, TANAKH, ISV). I don't think it is necessarily invalid in terms of the context, although that too may be in question, but the Hebrew word does not have that meaning. In English, invoke means to "cite or appeal to (someone or something) as an authority for an action or in support of an argument" [s.v. "invoke," *The Oxford American College Dictionary*]. While that is true of Yahweh and His relationship with Israel, it is not what the Hebrew word means, and that is not what is happening here. The Hebrew word does not mean that the Israelites were invoking the name of God to support something they were doing, instead it was a way of proclaiming their relationship with God as God's people, Israel. "Mention" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, LSV, YLT), "declare" (CSB), or "confess" (ESV) are all better English words to use, because they convey the meaning better according to the definition of this Hebrew word.

The point is that the Israelites were swearing oaths in the name of Yahweh and acknowledging Him as the God of Israel, but their hearts were far from Him. Of course, God knew that and He is calling them out on it, but history will prove that His entreaties for reconciliation were rejected.

It is important to remember that when this prophecy was being revealed, the Babylonian conquest of Judah and the captivity of the Israelites was still nearly two centuries in the

future. They did not accept the fact of their destruction as the book of the prophet Jeremiah attests. They did not accept the fact that God was calling them unfaithful. They did not accept the fact that their hearts were in rebellion and their worship was unrighteous. At the time Isaiah revealed these words, the Israelites were not too keen on acknowledging their issues with Yahweh; they thought everything about their relationship with God was just fine. A lot of commentators treat these verses as though the Israelites were in captivity at the time, but they were not [cf. Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1078]. Keil and Delitzsch believe this is spoken to "the Judean exiles in Babylon" [C. F. Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:461], and that is true, but only in terms of the future captivity.

At the time, the Israelites were in an idolatrous state of rebellion that would lead to their captivity, but their actual exile and captivity was still in the future. Unger correctly stated that these words were meant to comfort the exiles in the future when they were actually captives in Babylon, and he rightly observed that these words, when spoken, were to the "preexilic nation" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1273]. Smith also related these words to what has come before in the preceding chapters when the prophet was rebuking and warning the Israelites of his time that their rebellion was going to result in future judgment. Therefore, Smith is also relating these verses to the preexilic nation [cf. Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 318].

The use of the word "loins" in this verse is unusual but not unheard of. Clearly, the text is suggesting lineage and descendants given the context of Jacob, Israel, and Judah, but the word does not mean loins, and there are other Hebrew words that could have been used to mean "loins." The word, מַיִם, means water or waters referring to the liquid which is common to all life of various contents, amounts, sources, and so on. The literal rendering of the text is "and from [the] waters of Judah they came out." Numbers 24:7 is written in a similar way. Apparently, the text has to be slightly emended (changed) to arrive at that interpretation (*mimmē* to *mimmē'ē*) [cf. Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 316]. If I correctly understand this situation, the problem with that is that it involves changing the text to justify the interpretation.

The great privilege that Israel had in terms of being God's choice people was being squandered because the people were not living in truth and righteousness. Instead, they were in rebellion. "[A]t the broadest and deepest level these people do not deal with God with integrity and they do not walk before God in ways that are upright or truthful. They do not follow the covenant stipulations as they promised when they entered into a covenant relationship with God. What these wicked people actually do and what ought to be demonstrated in the righteous lives of these people are two completely different things. This accusation requires one to view the audience as people who had the right birthright, were part of the right social or ethnic group, and were associated with the right God, but unfortunately none of these right connections mattered because they did not have a profound impact on their lives" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 316-317]. This is a very sad commentary on Israel's relationship with Yahweh. There is a huge difference between what could have been and what actually exists. Of course, the nation has an

amazing future, but the process of getting there has been and will continue to be a dramatic and painful one.

The conjunction “for” in verse 2 represents the idea that although the Israelites appear to be loyal to the city that houses the Temple and which is the center of Judaism, they are not. Although they claim to rely on the God of Israel, the question then is, are they really depending on Him, the commander of the heavenly army, the Lord of hosts? The answer is no, they are not. Some theologians seem to believe that Israel was relying on Him, but given the history of the nation that only turned to God sporadically and only under the rule of a few faithful kings of Judah, that seems to be an untenable position. Young wrote, “Because the dwelling place of Yahweh on earth is holy, the people who worship Yahweh are therefore called holy. Upon this One they lean for support and sustenance, and recognize and confess that He is the eternal, true God” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:247]. I just want you to be aware that some people make this claim, but it simply flies in the face of Scriptures that reveal the opposite, and I would not give this line of thought much credence. This describes the believing remnant, but it cannot be an accurate assessment made of the nation as a whole.

Words are cheap, and the words of loyalty to Yahweh and of pious religious observance are obviously false. Even today, we speak to this truth concerning observing behavior rather than relying on what is said; i.e., we might say “don't listen to what people say, watch what they do,” or “actions speak louder than words.” The Israelites' actions did not match their words. It is not just Isaiah that highlights the national rebellion of Israel, the Word of God in its totality testifies to the unfaithful character of the nation, but it also testifies to the nation's reconciliation and restoration at some point in the future.

In these two verses, Israel's patriarchs are noted which also implies all the amazing work of God in establishing the nation. The relationship of Israel with Yahweh, the Creator God of the universe, is emphasized which implies the miraculous works that went into establishing the nation. Israel's present is noted which involves the holy city in which the Temple is located and wherein God resides who is identified here as Yahweh of armies. The point is being made that the nation has a relationship like no other nation with Yahweh and they should therefore listen to Him and obediently obey Him.

These two verses also identify a problem. Israel was not serious about doing God's will for them as a nation. They were not operating in truth and righteousness. They claimed to belong to Him with their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him. They did not recognize the greatness that belongs to Him, Yahweh of armies.

“Thus the introductory statements function to call attention to the disparity between what is and what ought to be. How can Israel realize all the potential that its great heritage and profound faith have to offer? By squarely facing the contradiction between their words and their actions that is at the heart of their professed faith, by paying careful attention to all that God's activities with them can teach, and by acting resolutely on what they learn” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 261]. Of course, national Israel has never done this, and the nation will not do it until the Tribulation ends, but once that happens it will be a permanent national condition (Jer. 31:33-34). No longer will it be only a small

believing remnant that is faithful, but the nation as a whole will be faithful when living under the auspices of the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:33–34 ³³... “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Next, Yahweh reminds the people that He has proclaimed things in the past that have come to pass. Because idols cannot do that, He is proven to be the one, true God as opposed to the false gods the Israelites have come to embrace.

For example, in Genesis 15, God promised Abraham that he would have a natural born son (v. 4), descendants too numerous to count (v. 5) who would be enslaved in a foreign land for four hundred years (v. 13), but would then be freed with many possessions (v. 14), and they would come back to possess the land of Canaan (vv. 16, 18-21). The fact that those things were predicted and came to pass in miraculous ways should have encouraged a knowledge of and a faith in Yahweh that never left the Israelites and was never doubted, neglected, and even abandoned, but it didn't. Of course, there are many other examples of prophecy and the subsequent fulfillment of it recorded in the Word of God.

Isaiah 48:3-5 ³“I declared [נָגַדְתִּי] the former things long ago And they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed [שָׁמַעְתִּי] them. Suddenly [פְּתָאִים] I acted [עָשִׂיתִי], and they came to pass. ⁴“Because I know that you are obstinate [קָשָׁה], And your neck is an iron sinew And your forehead bronze, ⁵Therefore I declared *them* to you long ago, Before they took place I proclaimed *them* to you, So that you would not say, ‘My idol has done them, And my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.’

In verses 3-5, declaring former things are contrasted with verses 6-8 which is a promise to declare new things from this time. The old things concern the history of Israel and God's role in declaring it and bringing it to pass. The new things will concern Israel and the world in general. The remainder of Isaiah has a lot to say about the Messiah and the Kingdom to come.

Why did God use prophecy in this way? The issue boils down to our sin nature. Mankind naturally rejects what is of God, and Israel is “exhibit A” in that regard. Despite being the recipients of divine revelation, despite the supernatural creation of the people and the nation, despite seeing prophecy fulfilled to the smallest details, despite the miracles that accompanied the Exodus, and despite God's presence in the Temple, they still rebelled against Him no matter what He did and no matter what they experienced under His divine care for the nation. Instead of recognizing God for these things, Israel's tendency was to give credit to their idols. Things predicted in the former times that were exactly fulfilled suddenly and without warning, reveal idols to be empty and worthless. “[T]he human spirit is not a blank page, equally ready to be inscribed with good or evil. It is, according to Isaiah and all the rest of the Bible, already blotted with a well-nigh incurable

insistence on our own way at all costs" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 262].

The sin nature, represented by a heart that is inclined to choose and do what is evil rather than what is good, drives mankind to be his own god. Men do not like to be subject to their Creator and submit to His sovereignty over their lives. The end result is that even when people know that God is operating in their lives, they would rather give credit to what they do for themselves, which, in this case, is make an idol to serve as their god.

Romans 1:24–25 ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

There is a dispute concerning the meaning of the former things. Some theologians believe it is a reference to things still to come, but when they do come, they will be first to take place. In this view, God is saying that He made known to Israel the first things of what is to come in the future. This is said to be a specific reference to the defeat of Babylon at the hands of Cyrus and the subsequent release of the Israelite captives to return to Israel [cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:247].

The grammar is inconclusive in terms of deciding this issue. The first clause of verse 3 literally reads, "The first [or former] [things] from then I told [or declared]." If the grammar does not decide this issue, then context must decide it. The larger context suggests that Israel's past history is in view. God predicted many things for the nation and many of them have come to pass proving His identity as the one true God, the only God who can accurately predict the future and see to it that it comes to pass.

Israel was mired in spiritual rebellion; idolatry was rampant. Isaiah had already revealed the foolishness of looking to idols made of materials that God, and God alone, had already created by means of the spoken Word (Is.44:9-20). Idols cannot accurately predict the future nor can they bring to pass that which their adherents claim to foresee, but the Creator God of Israel can do that. He alone has the ability to predict the future, and bring it to fruition. He has predicted things in the past to show the Israelites not only the powerless nature of idolatry, but to reveal to them the unsurpassed power and authority He alone possesses. God also brings things to pass in unexpected ways that is described as the outworking of God's "sovereign creativity" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 135]. He also acts at unexpected times. When things come to pass that God predicted long before anyone even thought of such things taking place, the rebels are deprived of the opportunity to give credit to their idols.

God declares, proclaims, and acts resulting in the declarations and proclamations going forth from His mouth and when He acts, they come to pass. The point to the use of these words is that God is a God of action. When He declares and proclaims something, He sees it through and it will come to pass. That is in contrast to dead idols that can declare or proclaim nothing, and they are powerless to cause anything to come to pass.

Declare, **נָגַד**, means to make known in this context. This is a causative verb form which informs us that God caused to make these things known to the Israelites. The verb is also a perfect verb which refers to completed action. God definitely made certain things known to the Israelites that He wanted them to know, to understand, and to heed. Comprehending and doing are part of hearing.

Proclaim, **שָׁמַע**, is the word basically meaning to hear, but in this context, it means to proclaim. This is due to the causative use of the verb meaning to listen, to proclaim, or to announce. This is an imperfect verb meaning incomplete action, and here it expresses continual action. God provided the Israelites with information He wanted them to know, and He told them over and over. For example, there has been a lot of repetition of information throughout the book of Isaiah. The proclamation has been specifically provided to Israel, the text reads, "to you." Gentiles are privy to these things because their revelation has been recorded in the Word of God, but He is dealing with Israel here.

To say that these things are coming from God's mouth, is to say that divine revelation has been provided. Divine revelation is the Word of God, and as such it is inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. Men have heard, because God has caused them to hear it, and those receiving the revelation are responsible for understanding and obeying it.

Act, **עָשָׂה**, means to do, to accomplish, and to complete. It primarily refers to performing an activity with a distinct purpose, a moral obligation, or a goal in view. It is particularly used in connection with God's commands. Whenever God decides that something He has predicted has reached the time decreed for it to be fulfilled, He will do it and He will see it through to completion.

There are many things God long before proclaimed will happen, and when they do take place, they will happen suddenly.

Suddenly, **פְּתָאֵם**, means suddenly, surprisingly, unexpectedly. The sense of the word is that things occur all at once, surprisingly, and all of a sudden. The word is primarily used to indicate God's judgment. The sense is not that something may happen immediately, but that when it does come to pass, it will happen without warning and all at once, in an instant pertaining to an extremely short period of time for a state or event. The reason that God acts suddenly and unexpectedly is because Israel is stubborn or hard.

The fact that things do not always happen immediately causes skeptical and unbelieving people to scoff at God's power to actually do what He has revealed He will do. God will see to it that His words are fulfilled in His own good time and not before. God's concept of time and man's concept of time are two different things. What seems like a long time to us, is soon on God's timetable. Peter addressed this issue in terms of the Day of the Lord. Those who refuse to believe the truth of the Lord's coming mock and denigrate the truth. It will suddenly fall on the world at some point in the future, and the world will be surprised when it does despite all the warnings provided in the Word of God.

2 Peter 3:3–4 ³Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For

ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

Obstinace, or stubbornness, was and still is a major problem for the Israelites. The description of their stubbornness is illustrative: their neck is an iron sinew and the forehead is of bronze. These figures of speech represent the nation's attitude throughout history. They are used often enough to get a good idea of the meaning, although any conclusions may be just a bit subjective.

Obstinate, קָשָׁה, means hard and its primary function is to describe something as hard. When used in this context, the word means stubborn, rebellious, and obstinate particularly when used in conjunction with the concept that the Israelites are a stiff-necked, hard-headed people. The root of the word refers to the effect of an overly heavy yoke, which is hard to bear, and secondarily to the rebellious resistance of the oxen to the yoke. "A frequent use of the word relates to the stubborn (stiff-necked) subjects of the Lord. Like rebellious oxen, calf-worshipping Israel quickly turned aside from the Lord's service" [Harris, Archer, Jr., Waltke, s.v. "קָשָׁה," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 818].

The concept of a stiff-necked people is used in the Old Testament at least 8 times, and in the New Testament, 1 time. It is interesting to note that Jeremiah referred to the concept 3 times. That is noteworthy because Jeremiah's prophetic ministry occurred immediately preceding the Babylonian destruction of Judah and the Temple. One of the reasons given for God's imposition of divine temporal discipline on Judah was their stubborn refusal to heed His Word which is related to the Israelites' stiff-necked, rebellious state of mind.

Jeremiah 19:14–15 ¹⁴Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD's house and said to all the people: ¹⁵"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to bring on this city and all its towns the entire calamity that I have declared against it, because they have stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words.'"

"The 'neck of iron' pictures unwillingness to bow in submission. The 'brazen forehead' represents an opinionated person with a closed mind, or a shameless person who persists in sin" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 135]. "[T]he Israelite nation was 'hard, stubborn,' and had a neck constructed of inflexible iron muscles that made it nearly impossible for it to turn to listen or change directions. Israel's forehead was so impenetrable that it metaphorically appeared like it was made of bronze. These metaphors of the nation's unresponsiveness were used again and again from Sinai to the exile. This is not some new or unusual characteristic of the nation" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 318-319].

The things made known in the past were made known specifically to Israel. The nation is without excuse in terms of knowing what God has revealed. They received God's revelation, they recorded God's revelation, and they are the custodians of God's revelation. Because Israel knows, God expects Israel to obey.

God launched a preemptive strike against the Israelite idolaters by declaring and proclaiming things to them that were destined to occur in the future. Idols cannot do that and only the God who created all that exists can do it. When God proclaimed and declared things that have yet to occur, the Israelites could not deny, marginalize, and even denigrate God's ability to predict the future by giving credit to their idols when those events actually occurred. The idols did not, could not, bring God's prophecies to pass.

The concept of idols in the form of graven and molten images is self-defeating. These things are all man-made out of materials already part of the creation and placed within the creation by the Creator God. Inert objects have no ability to do anything. They can't think, and they certainly cannot predict the future. They are not in any sense a god, except as they are assigned the significance and authority of deity by fallen man. The problem for mankind is that they can assign all the significance and authority to idols that their heart desires, but that does not grant a lifeless hunk of created material formed by man into something resembling the creation any power or any authority whatsoever.