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I Will Restore Your Judges

1: 24-31

I will restore your judges DIG: What is the purpose of the judgment awaiting those who reject the Lord in these verses? What is the future for those who repent of their sins? How will it be different from their present condition?

REFLECT: Why is Isaiah so hard-hitting here? How do you know when to use *shock treatment*, as he does, or a *gentle word* without skirting the main issue, as does Jesus with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-16?

God's lawsuit ended with His pronouncement of judgment on the guilty nation of Judah. Here ADONAI is pictured not only as one of the parties in the litigation, but also as **the Judge** who will decide what will happen to the guilty party. Those who are stubborn and refusing to repent, would be judged, but the repentant would be redeemed. **The point of this section is that the condition is so hopeless that God Himself must take the situation in hand.** The horror of the perversion that had taken place in Judah is emphasized by the mounting up of the divine titles that occurs like nowhere else in the book of Isaiah. Thus, ADONAI, the LORD of heaven's armies, the Mighty One of Isra'el, declares: **Ah, I will get relief from My foes and avenge Myself on My enemies (1:24a).** It is as though a tsunami of consequence loomed higher and higher, with the reader waiting for the inevitable crash. The combined effect of these names point to complete dominance. Who would be so foolish as to defy ADONAI, the LORD of heaven's angelic armies, the Mighty One of Isra'el? But He who is mighty to save can also destroy, even more so because the enemy was **the apple of His eye, Isra'el (Zechariah 2:8).** As Peter said: **For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God (First Peter 4:17).**

The announcement of the prophecy begins with a **woe**, which is normally more of a criticism than a threat, but here the threat is obvious. **Woe, I will get relief from my foes and avenge Myself on My enemies (1:24b).** God's judging will bring Him relief from the displeasure caused by His enemies, the utter un-repentance of Jerusalem and Judah. James said that **anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God (James 4:4).** Did Judah think that she could do anything she wanted and still remain

in favor with **the Mighty One of Isra'el?**



Both of these verses begin with the Hebrew verb *shuwb*, meaning *to return*. The English translation tends to obscure the duplication. In **1:25 ADONAI** will cause **His hand to return**, whereas in **1:26 He** will cause **their judges to return**. **God** declared that **He** would **turn His hand against** them, declaring: **I will turn My hand against you**. But then a hopeful note begins to materialize: **I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities (1:25)**. As for the nation itself, **their impurities** will be removed. **He** uses the example of metal being purged of **impurities** by fire. This analogy is expanded in **Ezeki'el 22:18-22**. **God** lists the results of this purification. First, **Isra'el** will now gain righteous leadership as in the days of old. **I will restore your judges as in the days of old** when **David** and **Solomon** were **kings, your counselors as at the beginning (1:26a)**. **ADONAI** uses the term **judges**, not the kind that sit in the courts of law, but the kind of **judges** that are described in the book of **Judges**, like **Deborah (Judges 4 and 5)** seen here to the left (art by Sarah Beth Baca: see more information on Links and Resources).

Secondly, **Zion** itself will become the center of **righteousness** rather than the center of wickedness that it had become. **Afterward you will once again be called the City of Righteousness, and the Faithful City (1:26b)**. **Jerusalem** will return to the values of King **David's** reign, and the early part of **Solomon's**. Regardless, **Isaiah** saw a time when **God's people**, having passed through fire of purification, would relate to **Him** and to one another as **they** should.

Thirdly, then **the prophet** details the contrast between the fate of the remnant and the wicked. **Zion**, or the people of **Jerusalem, will be redeemed with justice, and her repentant ones with righteousness (1:27)**. **Zion** is a favorite term of **Isaiah**, occurring 47 times in the book, 29 times in **Chapters 1-39** alone. The only other book in which **Zion** occurs so often is in the Psalms, where it appears 28 times. The word **redeemed** used here means to be **redeemed** by the payment of a price. *Go'el*, the word for redemption (see my commentary on **Ruth, to see link click [Ax - Ruth and Bo'az on the Threshing Floor](#)**), does not appear at all prior to **Chapter 43**, but occurs 22 times afterwards. **Isaiah** does not say what that price is here; but in **Chapter 53** he will point out that the price is **the Messiah's** blood (see the commentary on **Exodus [Bz - Redemption](#)**). So here **the LORD** is laying down a basic point that will be developed later: **Zion's** redemption will only come with the payment of a price.

In contrast to **the righteous**, however, **rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake ADONAI will perish (1:28)**. Along with the redemption of **Isra'el** there must also be the destruction of **the wicked**. **The rebels will perish**, after being **disgraced** forever due to their idol worship. **They will be ashamed** that **they** were ever involved in idol worship near **the sacred oaks in which they delighted; they will be disgraced because of the idols in the gardens that they had chosen**. **Isaiah** prophesied that **they** would become **like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water (1:29-30)**. **The wicked** of the earth will one day be exposed. Although once strong like a **mighty man, they will become like tinder, and their work** of making and worshipping idols, like a **spark**, will destroy **them**. **They will burn both** by destruction of the Babylonian army, as well as eternal judgment, **with no one to quench the fire (1:31)**.

The wicked are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand up to the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous (Psalm 1:4-5). They are merely the **chaff** from wheat, good for nothing but burning. It is ironic that in making **themselves** apparently self-sufficient, **they cut themselves off from God**, the only true source of life. This is also a valuable lesson for you and me today.