

Isaiah 3:1-5 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

Isaiah 3:1
Isaiah 3:2
Isaiah 3:3
Isaiah 3:4
Isaiah 3:5
Isaiah 3:6
Isaiah 3:7
Isaiah 3:8
Isaiah 3:9
Isaiah 3:10
Isaiah 3:11
Isaiah 3:12
Isaiah 3:13
Isaiah 3:14
Isaiah 3:15
Isaiah 3:16
Isaiah 3:17
Isaiah 3:18
Isaiah 3:19
Isaiah 3:20
Isaiah 3:21
Isaiah 3:22
Isaiah 3:23
Isaiah 3:24
Isaiah 3:25
Isaiah 3:26

Isaiah 3:1 For [behold](#), the [Lord GOD](#) of [hosts](#) is going to [remove](#) from [Jerusalem](#) and [Judah](#) both [supply](#) and [support](#), the [whole supply](#) of [bread](#) And the [whole supply](#) of [water](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): Behold now, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will take away from Jerusalem and from Judea the mighty man and mighty woman, the strength of bread, and the strength of water,

Amplified: FOR BEHOLD, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff [every kind of prop], the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.

NET: Look, the sovereign LORD who commands armies is about to remove from Jerusalem and Judah every source of security, including all the food and water, ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: Now the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth is about to deprive Jerusalem and Judah of resources and provisions -- all reserves of food, all reserves of water- ([NJB](#))

NLT: The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will cut off the supplies of food and water from Jerusalem and Judah. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: For, lo, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, Is turning aside from Jerusalem, And from Judah, stay

and staff, Every stay of bread, and every stay of water.

For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water:

- Famine - Ge 12:10; 26:1; 43:1; Lv 26:19, 26; Dt 28:23,24,38; 2Sa 21:1; 1Ki 17:1-12; 18:2; 2Ki 8:1,2; Ps 105:16-[note](#); Ps 107:34-[note](#); Isa 3:1, Jer 14:1, 15:2; Lam 4:9, 10, Ezek 14:13, 14, 15, 16, 21; Joel 1:10,11,16, 17, 18, 19, 20; Am 4:6

Recall that Isaiah prophesied from about **740-680BC** and the prophecy in this chapter was fulfilled in the defeat of Jerusalem and Judah by the Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in **586BC**. In this section God will judge His people by taking away from them everything they were trusting, including food and water, leaders and soldiers, and judges and prophets.

It should be noted that not everyone agrees that the events described in Isaiah 3 were completely fulfilled in 586BC but has a yet future fulfillment. For example, **John MacArthur** has the following note...

The fall of Jerusalem in 586BC was only a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. The final fulfillment awaits the times just prior to Christ's second coming. against the Lord. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word or Logos](#))

Motyer sums up this section noting that...

The message of the whole section is solemn in the extreme. Divine judgment on society begins to manifest itself in the disappearance of solid leadership (Is 3:1, 2, 3) and the appearance of immature, capricious leaders (Is 3:4). Society becomes divided (Is 3:5a), the age-gap opens up (Is 3:5b), values are at a discount and those who should be despised take the initiative (Is 3:5c). An air of despair dominates elections (Is 3:6, 7). All this arises from moral and spiritual causes. It is not the result of failures of policy but of speaking and acting against the Lord and provoking him; blatant sin inviting its just reward (Is 3:8, 9, 10, 11). (Motyer, J. A. The Prophecy of Isaiah. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press)

For - This conjunction explains why Isaiah commanded his readers to...

Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed? (Is 2:2-note)

Why should they not regard or trust in man? Because God is preparing to bring judgment on Jerusalem and Judah. Isaiah's point is that in view of the divine judgment to men, whether rulers or skillful enchanters, etc, his readers would be utterly foolish to trust in their counsel or guidance = "**Stop regarding man...** !" God's judgment will fall on the nation as a whole, but in this next section Isaiah directs special attention to the leading men and women.

John Calvin comments that **Isaiah**...

continues with the same subject he was dealing with at the close of the previous chapter. He warns the Jews that their wealth, no matter how great it may be, will not prevent God's wrath from burning up all their defenses. It follows from this that they are behaving like madmen when they put their trust in weapons of war and in armor. ([Commentary on Isaiah - Volume 1](#))

Delitzsch and Driver write that

the universal proclamation of judgment (in Isaiah 2) concentrates itself more especially on Judah and Jerusalem. The current of discourse now bursts the banks confining it in strophic form, -- though otherwise it flows with freedom, -- and the exhortation of Is 2:22 not to trust in man, which rests on what has gone before, becomes the stepping-stone from the universal proclamation of judgment to the more special one in Is 3:1... That the announcement of judgment begins anew is evident even from the name of God (**the Lord the LORD of hosts**) with which Isaiah everywhere (Is 1:24, 10:16, 10:33, 19:4) introduces the judicial dealings of God. Trust in man was the great sin especially prevailing in the times of [King Uzziah](#) and [King Jotham](#) (**Ed**: Sounds very contemporary doesn't it? "In God we Trust is being slowly but steadily replaced by "In man we Trust!" Woe to the !" is the liberal cry in America!, cp Pr 14:34, Ps 33:12-[note](#)). (Paradoxically) The national glory at that time carried within it the **Wrath** of Jehovah, which was about to break out even in the days of [King Ahaz](#), and during [King Hezekiah's](#) reign was merely restrained, not changed. The outburst of wrath Isaiah here proclaims, describing how Jehovah is throwing down the Jewish State into ruins by removing from it the supports of its existence and the pillars of its fabric (**Ed**: Beloved, as you read this comment regarding ancient

Judah, does it not cause you to shudder and even weep for America, founded on great pillars of Christian truth, pillars that are undergoing repeated attacks to remove any vestige of God from our culture, a removal which the Almighty is allowing?) In **supply and support** the full idea is placed in the foreground; the two nouns, which are but one and the same word in different forms, and these determined by the gender (Mic 2:4, Nahum 2:11, Zeph 1:15, 2:1, Ezek 21:3), serve to generalize the notion. Both are "instrumental" forms, and signify that which is used in giving support... Of the various means of support, bread and water are first name, not in a figurative sense, but as the two absolutely indispensable conditions, and the basis of human life. Life is supported by bread and water; it goes, as it were, on the crutch of bread, and "to break the staff of bread" (Lv 26:1ff; Ezek 4:16, 5:16, 14:13, Ps 105:16) is thus equivalent to physical destruction. The fall of the Jewish State accordingly begins with the withdrawal from it by Jehovah of all support afforded by bread and water, all stores of both. And this was actually fulfilled; for, both in the Chaldean (Babylonian, 586BC) and in the Roman periods (Jerusalem and the Temple besieged and destroyed in 70AD), Jerusalem perished under dreadful famines such as were threatened... on both occasions, the inhabitants were reduced to such extremity that women devoured their own children (Lam 2:20; Josephus, Bell.Jud. 6.3, 4). ([Isaiah 3 Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

Behold (hinneh) calls attention to the text and directs the reader to give special attention. Whenever you encounter this interjection know that the LORD desire our undivided attention for what follows. In this case He is about to move in judgment **to remove!** This should attract any sane person's full attention.

Isaiah uses **hinneh** (behold) frequently throughout his prophecy in an attempt to engage his reader's attention - Isa. 3:1; 5:7, 26, 30; 6:7, 8; 7:14; 8:7, 18, 22; 10:33; 12:2; 13:9, 17; 17:1, 14; 19:1; 20:6; 21:9; 22:17; 24:1; 25:9; 26:21; 28:2, 16; 29:8, 14; 30:27; 34:5; 35:4; 36:6; 37:7, 11, 36; 38:5, 8, 17; 39:6; 40:9f; 41:15, 27; 42:9; 43:19; 47:14; 48:7, 10; 49:12, 22; 51:22; 52:6, 13; 54:11; 58:9; 59:9; 60:2; 62:11; 65:1, 6, 13f, 17f; 66:12, 15

John Calvin comments that...

Behold (hinneh) is employed not only to denote certainty, but to express the shortness of time, as if Isaiah caused wicked men to be eye-witnesses of the event; for it frequently happens that men who do not venture openly to ridicule the judgments of God will nevertheless pass them by, as if these judgments did not relate to them or were still at a great distance, reasoning "What is that to us?" or "If they ever happen, why should we be miserable before the time comes? Will it not be time enough to think of those calamities when they actually do occur?"

Wicked men have a tendency to downplay the judgment aspect of God by digging lurking-places for the descriptions of His judgment and because of this fact Isaiah presses his readers more earnestly, so that they may not imagine that the judgment of God is far in the future or vainly expect that His hand of judgment will be relaxed (as if God would forget what He promised to carry out!) ([Commentary on Isaiah - Volume 1](#)) (English modernized by me)

The Lord God of hosts (Adonai Elohim Sabaoth) (cp study of **Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts or of armies**) places emphasis on God's power which should leave the reader with a sure understanding that the judgment prophesied will be carried to completion.

Note that the **NAS** and **ESV** do not have the word "LORD" (**Jehovah**) but the **KJV** and others add this Name so the full title of God in those versions reads "**the Lord** (adon), **the LORD** (Jehovah) **of hosts**".

As noted below, **Isaiah** uses this compound Name of God more than any other OT book (although it is also common in Jeremiah's prophecy). This compound Name of God is found first in Isa 1:24, where "piles" on another divine title **the Mighty One of Israel**. This name describes God as the Master of all and thus Who can easily accomplish the specific aspects of the removal described in the following passages.

Lord ([0136](#)) (**adon**) means the one who is the sovereign master, the One Who has supreme power and authority and is often used in place of **Yahweh** which many Jews felt was too holy to utter, and emphasizes the supreme authority or absolute mastery of God over all things, animate and inanimate.

The **NET Bible** renders the Name of God in Is 3:1 as "**the sovereign LORD**". The **NET Bible note** adds that...

The title pictures God as the sovereign King Who has at His disposal a multitude of attendants, messengers, and warriors to do His bidding. In some contexts, like this one, the military dimension of His rulership is highlighted. In this case, the title pictures Him as one Who leads armies into battle against His enemies. (Note on Isa 1:9)

From a practical standpoint, this compound Name makes it clear that it is the providential working of a just God and not "bad luck" that will bring the removal of **supply and support** from **Jerusalem and Judah**.

The Lord God of hosts - This Name of God is found 34x in 33 verses in the NAS (2Sa 5:10; Ps. 59:5; 69:6; 80:4, 19; 84:8; 89:8; **Is 1:24; 3:1, 15; 10:23, 24; 19:4; 22:5, 12, 14, 15; 28:22**; Je 2:19; 15:16; 38:17; 44:7; 46:10; 49:5; 50:25, 31; Amos 4:13; 5:14, 15, 16; 6:8, 14; 9:5)

The virtually identical compound Name, **the Lord, the God of hosts**, is use 7 times in the OT - 1 Ki 19:10, 14; Is 10:16, 33; Je 5:14; 35:17; Ho 12:5

Calvin writes that the reason Isaiah refers to God in this passage as..

the Lord and Jehovah of Hosts is that the majesty of God might terrify their drowsy and sluggish minds. God Himself has no need of titles, but our ignorance and stupidity must be aroused by perceiving His glory as symbolized by His titles. ([Commentary on Isaiah - Volume 1](#)) (English modernized by me)

Jerusalem and Judah - Isaiah is not addressing the Church which was a mystery in the Old Testament. The truths in Isaiah have many applications to the modern Church but the direct recipient of this prophetic exhortation is Jerusalem and Judah (**Judah and Jerusalem** are specifically addressed 11 times in Isaiah - Isa 1:1, Isa 2:1, Isa 3:1, Isa 3:8, Isa 5:3, Isa 7:1, Isa 22:2, Isa 36:7, Isa 37:10, Isa 40:9, Isa 44:26).

Ironside opens his comments on **Isaiah 3** writing...

THIS third chapter continues along the same line as chapter two, but makes it very definitely clear that it is Jerusalem and Judah which GOD has in view above all others when He speaks of coming desolation and unsparing judgment. The covenant people and the one-time holy city had gone so far from the path of obedience that GOD Himself prepared them for the vengeance decreed by weakening their means of defense. ([Isaiah 3 - Judah's Fallen Condition](#))

Supply and support - Note the emphasis is on not just most of the supply but the **whole supply** which will make daily existence difficult. Supply and support are related Hebrew nouns and thus the idea is that supports of every kind would be removed. The thoroughness of God's judgement is pictured by our saying in English that "the rug was pulled out from under my feet"!

Clearly Isaiah is speaking of a time of famine as well as disruption of the social fabric of the society. J Vernon McGee has an interesting observation that...

There are thirteen famines mentioned in the Word of God, and every one of them is a judgment from Him upon the nation of Israel. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

Calvin writes that Isaiah prophetically warns that Jerusalem and Judah...

will have the whole produce of the harvest taken from them, so that they will perish from famine (cp Lv 26:26; Ezek 4:16). Immediately in a similar manner he addresses their military strength ("support"), and all that relates to the good order of the state. Hence we may infer that the Jews boasted of the prosperity which they at that time enjoyed, so as to entertain a foolish belief that they were protected against every danger. But Isaiah threatens that not only the whole country, but Jerusalem herself, which was the (symbolic) invincible fortress of the nation, will be exposed to God's chastisements. The idea is that "The wrath of God will not only fall on every part of the body, but will pierce the very heart." ([Commentary on Isaiah - Volume 1](#)) (English modernized by me)

The question arises as to when did God remove both supply and support for Jerusalem and Judah? Clearly this reached an apex in the Babylonian exile but in another sense this prophecy has been repeated in the years subsequent to the Babylonian exile.

Supply ([04937](#)) (**mish'en**) refers literally to a support and figuratively as here to that which serves as a protector or provider of sustenance. The word is used figuratively as that on which one relies. For example, David in 2Sa 22:19 says that in the day of calamity, **Jehovah** (Yahweh) was his effective support. Here in Isa 3:1 **mish'en** is used of the basic physical life supports such as bread and water, that God will remove from Jerusalem.

Young makes an interesting observation regarding **supply and support** noting that these...

Two Hebrew words are employed, one masculine and the other feminine, and thus the thought of totality is presented. Every kind of stay and staff will be removed. A similar phenomenon appears in the Arabic language: "he has not either male or female lamb," meaning he has nothing (Hariri) and "male and female wild

beasts,” every kind of wild beast. By using both masculine and feminine the prophet exhausts the category; the thought is that every kind of support—all support whatever—will be removed. ([Young, Ed: The Book of Isaiah - 3 Volume Commentary. Eerdmans Pub. 1992-hardcopy](#) or [Logos](#) or [Wordsearch](#))

Mish'en - 4v in OT - 2Sa22:19, Ps 18:18, Isa 3:1, Isa 10:20

Clarke notes that

The Hebrew words **mish'en... mish'enah** come from the same root *shaan*, to lean against, to incline, to support; and here, being masculine and feminine, they may signify all things necessary for the support both of man and woman.

Support ([04938](#)) (**mish'enah**) refers to a support such as a walking-stick or staff (Elijah's staff 2Ki 4:29, 30, 31). In Ps 23:4 it refers to the shepherd's staff (with a crook) which is a comfort and guide the straying sheep. The idea of both **mish'en** and **mish'enah** is something one leans on.

Mish'enah - 11v in OT - Ex 21:19 Nu 21:18 Jdg 6:21 2Ki 4:29, 4:31, 18:21 Ps23:4 Is 3:1, 36:6 Eze 29:6, Zec 8:4

In **Leviticus** God warned Israel if she disobeyed (cp Lv 26:18)...

I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze **Ed**: figures of speech picturing incredible drought = No rain and no crops). (Lv 26:19)

When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven **Ed**: One oven would suffice to bake the bread for ten families), and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied. (Lv 26:26)

Compare **Deuteronomy and Ezekiel**...

The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed... You shall bring out much seed to the field but you will gather in little, for the locust will consume it. (Dt 28:23, 24, 38)

Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, behold, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they will eat **bread** by weight and with anxiety, and drink **water** by measure and in horror (Ezekiel 4:16)

Whole... whole ([03605](#)) (**kol**) occurs over 5000x in the OT (percentage wise most frequently in Deuteronomy [*"with the **whole** heart, the **whole** soul, and with **all** your might*"] and Ecclesiastes [*"everything is vanity"*]) and means the totality of something. When accompanied by a negation, **kol** acquires the meaning "no." **Kol** is all inclusive and speaks of the totality of something, in this case the supply of sustenance, which Israel (much like America today) took for granted in the good times that existed when Isaiah was prophesying. Note the repetition of this word **kol** serves to further emphasize the totality of the reality and severity of this prophetic warning.

Bread ([03899](#)) (**lehem** as in the famous "house of bread" = "Bethlehem" = Beth = house + lehem) means bread and more generally speaks of food and/or anything God has provided for nourishment.

Calvin paraphrases this first clause as...

God will take away every help and assistance by which you think that you are upheld, so that nothing whatever may be left to support you.

Ed Young has a good argument that...

The fulfillment is not to be sought in the Babylonian exile but in all the judgments which from that time on came over Israel and which still rest on that unfortunate people (cf. comments on Isa 3:12). Israel's whole history is seen at a glance, as though the entire drama were completed in the first act. The exile only began the fulfillment (there were still prophets in the exile); it did not complete it. ([Young, Ed: The Book of Isaiah - 3 Volume Commentary. Eerdmans Pub. 1992-hardcopy](#) or [Logos](#) or [Wordsearch](#))

Isaiah 3:2 The **mighty man** and the **warrior**, the **judge** and the **prophet**, the **diviner** and the **elder**, (**NASB: Lockman**)

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): the great and mighty man, the warrior and the judge, and the

prophet, and the counsellor, and the elder,

Amplified: The mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the [professional] prophet, the one who foretells by divination and the old man, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

NET: the mighty men and warriors, judges and prophets, omen readers and leaders, ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: of hero, warrior, judge, prophet, diviner, elder, ([NJB](#))

NLT: He will destroy all the nation's leaders--the heroes, soldiers, judges, prophets, diviners, elders, ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: Hero and man of war, judge and prophet, And diviner and elder,

The mighty man and the warrior, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder

- Is 2:13, 14, 15; 2Ki 24:14, 15, 16; Ps 74:9; La 5:12, 13, 14; Amos 2:3)(Is 9:15; Ezek 8:12; 9:5)

So from **bread** and **water**, Isaiah turns to Jerusalem and Judah's sources of security (**mighty man... warrior**) and leadership, both spiritual and secular. These are the categories of people who in general gave Judah a sense of safety and institutional/governmental order. These were categories of individuals that the laity depended on and their removal would lead to virtual anarchy and radical upheaval of the entire order of society.

Motyer sums up this list of leading men noting that...Isaiah heaps up titles, moving broadly from the national (judge and prophet) to the local (elder and craftsman), and mixing the legitimate with the illegitimate (counsellor and enchanter). This creates an impression of the total collapse of the command structure of society. The dissolution of society and the abandonment of true religion is always the signal for superstitions and an obsessive interest in prognostication, hence the reference to the soothsayer or 'fortune-teller'. (Motyer, J. A. The Prophecy of Isaiah. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press)

Warrior... judge - God will remove both the military and civil support, for the judges made decisions and undergirded to functioning of the government. These "stays" would be completely removed.

Delitzsch comments that

as the State, under Uzziah and Jotham, had become a military one, the prophet in both verses begins with the mention of military officers. ([Isaiah 3 Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

Calvin writes that regarding **the mighty man... warrior...**

Of these he threatens that the Jews will be wholly deprived, so that they will neither have wisdom or bravery at battle, nor military forces abroad. He is not careful to attend to order, but is satisfied with giving a short abridgement, and mixes one subject with another. He begins with men of war, into whose hands was committed the defense of the country. God sometimes takes them away by death, and sometimes by making them soft and effeminate. The latter is more frequent, so that posterity degenerates from the bravery of ancestors, and those who were formerly courageous become, in process of time, cowardly and unfit for war. But we see also that the former sometimes happens, in consequence of which the boldest men suddenly lose heart...

The word **judge** stands for every kind of governors; and it is certain that by **prophets** are meant every kind of teachers. Accordingly, he threatens that the civil government will be set aside, and that instruction will be at an end, and that thus the Jews will be destroyed; and, indeed magistrates and teachers hold the same place in the commonwealth that the two eyes do in the human body. ([Commentary on Isaiah - Volume 1](#)) (English modernized by me)

We encounter an almost verbatim fulfillment of the **removal of the leading men** by the Babylonians...

Then he (Nebuchadnezzar) led away into exile **all** (note repetition of "all") **Jerusalem** and **all** the captains and **all** the **mighty men** of valor, ten thousand captives, and **all** the craftsmen and the smiths (**Ed:** Both the Assyrians and the Babylonians had the practice of removing leaders and influential people from the lands they conquered which would effectively minimize any native resistance due to lack of leadership). **None** remained except the poorest people of the land. (compare (Isa 39:6; Mic 4:10) So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to

Babylon; also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 And all the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon. (2Ki 24:14, 15, 16)

The prophet - Although the context is not entirely clear, it is possible Isaiah is referring to false prophets such as those who saw false visions (Ezek 13:9 - see below). The prophet Ezekiel himself was taken in the second siege of Jerusalem in 597BC and although removed from Judah and Jerusalem still functioned as a true prophet of God.

As an aside according to rabbinical tradition Isaiah was sawn asunder (cp He 11:37) by order of [Manasseh](#) (697-642BC), and after his death the prophetic voice was heard no more until the reign of Josiah.

Young comments that...

the mention of **prophet** Isaiah shows how serious the deprivation will be that is to come upon the nation. It was through the **prophet** that the will of God was made known, and when the people are left in ignorance of divine revelation their plight is tragic indeed. A famine of hearing the words of the Lord is more serious than a famine caused by lack of food. A contemporary of Isaiah had said, "**Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord**" (Amos 8:11 - **Ed**: A shepherd layman who prophesied primarily to the Northern Kingdom circa 755BC). (Ibid)

The diviner ([07080](#)) (**qasam**) is a verb and means to practice divination wherein one seeks to foresee or foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge usually by the interpretation of omens or by the aid of supernatural powers. All the major prophets condemned divination (Is. 44:25; Jer. 27:9; 29:8; Ezek. 13:9).

The **KJV** rendering of "**prudent**" misses the essence of the word. The **NIV** renders it **soothsayer**.

Qasam - 20x in OT - Deut. 18:10, 14; Jos. 13:22; 1 Sam. 6:2; 28:8; 2 Ki. 17:17; Isa. 3:2; 44:25; Jer. 27:9; 29:8; Ezek. 13:9, 23; 21:21, 23, 29; 22:28; Mic. 3:6, 7, 11; Zech. 10:2 and is rendered in the NAS as conjure(1), divination(2), divine(2), diviner(2), diviners(7), divining(1), practice(1), practiced(1), use(1), uses(1), utter divinations(1).

Isaiah's inclusion of **diviner** and **enchanter** (Is 3:3) does not signify that he approved of these practices. Unfortunately, the nation had come to "approve" of them and to depend on even these evil, godless methods for their "wisdom" and their survival. **Isaiah** wrote disparagingly about Babylon trusting in this kind of activity (Is 47:12).

Hosea (circa 710BC prophesying primarily to the northern kingdom, cp Isaiah 740-680BC speaking to the southern kingdom) issued a similar prophetic warning that...

the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar (**Ed**: This has continued for almost 2000 years - the Temple having been destroyed in 70AD!), and without ephod or household idols (**Ed**: The Jews largely abandoned their pagan images and teraphim when the Babylonians took them into captivity). (Ho 3:4)

God's word is very clear regarding **diviners/divination**...

There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses **divination**, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer... For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to **diviners**, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so. (Dt 18:10, 14)

Balaam a diviner met a fitting end...

The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor, the **diviner**, with the sword among the rest of their slain. (Joshua 13:22)

God clearly stated through **Ezekiel** (who was prophesying to Judah and Jerusalem)...

So My hand will be against the **prophets** who see false visions and utter lying **divinations**. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord God. (Ezekiel 13:9)

Zechariah (a post-exilic prophet) writes that...

the teraphim speak iniquity, and the **diviners** see lying visions, and tell false dreams; They comfort in vain.

Therefore the people wander like sheep (**Ed**: false dreams lead to false steps and to real affliction!). They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd. (Zechariah 10:2)

Mark Phelps writes that **divination** is...

The art of determining the future or ascertaining divine will. An important aspect of life throughout the ancient Near East, divination was not a mystical practice, but a process based upon empirical observation and cause/effect, practiced by trained specialists. (Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Page 349. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans)

Unger adds that...

Divination, the art of obtaining secret knowledge, especially of the future, is a pagan counterpart of prophecy. Careful comparison of Scripture will reveal that inspirational divination is by demonic power, whereas genuine prophecy is by the Spirit of God. The biblical attitude toward divination is distinctly hostile (Dt. 18:10, 11, 12). ([Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Elder ([02205](#)) (**zaqen** possibly from **zaqan** = beard) (171 uses in OT and 9 uses in Isaiah = Is 3:2, 5, 14; 9:15; 20:4; 24:23; 37:2; 47:6; 65:20) refers to older individuals and can convey the ideas of individuals who were of dignity, rank, privilege, experience, or authority, as well as those qualified for specific leadership roles. Refer to the article in [Holman's Dictionary](#) ([Easton](#); [ISBE-NT](#) [ISBE-OT](#)) for more in depth discussion of "elders", as used in the Old and New Testaments.

The **Septuagint** translates **zaqen** with **presbuteros** (see word study) which referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. **Presbuteros** is transliterated into English as "presbyter" (a leader in one of the Jewish communities--especially a member of the Sanhedrin--or of the early Christian churches) and from which the word "priest" (from Late Latin presbyter) was derived. Presbuteros in the secular Greek culture referred to older men with seniority to serve as ambassadors to other states and as advisors within the political community or in the management of public affairs. So these were men of "ripe age" and experience to whom was committed the direction and in the New Testament the government of individual churches. It should be emphasized that in the context of its Biblical use the concept of elder had less to do with age per se than with the quality of one's spiritual character (reputation is what others think about you but character is what those most intimately associated know is really true about you) and possession of the ability to teach. Simply being older, including even being older in the faith, does not by itself qualify a man for leadership in the church.

Isaiah 3:3 The [captain](#) of [fifty](#) and the [honorable](#) * man, the [counselor](#) and the [expert artisan](#), and the [skillful enchanter](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): the captain of fifty also, and the honourable counsellor, and the wise artificer, and the intelligent hearer.

Amplified: The captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the expert craftsman and the skillful enchanter. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

NET: captains of groups of fifty, the respected citizens, advisers and those skilled in magical arts, and those who know incantations. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: captain, dignitary, counsellor, architect, soothsayer. ([NJB](#))

NLT: army officers, honorable citizens, advisers, skilled magicians, and expert enchanters. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: Head of fifty, and accepted of faces, and counsellor, and the wise of artificers, And the intelligent of charmers.

The captain of fifty and the honorable man, the counselor and the expert artisan, and the skillful enchanter

- Ex 18:21; Dt 1:15; 1Sa 8:12

- Honorable - Jdg 8:18) (Enchanter - Ex 4:10,14, 15, 16)

Delitzsch comments that the names of the leaders of the military and of society

are here intermingled without any attempt at arrangement, because the mighty and magnificent State, properly regarded is but a heterogeneous mixture of Judaism and heathenism, and the godless glory will become a mass of utter confusion when the wrath of Jehovah bursts forth.. ([Isaiah 3 Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

The captain of fifty - see 2Ki 1:8, 2:16, 17, 1Sa 8:12. This term designates a specific leader of 50 men. Compare this Hebrew phrase to the Roman term **centurion** (from Latin = *centurio* = century), a military officer who commanded a hundred men.

The honorable - This is a Hebrew idiom which more literally reads "the ones lifted up with respect to the face" (cp **'highly respected'** = 2Ki 5:1 and **"accepted of face"** = 2Ki 5:1YLT)

Counselor ([03289](#)) (**ya'ats/ya'as**) (74x in the OT and 17x in Isaiah = Is 1:26; 3:3; 7:5; 9:6; 14:24, 26, 27; 19:11, 12, 17; 23:8, 9; 32:7, 8; 40:14; 41:28; 45:21) is a verb meaning to advise or counsel. It's most "famous" use is in the description of the Messiah (Is 9:6 "Counselor").

Expert (**chakam**) wise, skilled, experienced.

Artisan (**charash**) craftsmen, engravers (basically describes those skilled in some craft such as metalwork, 1Chr 14:1, woodwork 1Chr 14:1, stonework Ex 28:11). There may however be an additional nuance intended because the word for **artisan** is also used later by Isaiah to describe those **skilled at making idols** (Is 40:19, 20, 44:11, 12, 13, 45:16)! There is no question that they will be removed from the land of Judah! (These will be carried away - See 2Ki 24:14, 16, Je 24:1, 29:2)

The skillful enchanter - More literally this reads "the wise with respect to magic", describing one who could whisper or mutter magical "formulas" (one instructed in whispering) in clear defiance to God's holy law (see below). Some feel this represents those who attempt to communicate with the dead (spiritism) (cp Is 8:19)

Skillful ([0995](#))(**biyn**) primarily speaks of understanding or insight and in this context indicates that these men had specialized knowledge that they effectively implemented.

Enchanter ([03908](#)) (**lahas**) was one skilled in magic arts and/or charming, eg, the act of charming snakes through soothing sounds or whispering (Eccl 10:11, Je 8:17). It is interesting that this same Hebrew noun (**lahas**) is the same word used to describe the **amulets** worn by the haughty women (Is 3:16-note) in Isa 3:20-note.

The **diviner** (in Is 3:3) and **enchanter** in this passage were both clearly prohibited by God, Moses recording that...

There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you. (Dt 18:10, 11, 12)

Later in **Isaiah** God describes the utter and complete impotency of divination, witchcraft, sorcery, astrology, etc, in the time of His judgment ...

But these two things will come on you suddenly in one day: Loss of children and widowhood. They will come on you in full measure In spite of your many **sorceries** (Heb = *kesep* = occult practices, magic), In spite of the great power of your **spells** (Heb = *heber* = magical spell or incantation, as in Dt 18:11 above, cp Ps 58:5). (Is 47:9)

Stand fast now in your **spells** (Heb = *heber* = magical spells or incantations) and in your many sorceries (Heb = *kesep* = occult practices, magic) with which you have labored from your youth; Perhaps you will be able to profit, Perhaps you may cause trembling. You are wearied with your many counsels; Let now the **astrologers**, those who **prophecy by the stars**, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon (Is 47:12, 13)

Isaiah 3:4 And I will **make** mere **lads** their **princes**, and **capricious children** will **rule** over them, ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And I will make youths their princes, and mockers shall have dominion over them.

Amplified: And I will make boys their princes, and with childishness shall they rule over them [with outrage instead of justice]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

NET: The LORD says, "I will make youths their officials; malicious young men will rule over them. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: I shall give them boys for princes, raw lads to rule over them.' ([NJB](#))

NLT: Then he will appoint children to rule over them, and anarchy will prevail. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And I have made youths their heads, And sucklings rule over them.

And I will make mere lads their princes, and capricious children will rule over them

- 1Ki 3:7, 8, 9; 2Chr 33:1; 34:1; 36:2,5,9,11; Eccl 10:16

Delitzsch writes that...deprived of its proper foundation and torn from its grooves, the kingdom of Judah falls a prey to the most audacious despotism. ([Isaiah 3 Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

I will - In context, this is clearly the LORD Himself speaking these words of judgment. While it is difficult to discern when the LORD ceases speaking in the following verses, certainly by Is 3:8 Isaiah is once again speaking (for he refers to the LORD in the third person).

Mere lads - Nature abhors a vacuum and so does leadership. So when God takes away those things (and people) in which Judah had placed their trust and depended upon for military security and social order, this "vacuum" would be filled by those who were inadequate, incompetent and ill equipped to lead individuals (**mere lads**).

We have a clear record of this pattern when the kingdom was torn from Solomon's son, **Rehoboam**, who refused the counsel of the elders and instead listened to the foolish counsel of young men. (see 1Ki 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). Contrast Solomon's attitude at the inception of his rule after David (1Ki 3:7).

As **Delitzsch** notes it is

generally a misfortune when the king of a country is a lad (Eccl 10:16), (but) it is doubly so when the princes or magnates surrounding and advising him are also youths or youngsters, in the bad sense of the term. ([Isaiah 3 Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

Lads ([05288](#)) (**naar**) refers to a boy or young man and the **Septuagint** translates it with **neaniskos** which refers to a relatively young man or youth.

Capricious children will rule over them - The **NET Bible** ([ref](#)) has "malicious young men will rule over them". The **NLT** paraphrases it - "anarchy shall prevail". The **Amplified** has "with childishness shall they rule over them [with outrage instead of justice]".

Capricious ([08586](#)) (**ta'alulim**) means wantonness (wanton describes one hard to control, one who is playfully mean, one who is maliciously and unnecessarily cruel or destructive, one who acts without justification). It describes those who are unstable, capricious and thus unpredictable.

Constable observes that...

Wicked King **Manasseh** began ruling over Judah when he was only 12, and Kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, who followed him later, proved capricious. ([Isaiah 3 - Expository Notes](#))

The **NET Bible note** adds that...

The immediate context makes clear the fact that they are mere youths. The coming judgment will sweep away the leaders, leaving a vacuum which will be filled by incompetent, inexperienced youths. ([NET Bible Isaiah 3:4 - Scroll to bottom of page](#))

Solomon writes...

Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning. (Eccl 10:16)

This prophecy was literally fulfilled when the [Manasseh](#) [circa 697-642BC] began his reign over Judah at age 12. (see 2Chr 33:1,2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Clarke adds that...

This also was fully accomplished in the succession of weak and wicked princes, from the death of Josiah to the destruction of the city and temple, and the taking of Zedekiah, the last of them, by Nebuchadnezzar.

Young has an excellent word for America...

How good God is to give a nation worthy rulers. May we ever appreciate such and constantly render our gratitude to Him for them. May we pray that He will spare us from the calamity of unworthy and unable rulers. Prayer must always be made for the officers of state. ([Young, Ed: The Book of Isaiah - 3 Volume Commentary. Erdmans Pub. 1992-hardcopy](#) or [Logos](#) or [Wordsearch](#))

Isaiah 3:5 And the [people](#) will be [oppressed](#), [each one](#) by [another](#), and [each one](#) by his [neighbor](#); The [youth](#) will [storm](#) against the [elder](#) and the [inferior](#) against the [honorable](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And the people shall fall, man upon man, and every man upon his neighbor: the child shall insult the elder man, and the base the honourable.

Amplified: And the people shall be oppressed, each one by another, and each one by his neighbor; the child shall behave himself proudly and with insolence against the old man, and the lowborn against the honorable [person of rank]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.

NET: The people will treat each other harshly; men will oppose each other; neighbors will fight. Youths will proudly defy the elderly and ruffians will challenge those who were once respected. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: People will be ill-treated by one another, each by his neighbour; the young will insult the aged, and the low, the respected. ([NJB](#))

NLT: People will take advantage of each other--man against man, neighbor fighting neighbor. Young people will revolt against authority, and nobodies will sneer at honorable people. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And the people hath exacted -- man upon man, Even a man on his neighbour, Enlarge themselves do the youths against the aged, And the lightly esteemed against the honoured.

And the people will be oppressed, each one by another, and each one by his neighbor; The youth will storm against the elder and the inferior against the honorable:

Delitzsch comments that

then the people become like the government: passions are let loose, and all restraints of modesty are burst asunder. ([Isaiah 3 Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

In chapter 9 **Isaiah** records a similar refrain...

By the fury (ideas expressed by this Hebrew noun = a surpassing measure or excess) of the LORD of hosts (Jehovah of the armies = a warrior) (See [Jehovah Sabaoth](#), [LORD of hosts](#)) the land is burned up, and the people are like fuel for the fire. No man spares his brother. And they slice off what is on the right hand but still are hungry, and they eat what is on the left hand but they are not satisfied. Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm. Manasseh *devours* Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, and together they are against Judah. In spite of all this His anger does not turn away, and His hand is still stretched out. (Is 9:19, 20, 21)

The following passages further amplify Isaiah's picture of a divisive spirit and absorption in self sustenance - Is 11:13; Je 9:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; 22:17; Ezek 22:6,7,12; Amos 4:1; Mic 3:1, 2, 3,11; Zec 7:9, 10, 11; Mal 3:5; Jas 2:6; 5:4)

Oppressed (05065)(nagas) to oppress, to be pressed or harassed, to drive (be a taskmaster), to exact (to call for forcibly, to force or compel, to extort, to demand as a right, to insist upon), to exert demanding pressure. The root conveys the sense of exertion of demanding oppressive pressure for payment or labor. Although **nagas** is a verb, the participle is used to describe a taskmaster or slave driver. For example in Ex 3:7 the taskmasters caused affliction of God's people, but in the present context the affliction is not from the Egyptians, but from one Jew to another illustrative of the total breakdown of society in Judah and Jerusalem.

Delitzsch comments that **nagas**

signifies to treat as tyrant or taskmaster. The meanest selfishness then stifles all nobler motives; one becomes a tyrant over another, and rude insolence takes the place of reverence, which, by the law of nature, as well as the Torah (Lv 19:32) and custom, is due to the aged and superiors from boys and those in the humbler ranks... When there is disregard of the distinctions due to age and rank, the State in a short time becomes a wild and waste scene of confusion. ([Isaiah 3 Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah](#))

Nagas - 23v in the OT - Exod. 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13f; Deut. 15:2f; 1 Sam. 13:6; 14:24; 2 Ki. 23:35; Job 3:18; 39:7; Isa. 3:5, 12; 9:4; 14:2, 4; 53:7; 58:3; 60:17; Dan. 11:20; Zech. 9:8; 10:4.

Isaiah use of **nagas** in chapter 58 helps us get a sense of the meaning of this verb where God answers the peoples' question regarding **fasting**...

Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' (**Jehovah answers**) Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, and **drive hard** (**nagas**; Lxx = *huponusso* = to sting, prick and so to prod or goad) all your workers. (Is 58:3)

In another use of **nagas** we read...

Now the men of Israel were **hard-pressed** (**nagas**) on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food. (1Sa 14:24)

The **NAS** translates **nagas** as drive hard(1), driver(1), exact(2), exacted(1), hard-pressed(2), oppressed(2), oppressor(4), oppressors(2), overseers(1), ruler(1), taskmaster(1), taskmasters(5).

The **Septuagint** translates **nagas** with the Greek verb **sumpipto** (literally = fall together) which means to collapse (Lk 6:49), to experience inward breakdown (collapse). The sense in the context seems to be that the people shall experience an inward breakdown as all the pillars of society are removed by Jehovah.

Grogan writes that...

The people were showing too great a tendency to put their trust in human beings (Is 2:22). The prophet warned them that the objects of their trust were to be removed. Those traditionally respected—"the old," "the honorable," (Is 3:5)—will be violently replaced by the manifestly inadequate and by the base oppressor. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books - Grogan, G. Isaiah. Zondervan Publishing](#) or [Pradis = computer version](#))

Each one by another - Literally "man against man".

Each one by his neighbor - Literally "A man against his neighbor".

The youth will storm against the elder - A description of chaos and anarchy (cp Jdg 21:25)

Storm (proudly defy) ([07292](#)) (**rahhab**) means to press one's plea or be in a state of contention with someone, especially describes verbal or legal strife. **Rahab** denotes a loud-mouthed, tempestuous and then even arrogant attitude. The idea is to act fiercely against, to act boisterously, to act arrogantly, to press upon as in Pr 6:3 (importune).

Rahab - 4x in the OT - Ps. 138:3; Pr 6:3; Song 6:5; Isa. 3:5

The **Septuagint** translates **rahhab** in this verse with the verb **proskopto** (word study) which literally means to strike against (Mt 4:6), to make contact with someone in a bruising or violent manner (Mt 7:27 "burst against), to cause offense or displeasure. **Proskopto** in its literal use pictures a traveler who bumps against an obstacle and is caused to stumble.

Young adds that...

When respect for age goes, moral anarchy is at hand. Youths will storm against, that is, they will act insolently

or will press on against the aged. Respect for old age had been coupled in the law with the fear of God, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord" (Lv 19:32). When all authority passes, respect for age also passes. One evidence of the degeneration of a government and people is seen in the manner in which the aged are treated. What is here pictured is a war of all against all. (Ibid)

Inferior (07034)(**qalah**) is from a root which signifies the lowering of another's social position and is frequently (as in this verse) used as the antonym of "glory and honor" (**kabod**). The idea is the person who is lightly esteemed or even despised.

Veritable "nobodies" are coming against those who are Judah and Jerusalem's to be respected.

Young rightly observes that...

Disrespect for age and for those deserving of respect is a sign of pure barbarism. In such times, when the government itself is no longer responsible, the lowest classes gain the upper hand. It is a time when neither life nor property is safe, and when the decencies of life are constantly violated. Good government is one of God's best gifts to a sinful race. How great then is the sin of those who refuse to concern themselves with their responsibilities as citizens of the state! (Ibid)

Comment: Beloved, does this not make you weep over modern American pop culture which in so many ways displays gross disrespect for parenteral authority (cp children suing their parents for what in former days was deemed acceptable corporeal punishment!)

The **Septuagint** translates **qalah** in this verse with the adjective **atimos** meaning literally without honor and thus those who are disrespected, despised or considered insignificant (in this context) in the Judean society.

Qalah - 6v in OT - Dt 25:3; 27:16; 1Sa 18:23; Pr 12:9; Is 3:5; 16:14 and rendered in the NAS as degraded(2), dishonors(1), inferior(1), lightly esteemed(2).

Honorable (03513) (**kabod**) is from a root word meaning weighty or heavy and here speaks of a "weighty" person in society, one who is honorable, impressive, worthy of respect and which is the meaning in >50% of uses. **Kabod** is used to describe God in Is 3:8 (literally = the eyes of His glory)

The **Septuagint** translates **kabod** in this verse with the adjective **entimos** (en = in + time = honor, respect, reverence, esteem) meaning literally "in honor" and thus those who are respected, esteemed to be somebodies of considerable worth or those who are highly regarded.

The inferior against the honorable - "the lightly esteemed against the honoured" (YLT) The NET Bible has a picturesque rendering of this phrase = "*rifraff will challenge those who were once respected*". **Honor** will take a backseat in this society in which the moral order is turned upside down.

The picture is that of a society whose underpinnings are broken and which is therefore in total disarray. This is inevitably what happens when God removes the pillars of a society. Beloved, can we as believers in Jesus Christ read these passages and not lament and mourn over the current state of affairs in America, where we have seen prayer and Bible reading removed from schools for over 3 decades. Are we not reaping the bitter harvest from these God rejecting seeds as we witness the foundations of a once strong moral structure crumbling before our very eyes? I cannot write these words without thinking of God's encouraging words of mercy in the midst of His warnings of wrath when He declared...

If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name **humble** themselves and **pray**, and **seek** My face and **turn from** their wicked ways (= repentance - see word study), **then** (once all 4 conditions are met!) I will **hear** from heaven, will **forgive** their sin, and will **heal** their land. (2Chr 7:13, 14)

God was speaking to Israel in this passage but the principle surely applies to His Church. Dear believer, are you praying this prayer urgently and incessantly for America? If not please consider making this prayer a priority, for in the absence of a heaven sent revival, America is destined for far more difficult times as we continually remove every vestige of God from our society.