

Isaiah 1:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth:
they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

Analysis

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. This shocking statement expresses God's intense displeasure with Israel's religious observances. The Hebrew *sane* (נָפַשׁ, "hateth") is strong language denoting not mere disappointment but active hatred. "My soul" (*nafshi*, נַפְשִׁי) indicates God's deepest being—His entire person rejects their worship.

"New moons and appointed feasts" (*chodesh mo'ed*, חֹדֶשׁ מוֹעֵד) refers to the religious calendar God Himself instituted in the Mosaic law (Leviticus 23, Numbers 28-29). These included Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and monthly celebrations. The tragedy is that observances designed to facilitate communion with God had become "a trouble" (*torach*, טֹרַח)—a burden He found wearisome.

The threefold expression—"hateth," "trouble," "weary"—emphasizes divine revulsion. The phrase "weary to bear" uses *la'et* (לָאֵת), suggesting exhaustion from carrying a heavy load. How could worship exhaust the infinite God? The answer lies in context (vv. 11-17): their worship was divorced from justice and righteousness. Formal religious observance while practicing oppression, violence, and injustice created an unbearable contradiction. This passage anticipates Jesus's denunciation of Pharisaical hypocrisy (Matthew 23:23-28) and establishes that God desires mercy and knowledge of Him more than sacrifice (Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8).

Historical Context

Isaiah prophesied in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (740-681 BCE), a period of political turmoil and spiritual decline. Despite periods of reform (particularly under Hezekiah), Judah maintained external religious practice while tolerating injustice, idolatry, and moral corruption. The people assumed that performing prescribed rituals guaranteed divine favor regardless of their ethical conduct.

This attitude reflected a fundamental misunderstanding of the covenant. God established the sacrificial system and festivals not as ends in themselves but as means to relationship with Him and expressions of covenant faithfulness. The sacrifices pointed forward to ultimate atonement through Christ, while the ethical commands revealed God's character and required communal holiness. Israel separated ritual from righteousness, creating a religious veneer over corrupt hearts.

The historical context included widespread economic exploitation (Isaiah 1:23, 3:14-15, 5:8-10), judicial corruption, and religious syncretism. The wealthy oppressed the poor while scrupulously maintaining temple worship. Isaiah's indictment shattered any notion that ritual compliance could substitute for covenant obedience. This same pattern appears throughout biblical history and church history—God consistently rejects worship divorced from justice, mercy, and humility (1 Samuel 15:22, Amos 5:21-24, James 1:27).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How might modern religious practices become burdensome to God when divorced from genuine heart transformation?

2. What does this passage reveal about the relationship between worship and justice in God's eyes?
3. In what ways can we examine whether our religious observances please God or merely maintain external forms?
4. How does God's hatred of hypocritical worship challenge comfortable cultural Christianity?
5. What steps can we take to ensure our worship flows from hearts committed to justice and righteousness?

Interlinear Text

חֲדָשִׁיךָ ׀	וּמוֹעֲדֶיךָ	שִׂנְאָה	נַפְשִׁי	הִי ו	עַל י
Your new moons	and your appointed feasts	hateth	my soul	H1961	H5921
H2320	H4150	H8130	H5315		
לֹטְ בָח	נָלֵא יָתִי	נִשְׂאָ:			
they are a trouble	unto me I am weary	to bear			
H2960	H3811	H5375			

Additional Cross-References

Amos 5:21 (Parallel theme): I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Isaiah 43:24 (Parallel theme): Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

Isaiah 61:8 (Parallel theme): For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Isaiah 7:13 (Parallel theme): And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

Amos 2:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

