

Isaiah 1:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Analysis

Isaiah indicts leaders as 'rebellious' (Hebrew 'sarar'—stubborn, defiant) and 'companions of thieves,' exposing systemic corruption. Bribery perverts justice, while neglect of orphans and widows violates covenantal obligation to the vulnerable (Deuteronomy 10:18). Leadership failure compounds covenant unfaithfulness, as those charged with modeling righteousness lead in rebellion. This anticipates Jesus' denunciation of religious leaders (Matthew 23) and underscores that authority entails heightened accountability (James 3:1).

Historical Context

Judean rulers, meant to shepherd God's people (Ezekiel 34), exploited their position for personal gain. Archaeological evidence from the period reveals a growing wealth gap, consistent with Isaiah's charges.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do leaders today similarly pervert justice through self-interest?
2. What responsibility do we bear to advocate for the voiceless in our communities?

Interlinear Text

אָהָב	כָּלֹו	גְּנָבָּיִם	שָׁבָּרִים	סּוֹרְרִים	וּמְבָרִים	יְמָנִים	שָׁבָּרִים	אָהָב	
every one loveth	H157	H3605	H1590	H2270	H5637	Thy princes	are rebellious	and companions	
					H8269				
וְשִׁפְטָוּ	לְאָ	יְתָוּם	שְׁלֹמָנִים	וְרַדְךָ	רַדְךָ	שְׁחִידָה			
they judge	H8199	H3808	H3490	H8021	H7291	and followeth	after rewards	not the fatherless	
					H7810				
אַלְיָקְמָן	וְאַבְנָתָה	לֹא	אַלְמַנְתָּה	הַ	וְאַבְנָתָה	וְאַבְנָתָה	וְאַבְנָתָה	אַלְיָקְמָן	
come	H413	H935	H3808	H490	H7379	neither doth the cause	of the widow		

Additional Cross-References

Micah 7:3 (Judgment): That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

Exodus 23:8 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Zechariah 7:10 (Parallel theme): And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Isaiah 3:14 (Judgment): The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

Luke 19:46 (Parallel theme): Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Malachi 3:5 (Judgment): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

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