

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Vital Biblical Topics

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Visiting the Sins of the Fathers

1. Introduction:

I often read passages in scripture which puzzle me: and I spend months, even years wondering about their meaning. I know that the Almighty is a just God and that He loves the human race infinitely more than any human can imagine. But there are passages in the Bible which puzzle me no end. Here are two such passages: both directly related to the ten commandments and the character of God:

Exodus 20: 4: *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:*
5: *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;***
6: *And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."*

Exodus 34: 5: *"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*
6: *And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,*
7: *Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.***
8: *And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."*

2. Does that sound fair?

On first reading these texts seem to be saying that Jehovah, the Almighty God of Israel punishes children, **down to the third and fourth generation**, for the sins of their fathers. Is this the case? **Is the Judge of all the earth guilty of punishing the innocent?**

Sometime ago we received a letter from Nigeria. I'll quote one small section of the letter, because it concerns this issue of whether or not Yahweh punishes children for the sins of their forefathers.

"Elder, you know for sure that you are a great part of my life. There is an experience I want to share with you, to hear your advice. Sometime in August 1995, when with a friend, I was offered a free drive to

Onitsha. I never knew the man was a ‘**prophet**’ until we got to his church... Later the man said that the lack of progress in my family was **a result of abominations committed by our great grand fathers**. He warned that greater hardships would force me back to the village, unless certain things which I understand as ‘**ritual sacrifices**’ were done, to separate me from the curse and repercussions. He said that what looks like a cobweb covered me spiritually; and that I could never progress unless it was removed. He said it would cost me some **three thousand Naira to shelve the cobwebs on me and another four thousand Naira to do some ritual work in our family ...** In my own family there is no atom of peace.”

The letter then goes on to tell of the family's problems. It continues with the following:

“Elder, all these problems and difficulties seem to prove the prophet right. I know Satan is a big liar! What I saw on that day, to me was ‘**spiritism**.’ Can we suffer because of the sins or abominations of our great grand fathers, when I do not even share the same faith as them? Please answer me this question for I am in a dilemma.”

The Question is: Does Yahweh punish children down to the third and fourth generation for the sins of their fathers? That is what this poor African is asking. Had he directed his question to an ancient Israelite, the answer would probably have been ‘**Yes, Yahweh does punish children for the sins of their parents:**’ and they would have quoted the above texts to prove it. In fact ancient Israel coined a saying which went like this: ***‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are on edge.’***

3. Yahweh Explains

Is that what the Judge of all the earth is currently doing: punishing children for the sins of their parents? Today we are going to find out. When a man's words seem at odds with his professed character, the best policy to adopt, if you want to clear up any misunderstanding, is to ask him to explain himself. By explaining himself in ‘**other words**,’ the misunderstanding is usually cleared away. Listen to Yahweh's own words in Ezekiel chapter 18 as He clears up any misunderstanding people may have about Him on this matter concerning the punishment of the innocent.

Ezekiel 18: 1: *“The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,
2: What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, **The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?**
3: As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.
4: Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sinneth, it shall die.**”*

Verses:

19: *“Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? **When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.**
20: **The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.**
21: *But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.
22: All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.
23: Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?
24: But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.
25: Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?
26: **When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.**
27: **Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath****

committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

28: *Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

29: *Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?*

30: *Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."*

These verses make it perfectly clear that **the Most High does not punish children for the sins of their parents or grandparents**. Every man, woman or child, the Almighty quite plainly says, will be rewarded or punished for his/her own actions. In other words, Yahweh has refuted the charge that He punishes children for the sins of their fathers. He doesn't do that. He does not punish one generation for the sins of another. That is what He plainly tells us in (Ezekiel chapter 18).

4. "Visiting" ... What does this word mean?

What, then, does the Almighty mean when He says "**visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the third and fourth generation?**" If He doesn't **punish** children for the sins of their parents, then what does He mean when He says He "**visits the iniquity of the fathers on the third and fourth generation.**" Are they not one and the same thing?

THE ANSWER, I believe, is: **NO** they are not the same thing. There is subtle difference between direct punishment and the inevitable repercussions of actions which are judged to be iniquitous. The Hebrew word translated '**visiting**' is **paqad**. It means to look over, or after, to inspect, to judge. In other words God will inspect and examine the results on future generations of parental iniquity. He will take note of how each generation influences the next. Let me explain further.

Iniquity has far reaching effects: effects that continue from generation to generation: effects that are already detailed in Yahweh's law: irreversible effects which are the divinely ordained outcome of disobedience. Iniquity triggers a terrifying series of harvests which overtake the sinner, his immediate family and succeeding generations: and though the innocent are not actually being punished for their parents sins, they are, nevertheless affected by them: just as a drunken driver could cause chaos to his fellow travelers; or a drug addict cause pain and suffering to his immediate family. In short the **repercussions of iniquity are legion**. They have

- **Immediate effects** on those near and dear to us: that is on our children, their children, our friends and even the community we live in. Yahweh will not hold back or annul the immediate repercussions or effects of iniquity. They will be '**visited**.' They will be experienced by our children and their children. They will be '**visited**.' Every sinful word, every sinful deed, every sinful motive directly influences ourselves and others; particularly our children. If you commit iniquity, the curses mentioned in Yahweh's law will most certainly descend upon you and those who issue from your loins. These immediate *repercussions, outcomes or harvests of iniquity* are inevitable and irreversible. See **section 6** where the outcomes of iniquity (the divine curses) are listed. These curses will certainly fall on sinners and nothing in the universe will stop them.
- **Long-term effect - eternal death** to the sinner himself. The Bible also teaches that the Almighty will, because of His Son's death on Calvary, offer you salvation from the long-term effects of iniquity - eternal death!

What do these awesome facts mean?

They mean this: our behaviour as parents has a direct effect on our children's welfare down to the third and fourth generation. Oh what a fearsome responsibility we parents have! Pause and consider those eternal facts. **It is impossible to exaggerate even the short-term effects of iniquity.**

5. What is Iniquity?

Iniquity is a deadly spiritual poison which causes unimaginable sorrow and pain. **Iniquity is blatant sin:** sin

that will not be given up, even in the face of repeated warnings. Unlike ordinary sin, which is often committed in ignorance, iniquity is sin which is engaged in with full knowledge of Yahweh's law: knowledge which has been set aside **with a measure of defiance, even contempt**. In short: **iniquity is open defiance of the Almighty's law**, Here are some examples of people guilty of iniquity.

The Iniquity of Sodom

Isaiah 3: 9: *“The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and **they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.**”*

Balaam's Iniquity

Balaam's iniquitous advice resulted in tens of thousands of Israelites defying God. Here is the sad record of how Israel fell into sin after taking Balaam's sinful advice.

2 Peter 2: 16: *“But was rebuked for his **iniquity: the dumb ass** speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.”*

Numbers 25: 1: *“And Israel abode in Shittim, and **the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.***

2: And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3: And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

4: And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

5: And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.

6: And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

7: And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

8: And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

*9: **And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.**”*

The Iniquity of Ancient Israel

Leviticus 26: 39: *“And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.*

40: If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

*41: And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; **if** then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:*

42: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

*43: The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: **because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.**”*

Jesus will reject the Workers of Iniquity

Matthew 7: 21: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

22: Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?
23: And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, **ye that work iniquity.**”

Yahweh Will Punish Iniquity

Isaiah 13: 9: *“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.*

10: For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

*11: **And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.***

12: I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

*13: **Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.**”*

6. Blessing and Cursing

The book of Deuteronomy (the 5th book in the Bible) is one of the most important in all Scripture. Yet comparatively few Christians study it. It begins with a record of the Almighty's commandments, which were reiterated by Moses just before Israel entered the Promised Land. The word '**Deuteronomy**' means '**a repetition of the law**' - **Yahweh's law**. Towards the end of the book in chapters 27 and 28 you will find a detailed list of how Yahweh responds to acts of righteousness or iniquity: how He "**visits the iniquity of the fathers on the third and fourth generation:**" how the sins of the fathers affect their offspring several generations down the line. In other words you will see the long-term results or harvests of sin. The list is long and includes the following:

Cursing for Disobedience ... Deuteronomy

Idolatry	27:15
Deceit	27:18
Illicit sex	27:20-23
Bribery	27:25
Violence	27:24
Disrespect for parents	27:17

Blessing for Obedience ... Deuteronomy

In the city and field	28:3
Fruit of the womb	28:4
Basket and Store	28:5
National Defence	28:7
Employment	28:8
A good name	28:9
Spiritual prosperity	28:10-12

These curses and blessings come as a direct result of human behaviour. They are visited, they apply to all nations and communities. Whether a person is Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist or whatever, all peoples are included in these divine judgments. Disobedience and obedience will in every case result in the above mentioned curses or blessing. No one is excluded. Therefore, let no person, family, community or nation delude themselves into thinking that they will somehow bypass the inevitable consequences of iniquity - blatant sin. **That will never happen. It cannot happen: because the Almighty does not change.**

Malachi 3: 6: *“For I am the LORD, **I change not;...**”*

He reacts to iniquity in this day and age exactly as He did in the days of Moses. To be sure, when people sin in ignorance, He will often suspend sentence and wink at their ignorance. (Acts 17: 30)

Acts 17: 30: *“And the times of this ignorance **God winked at**; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”*

When those same people are informed about their sins: when they know what His law commands, and defiantly continue in iniquity, then the divine judgments outlined in Yahweh's law will most certainly follow. **Remember His words:**

Exodus 34: 7: *“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **and that will by no means clear the guilty**; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”*

7. Example of Visiting Iniquity on Subsequent Generations

Here is an example to better understand how iniquity can have horrifying repercussions on succeeding generations.

King David

King David was guilty of iniquity when he committed adultery with Bath-sheba, whose husband Uriah he later had murdered. The Most High was extremely angry with David who should have known better. Though the king repented of his sins and was forgiven, **the immediate harvest of his iniquity remained to be reaped.** Yahweh's message through the prophet Gad to David was as follows:

2 Samuel 12: 9: *“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.*

10: Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11: Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12: For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.”

The Bible tells us that the prophet's words were fulfilled to the letter: murder, rape and adultery overtook the family of king David.

8. Is Salvation Possible?

Is there any escape for a person or family caught up in the iniquities of their ancestors? Can a prophet, priest or pastor (for a fee) lift the divine curse and stop the inevitable harvest of iniquity? If God has blessed you, can someone come along and curse you? Or if Yahweh has cursed you, can someone come along and remove His curse: and turn His curse into a blessing? The prophet Balaam answers our question. He tells us that no man can reverse the Almighty's blessing or curse.

Numbers 23: 20: *“Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and **I cannot reverse it.**”*

Believe it or not the whole human race is currently suffering for the sins of its ancestors: all the way back to Adam and Eve. The repercussions of the sins of our rebellious ancestors - **and we all have them** - has brought all mankind to the point of total disarray and chaos. The curses listed in the book of Deuteronomy are currently falling on all nations! Billions of people are currently reaping a whirlwind harvest sown by their iniquitous ancestors. Troubles of every kind beset the whole human race. There just isn't any nation, city, town, village or community which can honestly say that those curses are not apparent in its midst. The whole world is under a terrible curse! **That is a fact which only the blind cannot see.**

Salvation is Possible

I am happy to report, nonetheless, that the situation is not hopeless. There is a way of escape. Salvation is possible; but only on a **personal basis** and then only on Yahweh's terms. Remember His promise: ***“keeps mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”***

This means that though a person is unable to escape the immediate consequences of ancestral iniquity: poverty, physical or mental disability etc., he/she can, through **faith** and **obedience**, enter the arena of mercy, blessing and eternal life. That is what salvation is all about. That is what Yahweh promises.

Ezekiel 18: 20: ***“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. 21: But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.”***

Yes, **salvation** is possible.

9. Removing the Curse

Do we need to pay the Almighty or some self-styled prophet to break free from the repercussions of ancestral iniquity? **The answer is no we do not.** All the Almighty's gifts come **‘free of charge.’** His love, His forgiveness and His gift of life are all provided **‘free of charge’** through His Son Jesus Christ. The price for our salvation has already been paid by **Yeshua the Messiah**. He died to set us free from the curses listed in Yahweh's law: and when we accept him we start out on the road of blessing. **This means that any so-called prophet, priest, prelate or pastor who charges a fee for saying a few prayers and assumes that he/she is able to somehow reverse a divine curse is himself/herself committing iniquity and deceiving the people who pay him/her.** Read the story of the prophet Balaam in (Numbers chapters 22-24). Balaam was totally incapable of reversing Yahweh's blessing on Israel. By his own confession he said: **“I cannot reverse it!”** Sad to say, just like Balaam of old, many Christian leaders, **wolves in sheep's clothing**, have turned the church into a den of thieves and made **‘counterfeit Christianity’** the most destructive force in humanity's history.

The only way to escape the curses listed in God's law is to accept **salvation by faith:** and then to demonstrate that **faith in acts of obedience.** In the process of time the **incoming blessing will far outweigh the curses brought about by ancestral iniquity.** The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the only way to escape eternal death is through **faith** and **obedience.** See the **Gospel Library** for information on the Everlasting Gospel.

10. Summary

Truth concerning the Almighty God is invaluable. **It is the most priceless commodity on the Internet.** This **A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada** article briefly explains a little-known Truth about divine curses brought on by **iniquity** which affect our children down to the third and fourth generation: Truth all the world should pay heed to. The article is summarized as follows:

- **Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel** is “merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving **iniquity** and **transgression** and **sin**, and that will by no means clear the guilty; **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.**”
- **He is a just and fair Judge.** He will not condemn anyone for the sins of another. You have His word for it. But neither will He reverse the short-term effects of iniquity on the environment and on our progeny.
- **Iniquity is blatant transgression of Yahweh's law.** It is sin that will not be given up in spite of repeated warnings: sin that is engaged in with open abandon.
- **Iniquity** brings irreversible consequences (curses) on future generations. **The book of Deuteronomy details the astonishing but little-known consequences of iniquity.**

- **No prophet, priest, or pastor** can reverse the consequences of **iniquity**: and those who charge a fee for pretending to do so **are charlatans of the worst kind. Keep clear of them.**
- **Only faith and obedience will attract the Almighty's blessing.** This is the only way one can break loose from the curses of iniquity that currently engulf the human race. True believers are blessed of God and no one can reverse His blessing. The mercenary prophet Balaam's futile attempts to reverse Yahweh's blessing prove this fact.
- **Salvation from eternal death is only possible on a personal basis: through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Yahweh's commandments.** Every other route of escape, however popular it may appear to be, **will end in disillusionment.**

AMEN!

In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.

Elder: *Max W. Mader*

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