

Unfaithful Isra'el

3: 6-18

DIG: To what does God compare the northern kingdom of Isra'el and the southern kingdom of Judah? The people of the north were attacked and deported by the Assyrians in 721 BC, a century before Jeremiah. Why did God allow that to happen? What did ADONAI hope the people of Judah would do when they saw what happened to Isra'el? What did Judah do? Why was Isra'el more righteous than unfaithful Judah? What is Jeremiah's message to the northern Kingdom? What does the one . . . two represent? How does Yirmeyahu envision the future for a united Kingdom? Why will the ark of the Covenant be irrelevant in those days?

REFLECT: How would you feel if your spouse was unfaithful? Would you take him or her back? If so, under what conditions? What does that tell you about God's love that He wants to take Isra'el back? Do you have trouble forgiving yourself for something you're done? Does it help knowing that God forgives you? Is something more needed? ADONAI is not impressed with mere external conformity. Is there any area of your life where you just try to impress others and have not inwardly acknowledged your guilt?

During the reign of Josiah

During the reign of King Josiah (see Ai - [Josiah Ruled For 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC](#)), the LORD said to Yirmeyahu, "Have you seen what faithless (from **shuwb**) Isra'el has done?" In this context, Isra'el means the northern kingdom of Isra'el. As if she was the embodiment of the sin of spiritual adultery. She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there by worshiping other gods (3:6). It is particularly in the oracles recorded in Chapters 2 and 3 of Jeremiah that we become aware of the links with Hosea both as to vocabulary and also in regard to ideas.

The LORD's repeated calls for repentance (**shuwb**) were ignored (2 Kings 17:13-15). I had hoped that after she had done all this sinning she would return (**shuwb**) to Me. God is not only ready, but anxious, to forgive those who ask for forgiveness. But she did not return (**shuwb**), and her treacherous (Hebrew: *bagowd*) sister Judah saw it (3:7). Here Jeremiah is the teacher of his people rather than the fussy theologian, and does not concern himself with such questions as Ha'Shem's omniscience and foreknowledge.

I gave faithless (from **shuwb**) Isra'el her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ij - Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?](#)). The historical fact is that in 722 BC the northern kingdom of Isra'el fell to the Assyrians. But even before this, parts of Isra'el had been seized by Assyria. In fact, during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (745-726 BC) Assyria formed three provinces from all the territory north of the plain of Jezreel and the Israelite lands of Megiddo, Karnaim, and Gilead. The upper class was deported and replaced by colonists from distant lands (**Second Kings 15:29**). It was a steep price to pay for her faithlessness. What should have been clear to unfaithful Y'hudah was that faithless Isra'el had been punished for her adulterous conduct.⁴⁹ Yet I saw that her unfaithful (from **shuwb**) sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery (3:8).

Sin always costs you more than you wanted to pay, and takes you further than you wanted to go. The reason for Y'hudah's behavior was simple. Her covenant with YHVH had become so dulled that she regarded her adultery as insignificant. Her conscience was seared as with a hot iron (**First Timothy 4:2**). Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood (3:9)

"In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return (**shuwb**) to Me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares the LORD (3:10). Y'hudah was not only apostate, but false also. A great religious reform took place during the reign of Josiah, and an earnest attempt was made to stamp out idolatry (**Second Kings 23**). While the reform may have had some beneficial results, it seems clear that it produced no profound change because the people weren't sincere in their conversion. Religious activity may have increased but true repentance (**shuwb**) was lacking.

Then ADONAI said to His prophet, "Faithless Isra'el, who has already been destroyed by the Assyrians, is more righteous than unfaithful (from **shuwb**) Judah (3:11; also see **Ezekiel 16:1-63** and **Hosea 2:2-23**). More righteous because the northern kingdom of Isra'el did not have the example of punishment before their eyes, as did Y'hudah in Isra'el's destruction. Faithless Isra'el had actually proven to be more righteous than her treacherous sister Judah. Why? Because Y'hudah had Isra'el as her example. As a result, Judah had greater light as to ADONAI's dealing with sin. And with greater light comes greater responsibility, and the rejection of greater light means greater judgment. This is a principle throughout Scripture. So having shown that there was greater guilt in Y'hudah, Ha'Shem deals with repentance.

In the **far eschatological future**, as the armies of the antichrist seek to eliminate the **Jews** forever, there will be a national regeneration and **all Isra'el will be saved (Romans 11:26a)**. But first, there must be a confession of **Isra'el's** national sin; and secondly, a pleading for **Messiah** to return (**shuwb**) (see the commentary on **Revelation Cv - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**). That will lead to the Second Coming (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ev - The Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Bozrah**).

Go, proclaim this message toward the north. "Return (shuwb), faithless (from shuwb) Isra'el," declares the LORD (3:12a). The plea here is one of an offended husband seeking his wife back, even against the Torah, even in the face of humiliation. The point was that if YHVH had borne with the southern kingdom of **Y'hudah** for so long in spite of **her** sins, then the northern kingdom of **Yisra'el**, disadvantaged by having no example before **her**, might expect His acceptance if **she returned (shuwb)**.⁵⁰

Yirmeyahu paused in his condemnation of sin to offer a message of repentance (**shuwb**) and hope to the northern Kingdom. **"I will frown on you no longer (I will not look on you with anger), for I AM faithful," declares ADONAI, "I will not be angry forever" (3:12b)**. If **Isra'el** responds, **God** will respond in kind. This is a divine principle that YHVH will respond to true repentance (**Ezekiel 18:21-23**). **God** will exclude no one from salvation who is willing to **turn around (shuwb)** and go in a different direction. **Only acknowledge your guilt** (see the commentary on **Revelation Ev - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**). **Admission of sin is the first step to repentance and recovery of God's favor. Acknowledge that you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered (Hebrew: pazar) your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed Me," declares ADONAI (3:13)**. The verb *pazar* means *to spend lavishly or extravagantly (Psalm 112:9 and Proverbs 11:24)*. **Judah, therefore, had been lavish or extravagant with her lust for other gods.**

Return (shuwb) faithless (from shuwb) people, declares the LORD, "for I am married to you (3:14a). There is a play on words here. The verb *ba'al*, meaning *to be master, husband, lord*, is used here in the pronoun **I** in an emphatic position. The use of the verb is significant. In the setting of the covenant, it is **ADONAI-Elohim** who calls **Isra'el** His wife (**Hosea 2:2, 16**). But not only that, **YHVH** is **Isra'el's** true **Husband (ba'al)**, unlike the false master **Ba'al**. Although a **certificate of divorce** had been given (**3:8**), **Isra'el** had not **married** another and **God** is still willing to be **her** first husband again just as **Hosea** was willing to be **Gomer's** husband again (**Hosea 3:1-5**). When repentance comes, there will be **five rewards in the far eschatological future**.

First, I [Myself am your Master] will choose you - one from a town and two from a clan - and bring you to Zion (3:14b). Consequently, there will be a worldwide regathering.

Second, Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding (3:15). Isra'el will finally have righteous leaders.

Third, the ark of the Covenant will neither be built nor remembered. **In those days**, declares the LORD. When Jeremiah (under the direction of the Holy Spirit) uses the phrase **in the days to come; the days are coming; in those days; in that day, at that time; or for the time will surely come**, the context points either to the **near historical future** or the **far eschatological future** and which one should be used. This is the first of twenty-five times that Yirmeyahu uses one of **these phrases**. **In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the Land, declares the LORD, people will no longer say, "The ark of the Covenant of ADONAI"** (see the commentary on Exodus Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace).

It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made (3:16). Why? For the true **Mercy Seat** will be ruling and reigning in the **far eschatological future** from the messianic Temple in Jerusalem (see the commentary on Isaiah Db - The Nine Missing Articles in Messiah's Coming Temple).

Fourth, because Yeshua Messiah will reign visibly from Tziyon it will become the center of Gentile attention (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-5). At that time they will call Jerusalem: The Throne of the LORD, and all the Gentile nations will gather in Yerushalayim to honor the name of ADONAI. Therefore, they will no longer follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts (3:17).

Fifth, there will be a total reunification of the two houses of Isra'el (3:18). **In the far eschatological future** the people of Y'hudah will join the people of Yisra'el, and together they will come from a northern land to the Promised Land I gave your ancestors as an inheritance (see the commentary on Genesis Eg - I Am the LORD, Who Brought You out of Ur of the Chaldeans to Give You This Land). **This was the fervent dream and hope of the prophets, both before** (Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 2:4; Ezekiel 37:16ff; Hosea 2:2), **and after the seventy years of Babylonian rule** (see Gu - **Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**).