

The Judgments Upon Judah

4:5 to 6:30

During the reign of Josiah

Metaphors drawn from the arena of warfare are particularly prominent in this section (4:5-6, 13, 16, 19-21, 29, 5:15-17, 6:1, 4-7, 22-23, 25). But the range of metaphors is remarkable: wild animals - lion, leopard, wolf, eagles (4:7, 13, 5:6); scorching wind (4:11-12); clouds and whirlwind (4:13); men guarding a field (4:17); cosmic catastrophe (4:23-26); ravaged vineyards (5:10; 6:9); fire (5:14); open grave (5:17); and shepherds with flocks (6:3). The metaphors for the wicked are also rich in meaning: lusty stallions (5:7-8); prostitute's dress and makeup (4:30); bird catchers (5:26-28). Metaphors of the anguish of the people suffering judgment are also present: a woman in labor (4:31). The use of such lively metaphors impresses us like no abstract or literal language can.⁵⁶

The theme of judgment hinted at in the first three chapters of **Jeremiah** and announced so dramatically in 4:3-4 is now spelled out in some detail, providing the central theme of the next major section. **The prophet from Anathoth** had pleaded earnestly for repentance (**shuwb**), and had given warning that sincere repentance, accompanied by a radical change in the national and individual life and a circumcised heart, needed to take place. However, this was rejected! Consequently, judgment day was at hand . . . Babylon was coming in a bad mood.

The preceding unit (**As - Return to Me**) portrayed YHVH as a wounded, betrayed lover and husband yearning for a return. Even at the end of the unit there is still hope that **Judah** will "come home." The mood is starkly different as this next section begins. Now there is no such yearning. Now there is darkness and harshness. This is a very different voice of **Ha'Shem**, who has reached the limit of yearning and the far edge of compassion. For all of **the LORD's** compassion . . . **God** will not be mocked.⁵⁷

- A. The apostasy of **ADONAI's** people (2:1 to 4:4)
 - B. The inevitability of **Ha'Shem's near historical** judgment (4:5-31)
- a. The apostasy of **ADONAI's** people (5:1-30)
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