

Flee for Safety People of Benjamin

6: 1-15

DIG: What do you think was God's purpose in this warning? What does this tell you about His character? Why should the people flee the walled city of Jerusalem (compare 6:1-5 and 4:6 where they are told to go to the City of David)? Why is it safer outside? What happens in a siege? Why does YHVH want Yirmeyahu to warn Yerushalayim? How eager is the City to hear God's word? What kind of response did Jeremiah get to his prophecy? How had the prophets and priests sinned against ADONAI?

REFLECT: Smokers know cigarettes cause cancer; people know that running through stop signs can get you killed. Why do people frequently ignore warnings? As believers, we are supposed to be able to read **the signs of the times** (Matthew 16:3)? What warnings does YHVH have for your society today? Are they paying attention or ignoring them? How eager are you to hear God's Word?

During the reign of Josiah

Here the Spirit of God presents a **near historical** prophecy of the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar and an invitation to escape the coming destruction. The identity of the invader is still unknown in the pages of the scroll. But the readers of **Jeremiah** sitting in Babylon knew full well who this terrible enemy had been. Looking back into the past in 586 BC, they had experienced it. But during Josiah's reign from 640 to 609 BC (or forty years before exile) all seemed well and **Jeremiah** seemed crazy. Through His prophet, ADONAI warned the righteous of **the TaNaKh**, or **the believing remnant**, to **flee**. What we find, however, is that most are unfaithful . . . most will either die or go into exile.

The call to flee from Jerusalem: The warning comes to **Jeremiah's** own tribe: **Flee for safety** (if it were possible), **people of Benjamin! Flee from Jerusalem (6:1a)**! Basically, this means *get yourselves, your families, and anything you can carry to safety*. As far as a tribal territory is concerned, **the city of Tziyon** was given to **the tribe of Benjamin**. However, it was taken by the Jebusites from the tribe of Judah. The Jebusites put **Jerusalem** inside **Benjamite** territory, but in **First Chronicles 9:3** we see that although it was supposed to belong to the tribe of **Benjamin**, the tribe of Y'udah took it. As a result, it was inhabited by both tribes. **Anathoth** (the birthplace of **Jeremiah**) was inside the territory of **Benjamin**, so **the Benjamites** were **Jeremiah's** closest countrymen (although as a priest **he** was from the tribe of Levi). So **he** grew up with **the Benjamites** and was responsible for teaching **them**. **He** now tells **them** to flee **Zion** to safety. The problem was that there was no safety anywhere!

Sound the shofar in Tekoa (the home of Amos)! Raise the signal over Beth Hakkerem! This is a cone-shaped hill called the Frank Mountain, between Bethlehem and Tekoa, named for its military purposes during the Crusades, a very suitable spot to raise a signal. For disaster looms out of the north, even terrible destruction (6:1b). This is a play on words. Tekoa and Beth Hakkerem both come from the same root and are villages just south of Yerushalayim. So the Benjamites were to flee to the south, and as they do, they would pass these two villages. The invasion comes from the north so they are to flee to the south. The oppressor is still unnamed.

O lovely and delicate daughter Zion (the population in general), you are ruined (6:2 NAB). The destruction will be so complete that shepherds will be able to tend their sheep in her ruins. Shepherds with their flocks will come against her; they will pitch their tents around her, each tending his own portion (6:3). Sheep have a tendency to eat the grass very close to the ground so only the soil is left. The emphasis is on the extent of the destruction that will come.

Jeremiah describes the zealotry of the invading army in a striking sequence of noon, evening and night. It will be vicious. As if spoken to the invaders themselves: Prepare for battle against her. The word prepare literally means to sanctify. This was a holy war against Jerusalem, since God Himself commanded it. Arise, let us attack at noon! Normally an enemy on the march would rest during the hottest part of the day. But not them! This denotes a surprise attack. Furthermore, they are so zealous they continue to attack at night. But, alas, the daylight is fading and the shadows of evening grow long. So arise, let us attack at night and destroy her fortresses (6:4-5)! Once Zion's fortress was gone she was defenseless.

This is what happened to Jerusalem at the hands of Gentiles by the LORD of heaven's angelic armies decree: Cut down trees and build siege ramps against Jerusalem (6:6a). The siege ramps were inclined planes that the soldiers of a walled town built up to the walls so they could bring their battering rams closer and work them to greater advantage. The siege ramp was made of all kinds of materials, earth, trees, and rocks. The sides were made of walled up brick or stone, and the inclined top made of layers of brick or stone, forming a paved road up to the city wall (Deuteronomy 20:20; Second Samuel 20:15).⁷⁷

This City must be punished; it is filled with oppression. There is a continuous stream of wickedness, just like a stream that does not stop. As a well pours out its water, so she pours out her wickedness. But wickedness is something the City ought to get rid of rather than keep fresh. There was a constant cry of violence and destruction resounding in her; ADONAI had a constant vision of sickness and wounds before Him (6:6b-7).

This was still during the reign of Josiah, early in **Jeremiah's** ministry (see **Ai - Josiah Ruled For 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC**). Therefore, there was always the opportunity to repent and delay judgment (see **18:8**). Take warning, Jerusalem, or I will depart (Hebrew: *yaqa'*) from you and make your Land desolate so no one can live in it (**6:8**).

The remnant would be judged several times: This is what **ADONAI-Tzva'ot** says: Even the few who remain in **Isra'el** after the initial invasion will be picked over again, [the invader will] turn back (**shuwb**) again and again as when a harvester checks each vine several times to pick the grapes that were missed (**6:9 NLT**). There would eventually be four deportations (see **Gt - In the Thirty-Seventh Year of the Exile Jehoiachin was Released from Prison**) for those who survived the initial invasion.

The general indictment here is that **Judah's** ears are not **circumcised**. The southern **Kingdom** is unresponsive as covenant partners. **Jeremiah's** message had been rejected. The people mock and despise the Word of **YHVH**. He asks rhetorically: **To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to Me? Their ears are closed (uncircumcised) so they cannot hear. The word of God is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it (6:10).**

Consequently **Jeremiah** says: I am full of the wrath of **ADONAI**, and cannot hold it in any longer. The wrath of **God** was going to be poured out on the children in the street (see **Ae - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**) and on the young men gathered together; both husband and wife will be caught in it, and the old, those weighed down with years. **God** answers **Jeremiah**, saying: Their homes will be turned over to others, together with their fields and their wives, when I stretch out My hand against those who live in the Land (**6:11-12**). His wrath will indeed fall on all the inhabitants of **Judah**. The words of **Ha'Shem** are filled with passion and lack of restraint.

There are many precedents in the **TaNaKh** where the writers expected their audience to understand that some of their universal statements were not to be taken literally. From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, because they all practice deceit (**6:13**). Surely **Jeremiah** did not claim that there was not a single prophet or priest who was not greedy for gain and did not practice deceit. After all, he was a prophet himself!

The prophets and priests dress the wound of My people as though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace (**6:14**). Like faithless physicians they dismissed their patient without going to the trouble of examining him properly; soothing him with the medicine of pleasant-sounding phrases when what was needed was the deep-cutting knife of repentance. This was the sin of the leaders. They dressed the nation's wounds, but only skin deep. The people were appeased when they heard

this false message from **their** false leaders (8:11). The reality was no peace, only judgment would come. But were **they** ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them, says ADONAI (6:15).

You would think that **they** would be **ashamed** when **their** predictions failed. But **the prophets and the priests** had no shame. In fact, **they** couldn't even blush because **their** conscience had been seared (First Timothy 4:2). There was nothing left but **judgment**.