

# Jerusalem's Fall and Exile Prophesied

## 9: 10-22

**DIG:** Why did Jeremiah want to separate himself from his people, in spite of his sadness for them? What does the prophet weep over? What seems to bother Jeremiah the most about ADONAI bringing the Holy City to ruins? How does the LORD answer His prophet? Who are the wailing women? Why will this become a booming profession? In what sense is death the "grim reaper?" What do the wise, the strong and the rich stand to lose from the invasion?

**REFLECT:** What has been the great sadness in your life? How do others respond to your feelings of loss or sorrow? How has God treated you? Do you think He identifies with your trials and tribulations? Do you talk to Him about them? Does He care? How?

**609 BC during the three-month reign of Jehoahaz  
This near historical prophecy would be fulfilled in 586 BC**

Jeremiah's words are flung boldly in the face of every self-deceiving ideological claim. The words of **the prophet** work against every soothing patriot, every self-confident creed, and every ideological ploy. **He** doesn't linger over **Judah's** violations of the covenant. **He** is a pastor. **His** community can begin grieving because the dye of historical dismantling had been cast. None in **Jerusalem** would be able to avoid the catastrophe by their positive attitude or theological position. Everyone would be affected. All would suffer loss.

**God's** judgment would not only come upon **His people**, but upon **the Land** that **they** had defiled. **Jeremiah laments** over his ravaged country where **he** grew up and knew so well. **I will weep and wail for the mountains [of Jerusalem] and take up a lament concerning the wilderness grasslands.** The Babylonians will carry out a scorched-earth policy. The hills and pastures on which **the cattle** grazed will become **desolate and untraveled, and the lowing of cattle will not be heard.** **The birds will have all fled and the animals will be gone (9:10).**

The LORD declared: **I will make Tziyon a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals.** Ruined cities that will be left as haunts for wild animals is common curse language.<sup>94</sup> **And I will lay waste the towns of Judah so that no one (comparatively) can live there (9:11).** There seems to be a strong link between national apostasy and natural disasters.

ADONAI issues a challenge to those who consider themselves **wise**, especially the false prophets that **Jeremiah** has to contend with. The inspired **prophet** responds in three parts. This verse, in **a threefold question**, may function as a rhetorical ploy, and asks, how can anyone make sense of what is happening: **Who is wise enough to understand this? Can they explain the events that have occurred, since they had predicted the exact opposite (Hosea 14:9)? No. They cannot! Who has been instructed by the Lord and can explain it? And lastly, using hyperbole to overemphasize the point, he asks: Why has the Land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross (9:12)?**

**The answer** is given in the next two verses. It is not all that difficult or complicated to understand. There are very good grounds for all of the destruction to come, and those grounds come from **the Torah**. To understand this astonishing threat, one need only ponder the main claims of **the covenant** that expose the false thinking of **Jerusalem**. But of course, **Zion** was incapable of pondering their covenant promises.

The reason for the indictment is given in three negatives and two positives. The negatives are **because they have abandoned My Torah, which I set before them at Sinai; and neither listened to what I said nor lived accordingly (9:13 CJB). Sin gives birth to sin. The present generation was suffering, partly at least, through the evil heritage they had received from their former generations (Exodus 20:5).** Simply put, they had abandoned the demands of **the Torah**. In **Deuteronomy 6:4** **Isra'el's** main responsibility is to **listen**. In **Deuteronomy 13:4** **Isra'el** is to **walk after . . . listen . . . cleave**, which forms a nice contrast to the three verbs above. The problem for **Jeremiah** was that on all three counts, **Y'hudah** was unresponsive.<sup>95</sup>

Two positives assert that **instead, they have [hardened] their hearts; and they have practiced idol worship and followed the Ba'als', as their ancestors taught them (9:14).** It was for these three reasons that the devastation of **verses 10 and 11** was about to come.

Therefore, **the judgment** is given. This is what **ADONAI-Tzva'ot, the God of Isra'el** says: **See, I will make this people eat wormwood and drink poisoned water in the Land. Wormwood, which has a bitter taste and poisonous effects, is used as a metaphor for destruction (see the commentary on Revelation Cy - The Third Trumpet: The Name of the Star is Wormwood) and sorrow (Lamentations 3:15).** Here, this metaphor is applied to the false prophets. The combination of wormwood and poisoned water is a deadly brew. **I will scatter them among nations that neither they nor their ancestors have known, and I will pursue them with the sword until I have wiped them out (9:15-16).** The **near historical** fulfillment of this prophecy would occur with the destruction of **Judah, Jerusalem** and the Temple by the Babylonians and King Nebuchadnezzar.

This is what ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: Consider now! Call for the wailing women to come; send for the most skillful of them. Professional mourners; they were generally women who followed the casket of the dead and lamented the death very mournfully (Matthew 9:23). Let them come quickly (Ezekiel 12:21-28) and wail over us till our eyes overflow with tears and water streams from our eyelids. The sound of wailing song itself is heard from Tziyon, "How ruined we are! How great is our shame! We must leave our Land involuntarily because our houses are in ruins" (9:17-19).

But it is not merely that the professional mourners are called upon to sing their dirge. They are to teach their tragic refrain to their daughters and their friends, for the days will be tragic enough to demand a multitude of mourners.<sup>96</sup> Now, you women hear the word of ADONAI; open your ears to the words of His mouth. Teach your daughters how to wail; teach one another a lament (9:20). The feminine plural verbs used here are long, elaborate forms of the verb and take a long time to pronounce. Imagine the stiff old women told to hurry, hurry, hurry, but spoken very slowly.<sup>97</sup> God wants them to learn a new wailing song of lament.

This is God's way of mimicking the religious system that brought them down to begin with. One of the legends of the god Ba'al was that he was planning on building a palace with no windows at all. But he was finally talked into having one window built (some god, eh?). Later in the story, another god named Mot (the god of death) entered through this one window of Ba'al's palace and killed him. Afterwards, Ba'al was (surprise, surprise) resurrected! This was part of the worship and legend of Ba'al. So in a satire of the very legend they believed in, a new wailed song was declared: Death has climbed in through our windows (Isaiah 28:14-22; Hosea 13:14) and has entered our fortresses, but not to kill Ba'al - but the Israelites! Death has removed the children from the streets and the young men from the public squares. [Jeremiah], says: This is what the LORD declares, "Dead bodies will lie like dung on the open field, like cut grain behind the reaper, with no one to gather them" (9:21-22). Which was the ultimate disgrace. This passage, which started at 8:13 and concluded here, is the Haftarah on the ninth of Av (see Gb - The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC).