

You Have Rejected Me, and I am Tired of Relenting

15: 5-9

DIG: What attitude had set God firmly against the people of Y'hudah here? What is the focus of the verses? Why should Jeremiah's prophecy about death and captivity gotten their attention? Are you shocked at the severity of the LORD's judgment? Why?

REFLECT: When have you reacted with scorn or persecution against someone who rocked your boat? How do you react when you are rejected by someone you love? Can you feel ADONAI's pain here? Can you identify with the One True God as a jilted lover with an adulterous wife? How sad is that!

608 BC during the eleven-year reign of Jehoiakim

Before the Jews even entered the Promised Land, Moshe had rehearsed with them the terms of the covenant, warning them that Ha'Shem would remove them from the Land if they refused to obey His voice (Deuteronomy 28:63-68). No sooner did Joshua and that generation of spiritual leaders pass from the scene (Judges 2:7-15) than the nation turned (**shuwb**) to idolatry and YHVH had to chasten them. First, He punished them *in the Land* by allowing other nations to invade and take control. Then, when the people cried out for help, He raised up deliverers (Judges 2:16-23). By the time of Yirmeyahu, however, the wickedness of the people was so great that God had to remove them *from the Land* and sentence them to exile in Babylon.

Now God elaborates on Jerusalem's destruction and speaks in the first person. Who will have pity on you, Yerushalayim? Who will mourn for you? Who will stop to ask how you are (Hosea 11:8-9)? Why? You have rejected Me, declares ADONAI. Repentance involves more than confession, it involves turning away (**shuwb**) from sin. Going in a different direction. But Y'hudah had not done this and her flimsy repentance was hypocritical. As a result, the LORD said to Judah, "You keep turning your back on Me. So I will stretch out My hand and destroy you; I am tired of relenting" (15:5-6 NASB). YHVH had promised that if Y'hudah would return (**shuwb**) to Him, He would forgive her. But she refused, choosing other gods. **Many times God had relented and did not severely punish Judah for her spiritual adultery. But He could relent no more. His patience had come to an end.**

The series of judgments Ha'Shem now reiterates are very similar to Amos 4:6-11. In the Amos passage the LORD implements curses in the hope that there would be a change on the northern kingdom of Israel's part. Yet God was greatly disappointed. Despite His efforts to save: **Yet, you have not returned (**shuwb**) to Me.**

Two metaphors are then used to speak of the destruction of Tziyon. Like a farmer at the city gates, YHVH says: **I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the city gates of the Land.** This figure would be well understood by the people of Y'hudah, who annually gather their harvest on the threshing floor. In winnowing, the grain, chaff and straw are all tossed in the air when the wind is blowing. The implication here is that there is much chaff and little grain. **The people are pictured as standing at the city gates of Zion as they are winnowed (Ezk 12:15)** and dispersed out into exile. But this is also a faint glimmer of hope. The punishment is designed to **turn (shuwb) the people from their ways, to God. I will bring bereavement and destruction on My people, for they have not repented (shuwb) of their ways (15:7).** Many have said that they **turned to God**, not in gratitude for prosperity, but in desperation from the deepest tragedy; their souls, being **winnowed** by adversity.¹⁵¹

Another metaphor relates to family life and death (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). **ADONAI** has bereaved Judah, that is, **He** has so destroyed **her** that **she** will have lost **her** capacity to assure **her** own future. **God** had told Abraham that his descendents would be **as numerous as the sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17).** But now **He** says: **I will make their widows more numerous than the sand of the sea. At midday I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of the young men (Ae - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh).** **Wives** will be deprived of **their husbands; mothers of their sons, warriors, and young, strong men.** So many **men**, both fathers and their male children, have been killed in battle, that every house seemed to have a **widow** and a mourning **mother** living there. These **women** will be filled with **anguish and terror** over what happened to **their families**, and even more because it had happened so **suddenly (6:26).**¹⁵²

The mother of seven sons was to enjoy a great blessing (Ruth 4:15; First Samuel 2:5), **She** should be overjoyed, but now **she will grow faint and breathe her last. Her sun will set while it is still day,** in the prime of **her** life. In the height of **her** glory, the glory of **her** many children, suddenly every one of **them** is gone from **her.** **She will be disgraced and humiliated. The woman who had seven sons** - you would think that one or two would survive. But no, **they** are all dead. **I will put the survivors to the sword before their enemies, declares the LORD (15:8-9).** The judgment did come, but the genre of prophetic fulfillment does not demand every detail of its language. There obviously was a remnant in exile that were reading these words, so the words are highly exaggerated here.

The God of Jerusalem is a **God** of enormous patience. But now that patience is spent. **Ha'Shem** is exhausted and will try no more if the situation does not change. A stubborn people like **Y'hudah** surely must die at **His** hand. The covenant with **ADONAI** needed to be taken very seriously, and **Judah** did not respond. Consequently, the end must come.