

# Heal Me, ADONAI, and I Will Be Healed, Save Me and I Will Be Saved Jeremiah's Fifth Complaint 17: 12-18

**DIG:** What are Jeremiah's countrymen saying about his ability to prophesy? What was the test of a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)? How did Yirmeyahu ask God to prove him right? How will the coming disaster bring both hope and terror to Jeremiah? Of what does Yirmeyahu need healing? How might he be confused with a false prophet?

**REFLECT:** Are there prophets today? Or is the canon of Scripture closed (see the commentary on Revelation Gd - If Anyone Adds to the Words of this Book, God Will Add to Them the Plagues Described)? What prompts people to become false teachers today? Do you think they believe what they're preaching (see the commentary on Jude Ap - These People Speak Abusively Against Whatever They Do Not Understand)? How honest are you with yourself? Could your heart be deceiving you about the motives of some of your actions at work? At home? In relationships?

606 BC during the eleven-year reign of Jehoiakim

Yirmeyahu continues to be poised between faith and doubt. There are seven passages in the book of **Jeremiah** labeled complaints or confessions: (1) Ax - Oh, Adonai ELOHIM, Surely You Have Deceived This People; (2) Bj - The Plot Against Jeremiah; (3) Bk - Why Does the Way of the Wicked Prosper? Why Do All the Faithless Live at Ease?; (4) Cm - Woe to Me, Mother, That You Gave Me Birth; (5) Cs - Heal Me ADONAI, and I Will Be Healed, Save Me and I Will Be Saved; (6) Cx - Jeremiah's Response to a Threat Against His Life; and (7) Db - You Deceived Me, LORD, and I Have Been Deceived. In each of these Yirmeyahu speaks in the first person. He opens his heart. He reveals what is going on inside while the fireworks are going off outside. Jeremiah's inner life is revealed in these confessions/complaints/prayers. When the priest from Anathoth was out of the public's eye he was passionate with God. He confessed/complained/prayed like we all do. This was his secret life. This was a man of prayer.<sup>166</sup>

**Isra'el's forsaken her hope:** For the righteous of the TaNaKh, the glorious throne, exalted from the beginning, was the place of their Sanctuary (17:12). YHVH was enthroned above the ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place. God wanted them to come to the Temple with the right heart attitude, a reverent attitude, as if entering holy ground. But the attitude of the vast majority of people in Jeremiah's day bordered on blasphemy, which led the citizens of Y'hudah and Tziyon to believe that mere association with the Temple and its rituals was the only demand that Ha'Shem made upon them. Clearly they had lost their way. Because of their hearts of stone, their sacrifices meant nothing.<sup>167</sup>

Jeremiah cried out: ADONAI, You are the hope of the united kingdom of Isra'el; but now she has forsaken the Shekinah glory (see the commentary on [Isaiah Ju - The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You](#)). All who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who depart from You will be written in the dust (17:13a). Words written in the dust are contrasted to words engraved in the rock. The former are easily obliterated and forgotten, so will be the fate of those who depart from ADONAI.<sup>168</sup>

Their names would be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water (17:13b; also see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Gp - On the Last and Greatest Day of the Feast](#)). There is, however, an inherent danger in forsaking the blessed hope (Titus 2:13). It means, in essence, that Y'hudah had forsaken her *only* hope. She had forsaken the very source of salvation itself! What she needed to do was to turn to ADONAI in faith. Then she would live. The logic of the argument is the same as the **shuwb** summons of Amos: **Seek Me and live (Amos 5:4)**, or the instruction in Deuteronomy 30:19 to choose life.

Heal me, ADONAI, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for You are the One I praise (17:14; R'Fayanu, from the Amidah). The reason Yirmeyahu asks God to save him, to rescue him, to vindicate him, from any situation is because God has been Jeremiah's praise. The prophet is now being attacked and accused of being a false prophet. He has spent years prophesying, but his prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. It had been about twenty years since he had been appointed as a prophet (see Ai - [Josiah Ruled For 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC](#)), and it would be another twenty years until Judah would fall (see Gb - [The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC](#)).

They keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the LORD?" And as if mocking me, they say: Let it *now* be fulfilled if true (17:15)! Moshe had defined how a false prophet could be identified: If what a prophet proclaims in the name of ADONAI does not take place or come true, that is a message ADONAI has not spoken (Deuteronomy 18:22a). There were both **near historical** and **far eschatological** prophecies. The problem with the **near historical** prophecies is that sometimes what was prophesied would take a few years, or in the best scenario, a few months to happen. Then the true prophet of God would be vindicated. The problem Yirmeyahu faced was that the LORD's judgment had mercifully been delayed and, as a result, the people doubted his message. YHVH knew His judgment was coming . . . Jeremiah knew it was coming . . . but the people doubted.

The people of Jerusalem began to cast doubt and poke fun at Jeremiah's prophetic office. Yirmeyahu vindicated his ministry to God in three ways. First, **I have not run away from being your shepherd. In other words, I had no intention of hastily abandoning my ministry because of the suffering it has entailed.** The prophet has not refused to follow God's direction or to be God's servant. Second, **You know I have not vindictively desired the day of despair** (that he had been prophesying). And third, **what passes my lips is open before you so that this coming disaster could be averted.** The LORD had known all of his prophecies because they originated from Him (17:16).

The prophet believes that YHVH's judgment is sure, but he wants it sooner rather than later, and he does not doubt who deserves it. **Protect me! Do not be a source of terror to me; You are my refuge in the day of disaster. Let my persecutors be put to shame, but keep me from shame; let them be terrified, but keep me from terror. Bring on them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction (17:17-18).** Yirmeyahu asks that he might be brought through it all without being terrorized, shamed or destroyed. He entrusts his vengeance to God and will not take matters into his own hands.

**God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything (First John 3:20).** Because of this, the Lord knows exactly how to help us. Lasting heart-level change and real progress with our problems originate with ADONAI. Trusting Him and living to please Him means we can flourish and be truly free.

Here we find Yirmeyahu praying, addressing ADONAI, and listening to God. When we pray we approach YHVH as a living person, not merely "getting in touch with our spiritual side." Prayer is the attention that we give to the one who attends to us. It is the decision to approach the Almighty as the center of our life, as our Lord and Savior. Prayer is personal language raised to the highest degree. The six confessions/complaints/prayers show the prophet in his unguarded and most personal times with Ha'Shem.

Nearly everyone believes in **God** and throws casual offhand remarks in **His** general direction from time to time. But prayer is something quite different. Imagine yourself at dinner with a person whom you very much want to be with. The dinner is in a fine restaurant where everything is arranged to give you a sense of privacy. There is adequate lighting at your table with everything else in the shadows. You are aware of the other people and activity in the room, but they do not intrude on your intimacy. There is talking and listening. There are moments of silence, full of meaning. From time to time a waiter comes to your table. You ask questions of him; you place your order with him; you ask to have your glass filled; you send the broccoli back because it arrived cold; you thank him for his attentive service and leave a tip. You depart, still in companionship with the person with whom you dined, but out on the street conversation is less personal, more casual.

This is a picture of prayer. The person with whom we set aside time for intimacy, for this deepest and most personal conversation, is **ADONAI**. At such times the world is not banished, but it is in the shadows, on the periphery. Prayer is never complete and unrelieved solitude; it is, though, carefully protected and skillfully supported intimacy. Prayer is the desire to listen to **YHVH** firsthand, to speak to **Him** firsthand, and then setting aside the time and making the arrangements to make it happen. Prayer originates from the belief that **the living God** is extremely important and that what goes on between us demands my full attention.

But there is a parody of prayer that we engage in all too often. The details are the same but with two differences, the person across the table is **Self** and the waiter is **God**. This waiter-**God** is essential but peripheral. You can't have the dinner without **Him**, but **He's** not an intimate participant in it. **He's** someone to whom you give orders and maybe at the end, give thanks. The person you are absorbed in is **Self** - your moods, your ideas, your interests, your needs, and your satisfactions or lack of them. When you leave the restaurant you forget about **the Waiter** until the next time. And if it's a place to which you go regularly . . . you might even remember **His** name.<sup>169</sup>