

The LORD Bless You, O Righteous Dwelling, O Sacred Mountain

Jeremiah 31:15-30 and Ezekiel 18:1-20

DIG: Who are Rachel and her children (Genesis 29:18, 30; 46:19-20)? How and why does Jeremiah use the image of Rachel weeping? How did the early messianic community interpret this image (Matthew 2:18)? What relationship does God want to restore between Himself and Isra'el (Hosea 2:18-20)? How can adulterous Judah become a virgin again? What is the meaning of the proverb quoted in Jeremiah 30:29 and Ezekiel 18:2-4)? Is ADONAI changing the rules (Exodus 20:5; Numbers 14:18) by which many thought of themselves as guilty (Deuteronomy 24:16)?

REFLECT: What use of this image of grieving and consolation give hope to you? What other images of grieving and consolation give you hope (Jeremiah 31:16-20, 23-25, 27-28)? Are you living in a stream of blessing, or a stream of cursing right now? Whose responsibility is that? If you are living in a stream of cursing is He just mean? How do you get from one to the other? What is the difference between living in a stream of cursing and being under attack from the enemy?

595 BC during the eleven-year reign of Zedekiah

The nation's future hope will contrast sharply with her present misery. The context here is the believing remnant at the end of the Great Tribulation, which was seen **in a dream** by God's prophet starting in Jeremiah 31:26 (see EI - **The Restoration of Isra'el**).

Looking back: This is what ADONAI says: A voice is heard in the town of Ramah (five miles north of Jerusalem), mourning and great weeping, Rachael weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children were no more (Jeremiah 31:15). Rachael, Jacob's favorite wife, was buried on the road to Bethlehem (see the commentary on **Genesis Ij - The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel**). The road that goes by the town of Ramah (north of Jerusalem) continues down to Bethlehem (south of Jerusalem). Ramah was near the border of Benjamin (**First Samuel 10:2**). It was the point at which the exile march to Babylon would begin. There the Jews were screened to see who would go into exile or who would stay in Zion. Because the Babylonians would normally take the younger and stronger Israelites, the older parents were usually left behind. So those mothers, identifying with Rachel, would be seen **weeping** for their **children** they would never see again.

Looking forward: This is what the LORD says: Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded. They will return (**shuwb**) from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your descendants, declares the LORD. Your children will return to their own land (Jeremiah 31:16-17). The context here is the **far eschatological future** of 31:1-14. Therefore, this hope is not in the return from the Babylonian exile, but for the final regathering.

Before a national restoration there must be a national confession (see my commentary on **Revelation Ev - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**). These are the words of the confession itself: I have surely heard Ephraim's (His people) moaning, "You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore (**shuwb**) me, and I will return (**shuwb**), because you are ADONAI my God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth" (Yirmeyahu 31:18-19). The judgment of the Great Tribulation was a direct result of the sins of her youth.

God's response: Is not Ephraim my dear son (yes), the child in whom I delight (yes)? Though I speak against him (discipline), I still remember him (love). Therefore, my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him, declares ADONAI" (Jer 31:20). YHVH has a deep longing for the northern kingdom of Isra'el to return (**shuwb**) to Him.

The call to repentance: Set up road signs; put up guideposts. **Mark well the road you have traveled into captivity, because by that road you will return - a figure of speech emphasizing the certainty of restoration.** Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return (**shuwb**), O Virgin Isra'el, return (**shuwb**) to your towns. How long will you wander (from **shuwb**), O unfaithful daughter? ADONAI will create a new thing on earth - a woman (Isra'el) in her weakness, will return (**shuwb**) to a man (YHVH) in His strength. In other words, Isra'el will embrace her God (Yirmeyahu 31:20-22).

The future prosperity of Isra'el: This is what the LORD of heaven's angelic armies, the God of Isra'el, says: When I bring them back from captivity, the people in the land of Judah and in its towns will once again use these words, "The LORD bless you, O righteous dwelling, O sacred mountain' (Jer 31:23). The sacred mountain has to do with mount Moriah, or mount Zion upon which the Temple was built. The phrase **will once again** means *they had used this in the past but not in recent days*. It was probably used in the glorious days of the monarchy (the reign of David and Solomon). But it fell into disuse when the Kingdom split apart and fell into idolatry. But when Isra'el returns (**shuwb**) to ADONAI at the end of the Great Tribulation, when the woman in her weakness embraces the Man in His strength, when **once again she** is a pure virgin, only then will this saying be used again.

The reason the saying will return is this: **People will live together in Judah and all its towns - farmers and those who move about with their flocks. I will refresh (in the Hebrew prophetic perfect, guaranteeing the intended action as if it had already happened) the weary and satisfy the faint (Jeremiah 31:24-25).**

At this Yirmeyahu awoke and looked around. My sleep had been pleasant to me (Yirmeyahu 31:26). This interrupts the flow of **Chapters 30 and 31** and is a puzzling interlude. What it means is that **Jeremiah 30:1 to 31:25** was revealed to **the prophet** in a dream. It was pleasant to **him** because it had been the opposite of what **he** had been proclaiming earlier in **his** ministry. **He** woke up momentarily, realized that **he** had been dreaming, **and then went back to sleep and dreamt Jeremiah 31:27-40.**

The days are coming, declares **ADONAI.** When **Jeremiah** (under the direction of **the Holy Spirit**) uses the phrase **in the days to come; the days are coming; in those days, in that day, at that time; or for the time will surely come,** the context points either to the **near historical future** or **the far eschatological future** and which one should be used. This is the seventeenth of twenty-five times that **Yirmeyahu** uses one of **these phrases.** **The days are coming** in the **far eschatological future** (**Hosea 2:21-23**) when **I will plant the kingdoms of the house of Isra'el and the house of Judah with the offspring of people and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster (cursing), so I will watch over them to build and to plant (blessing), declares the LORD (Jeremiah 31:27-28).**

In those days, during the messianic Kingdom, **people will no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jeremiah 31:29).** This was a complaint of those taken into captivity (**Ezeki'el 18:1-4**). In essence, the **exiles** in **Babylon** believed in the false doctrine that **they** were being punished for the sins of **their fathers.** **They** were misinterpreting the principle found in the **Torah (Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Numbers 14:18).** While it was true that the sins of **the fathers** was involved in **their** exile, it was also true that **they** were also guilty! **They** had merely continued the same sins as **their ancestors.** And thus, would receive the same punishment. **The ones** who took no responsibility for their sin would die a physical **death** in **Babylon** as set forth by **Moshe's** offer of **life** or **death.** **YHVH** has always had a stream of **blessing** and a stream of **cursing** set up as a principle in life from the garden of **Eden** until today (see my commentary on **Genesis Ba - The Woman Saw the Fruit of the Tree and Ate It**).

At the foot of Mount Sinai (see my commentary on **Exodus Db - The Revelation at Mount Sinai**) Moses had declared: **See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love ADONAI your God, to walk in obedience to Him, and to keep His mitzvot, regulations and rulings; for if you do, you will live and increase in your numbers; and ADONAI your God will bless you in the Land you are entering in order to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, if you refuse to listen, if you are drawn away to prostrate yourselves before other gods and serve them, then I am announcing to you today that you will certainly perish. You will not live long in the Land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess (Deuteronomy 30:15-18; also see Leviticus 26:14-39 and Deuteronomy 28:58-68).**

This has nothing to do with salvation. If anyone, even an unbeliever, **does what is right and just, does not defile his neighbor's wife, does not oppress anyone, does not commit robbery, gives food to the hungry, provides clothes for the naked, withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between two parties** (either knowingly or unknowingly, follows the stream of **blessing**), then such a one will **choose a life** blessed by **God**. In other words, your life will go smoother. There will be fewer bumps in the road (**Ezeki'el 18:5-9**).

However, if anyone, even a believer, **does what is evil and defiles his neighbor's wife** (punishable by **death** in **Leviticus 20:10**), **sheds blood** (punishable by **death** in **Leviticus 25:16**), **worships idols** (punishable by **death** in **Deuteronomy 17:1-5**), **oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, steals and generally follows the stream of cursing**, does not repent and takes no responsibility for his sin, then such a one chooses **death**. **Ezeki'el** teaches us that the righteousness of the father does not protect the son, just as Hezekiah's righteousness did not protect Manasseh from the consequences of his wicked life. People are responsible for their own sin. **Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death, his blood will be on his own head (Ezeki'el 18:10-13).**

This person's life will go hard. **God Himself** will punish such a one, as a loving father would discipline his children. But there is a point at which **the Lord** will not tolerate **His** good name being dragged through the mud any longer. Rabbi Sha'ul would later write to the church at Corinth: **Hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord (First Corinthians 5:5).**

Ezeki'el continues to teach the individual responsibility for our sin. **But suppose this wicked son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things. He is like his grandfather, not like his father. He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live in the stream of blessing, just as Josiah**

did not suffer death because of the sins of his father Manasseh (see Ai - [Josiah Ruled For 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC](#)). The son who avoids his father's sin will live, but his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was evil among his people. Then to repeat the principle of individual responsibility, Ezekiel continued to emphasize: **The one who sins is the one who will die (Ezeki'el 18:14-20).**

Moshe continued from Mount Sinai: **This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, a stream of blessing and a stream of cursing. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants, loving ADONAI your God, paying attention to what He says and clinging to Him . . . for that is the purpose of your life! On this depends the length of time you will live in the Land ADONAI swore He would give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).**

Without a doubt, the TaNaKh teaches individual responsibility for sin. That is why during the messianic Kingdom all the Jews left at the end of the Great Tribulation will confess their sin of rejecting **Messiah** and be saved (see above). **They** will not be able to blame **their** persecution during the Great Tribulation on anyone else. Consequently, those believing **Jews** will no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." **Instead, everyone will be punished for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes - their own teeth will be set on edge (Yirmeyahu 31:29-30).** The righteous of the TaNaKh will live forever in a stream of **blessing** in the presence of **ADONAI**.