

Handout: Jeremiah Lesson 8

But if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh your God, and do not keep and observe all his commandments and laws which I am laying down for you today, then all these curses will befall and overtake you ... Yahweh will send away both you and the king whom you have appointed to rule you to a nation unknown either to you or to your ancestors, and there you will serve other gods, made of wood and stone.

Deuteronomy 28:15, 36

The theme of the oracles in Jeremiah 11:1-13:27 is the curse-judgments of a broken covenant. The poetic call for repentance and faith in Chapter 13:15-27 probably took place just before Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC), captured the city of Jerusalem in 587/8 BC (see 2 Kng 23:36-37; 24:1-17; 2 Chr 36:5-10).

In 13:15-16, God warns the people through His prophet that before it is too late:

1. They must listen and pay attention.
2. They must not be proud.
3. They must give glory to Yahweh their God.

Historical background:

1. King Jehoiakim ruled for 11 years (609-598 BC).
2. King Jehoiachin/Jechoniah (Jeconiah), son of Jehoiakim, ruled 3 months (598 BC) before being deposed by the Babylonians. He and his mother, Queen (Gebira) Nehushta were taken to Babylon.
3. The Babylonians placed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, on the throne, renaming him King Zedekiah (587-582 BC).

Ancient tablets recording Jehoiachin/Jechoniah in Babylon were discovered in Iraq. They are referred to as Jehoiachin/Jechoniah's Rations Tablets. They were excavated near the Ishtar Gate in Babylon and are dated to c. 592 BC. Written in cuneiform, they mention Jechoniah (Ia-u-kinu) and his five sons as recipients of food rations at the court of the King of Babylon.

Chapter 14 forms a dialogue between Jeremiah and Yahweh that continues to the end of Chapter 15:4. Jeremiah expresses a poetic lament for the covenant curse-judgment of drought foretold in Deuteronomy 28:22-24. The unit is divided into three corresponding parts between 14:2-16 and 14:17-15:1-3:

1. Two laments (14:2-6 and verses 17-19)
2. Two communal confessions and petitions (14:7-9 and verses 20-22)
3. Two judgment oracles (14:10-16 and 15:1-3)

The first lament in verses 2-6 concerns the curse-judgment of a drought on the land. The second lament in verses 17-19 is about Jeremiah's own spiritual drought, caused by his visions of war, siege, and famine.

In 14:7-9, Jeremiah ignores God's command not to intercede for the people. He responds to the drought oracle by offering both a communal confession and a petition for Yahweh to intervene to end the drought that is causing such suffering. This passage moves from confession and petition to affirmation to questioning to affirmation and ends in a petition.

→ Over

Jeremiah is acting as the people's intercessor as he identifies with the people and their sinfulness.

1. He offers a corporate confession of sin coupled with a petition (verse 7).
2. He expresses an affirmation of faith in God (verse 8a).
3. He questions God's actions (verses 8b-9a).
4. He affirms God's unity with the people (verse 9b).
5. He offers a petition for deliverance and Yahweh's continuing presence with the people (verse 9c).

Chapter 15:1-4 is the last section of the unit that began in Chapter 14. It is Yahweh's answer to Jeremiah's question in 14:19, his confession of the people's sins and the sins of their ancestors in 14:20, and Jeremiah's plea for God not to break His covenant with Israel. The passage is in prose except for Yahweh's curse-judgment in verse 2. These verses are divided into three parts:

1. The rejection of Jeremiah's petition of mercy for the people in verse 1.
2. The two judgment oracles in verses 2b-3.
3. A reference to the Deuteronomic judgment and the prophecy in 2 Kings 23:26-27 in verse 4.

Even if Moses and Samuel pleaded [stood] before me...

Moses and Samuel the prophet were Israel's great intercessors of the past that "stood before" Yahweh. We stand before God in the Mass:

1. in worship
2. to hear the Word of God in the Gospel
3. in communal prayer
4. to offer intercessory prayer
5. to praise the Lord in song

The sins of King Manasseh (2 Kng 21:1-18):

1. He copied the disgusting practices of the nations Yahweh had dispossessed from Canaan.
2. He set up altars to false gods and worshiped them.
3. He built altars to false gods in the Temple.
4. He introduced child sacrifice, even sacrificing his son.
5. He practiced divination and promoted mediums and spirit guides.
6. He caused the shedding of innocent blood.