

# Isra'el Forsakes God

## 2: 14-19

**DIG:** In what ways was the nation backsliding? What roles does Assyria and Egypt (44:1) play in humiliating and destroying Isra'el? Why were terrible things happening to God's people (2:17)? What attitude did the people of Judah fail to have toward the LORD in verse nineteen? What role does ADONAI play in sealing Isra'el's fate (2:36-37)?

**REFLECT:** Think about this statement, "The greatest judgment Ha'Shem can send to disobedient people is to let them have their own way and reap the sad, painful consequences of their sins." How was this true in the book of Jeremiah? What evidence do we have that this is still true today?

**616 BC during the reign of Josiah**

When the marriage relationship with God was going well, Isra'el was protected from invaders. All who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them (2:3). But no longer, as Ha'Shem's **five rhetorical questions** demonstrate. Yet, Isra'el had become **plunder** (the spoils of war) to the nations around her. Her declaration that **she** would not serve YHVH had resulted in **her** serving those very nations - a new kind of bondage.<sup>36</sup>

For a long time Isra'el had been in bondage. **First**, the northern kingdom of Isra'el had fallen to Assyria in 722 BC. **Is Isra'el a servant, a slave by birth? The expected answer is negative. A different explanation accounted for their lowly state.** Slaves were normally bought, but **their** children belonged to the same master. It seemed to Jeremiah that some freeborn Israelites were already slaves and others were about to become slaves. If that were not so, **second**, why then had [she] become plunder (2:14)? Isra'el had been YHVH's own possession, a willing partner in the covenant, and a witness to the victories over all **her** enemies by the LORD (Jeremiah does not use the terms Isra'el and Judah consistently because. Sometimes he uses the terms interchangeably and sometimes he uses them distinctly. There is no pattern). But Jeremiah's original readers were sitting in Babylon, exiled from **the Land** and from **the Temple**. To **them**, the unthinkable had happened - **they** had been reduced to **slavery** once again, carried off as **plunder**. How did this come about? **They** had committed spiritual adultery until **she** was **plundered**.

**Lions have roared; they have growled at [her].** Judah had not merely been threatened she had been caught. This wasn't a warning, but reality. The lions in this scroll and the other prophets symbolize nations (**Hosea 5:1-15**). But who are they? **Jeremiah** was coming out against political alliances between **Egypt** and **Assyria**. **They have laid waste her land; her towns are burned and deserted. Also, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have cracked her skull, causing Judah's destruction (2:15-16).** At this point in Judah's history, **Egypt** was especially guilty. **Egypt merely exploited Judah for her own benefit, and would not hesitate to rob the Jews when it suited her convenience.** An unreliable ally, she would turn around and attack **Judah** within a few years in 609 BC. **Memphis** is the ancient capital of lower-**Egypt** (about 13 miles south of modern Cairo), and **Tahpanhes** (an important fortress is on the Eastern branch of the Nile Delta) was a city that controlled the entrance to **Egypt** from the land of Canaan. Later, both of these cities would become centers of Jewish exile after Jerusalem was destroyed (**Hosea 9:6**).

The real cause of **Judah's** trouble was plainly that she walked away from **ADONAI, the Living Water (2:13)**, who led her safely through the wilderness. **Jeremiah** reminded them. **Third, have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking ADONAI your God when He led you in the way of the wilderness (2:17)?** This answers the question of **verse 14**. This is a theme to which the prophet returned to again and again. And in addition to **forsaking the LORD** for false gods, **Judah** had also **forsaken Him** for false alliances. **Judah** vainly went back and forth between **Egypt** and **Assyria** trying to forge treaties that would guarantee her safety (**Jeremiah 2:36; Ezekiel 23:1-48; Hosea 7:11**).

But no alliance could protect **Judah** from her sin. And **fourth, now** (Hebrew: *we'atta*, is an important rhetorical participle signaling a shift from the past to the present) **why go to Egypt to drink water from the Nile? And fifth, why go to Assyria to drink water from the Euphrates River (2:18)?** What would she gain? Historically, **Jeremiah's** point is sharp and painful. Menahem, king of the northern kingdom of **Isra'el**, sought **Assyrian** aid against **Egypt**; Hoshea sought **Egyptian** aid against **Assyria**; Josiah died while fighting **Egypt** in support of **Assyria**. Obviously, none of those alliances had been helpful.<sup>37</sup> **Judah** then sought help from broken cisterns that could not hold **water (2:13)**. Ironically, the nations that she sought protection from would eventually enslave her.

Consequently, **Yirmeyahu** prophesied: **Your wickedness will punish you, and your apostatizing will rebuke you.** But she would realize that too late, as she was exiled in **Babylon**. **Consider and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of Me, declares ADONAI-Tzva'ot (2:19, also see 4:18 and 5:25).** **Isra'el's** apostasies had turned back on her and made her the victim of **plundering** neighbors. The irony is that by forsaking **Elohim** and seeking after the gods of

other nations, they were thrown into exile among those very nations.<sup>38</sup> **Isra'el**, a much-loved heir, did not need to have this happen. The original readers of **Jeremiah's** scroll would realize that **God** was speaking directly to **them**, saying, in effect, "Don't blame others for these events. **You have brought this upon yourself.**" **The bitter results of these acts would show them the folly of their ways.**

We can fall into the same trap today by seeking security in *anything* but **Jesus**. **Simon Peter** said: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that You are the Holy One of God (Yochanan 6:68). This is why the Bible says: Look, I am laying in Tziyon a stone, a chosen and precious cornerstone; and whoever rests their trust on it will certainly not be humiliated (Fist Kefa 2:6 CJB). **ADONAI** is my Rock, my fortress and deliverer, my God, my Rock, in whom I find shelter, my shield, the power that saves me, my stronghold (Psalm 18:2). **Jesus** tells us to build our **house on the Rock** and not **the sand** of this world (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dy - The Wise and Foolish Builders**). **The sand** is composed of human opinions, attitudes, and wills, which are always shifting and always unstable. To build on **sand** is to build on self-will, self-satisfaction, and self-righteousness. To build on **sand** is to be unteachable, to be **always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth** (Second Timothy 3:7).<sup>39</sup>