

# I Am Bringing Disaster on This People, Because They Have Rejected My Torah

## 6: 16-30

**DIG:** What are the ancient paths to Jeremiah's audience? What did Judah refuse to do? What are the good ways? Who are the watchmen? Why does God call the earth and the Gentile nations to witness the disaster? What has Judah offered ADONAI instead of obedience? How do they respond to Ha'Shem's warning? What response would YHVH prefer? What is Jeremiah's role now? Smelters purify silver ore by throwing it into molten lead: The pure silver floats, but the dross sinks. What does Yirmeyahu observe as Yerushalayim goes into the fire?

**REFLECT:** If material gifts and burnt offerings were not acceptable, what did God want? If presents are not good substitutes for time and attention spent with our children, what does that say about what we should be giving to our places of worship and charities? Do you know anyone who tries to buy YHVH off with gifts instead of obedience? Are you ever tempted to do this? Have you experienced His refining fire? What "silver" came to the surface? What dross remains to be burnt away?

### During the reign of Josiah

You may have heard the saying, "The past is supposed to be a guidepost, not a hitching post." It's easy to become tied to the memories of "the good old days," instead of using our experiences to find direction for the road ahead. We are all susceptible to the paralyzing effects of nostalgia - a longing for what used to be.

Yirmeyahu was a priest from a small town near Yerushalayim when ADONAI called him to be a prophet to the nations (1:5). He was given the very difficult job of pronouncing Ha'Shem's judgment primarily on the people of Judah, who had turned away from YHVH. He made it extremely clear that the message he was delivering was God's and not his own (7:1-2). ADONAI said: Stand at the crossroads and look. Ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls, which is a picture of salvation. The ancient paths . . . the good way are the truths taught by the Torah. But you said: We will not walk in it (6:16).

YHVH urged His people to look back so they could move forward. The purpose of considering the ancient paths was to find the good way marked by God's faithfulness, His forgiveness and His forward call. The LORD can teach us from our past that the best road is the one we walk with Him. God's guidance in the past gives us courage for the future.<sup>78</sup>

The importance of the covenant for **Yirmeyahu** cannot be overemphasized. For him it was fundamental to **Y'hudah's** very life, acknowledging **YHVH** as **her** only sovereign **LORD**, and gladly accepting the covenant obligations. When **Judah** took this way **she** followed **the ancient paths, the good way** and found rest. But being a stiff-necked people, **she** refused.

**ADONAI**, however, was not willing that **His** people should perish. Consequently, **He** appointed watchmen over them. **God** provided prophets who would warn them of the dangers that would result in **their** deliberate rejection of **His** sovereignty over them. A watchman stood on a high place to warn of danger (**Isaiah 21:11-12; Ezekiel 3:17 and 33:7; Micah 7:4; Habakkuk 2:1**). And I said: Listen to the sound of the shofar (**6:17a**)! **The purpose of which was to arouse them to reflect upon their actions. But people who would not obey the summons to return to the ancient ways were hardly likely to heed warnings about the dangers of a breached covenant. And they did not.**

**ADONAI** pointed them back to the five books of **Moshe** because it is the **Torah** that gives life: The **Torah** of **ADONAI** is perfect, restoring the inner person. The instruction of **ADONAI** is sure, making wise the thoughtless. The precepts of **ADONAI** are right, rejoicing the heart. The mitzvah of **ADONAI** is pure enlightening of the eyes. The fear of **ADONAI** is clean, enduring forever. The rulings of **ADONAI** are true, they are righteous altogether (**Psalm 19:7-9 CJB**). But they said no, "We will not walk in it" (**6:17B**). **God** also gave them the prophets, but they would not listen! So the **LORD** calls the **Gentile nations** to render judgment.

Therefore hear, you **Gentile nations**; you who are called together as witnesses to observe the spirit of rebellion among **God's** own people and what will happen to them. Hear, you earth: **I AM** bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their evil schemes, because they have not listened to **My** words and have rejected **My** **Torah**. Not only are the **Gentile nations** called to come and see **Judah's** rebelliousness, but they are to know of **God's** coming judgment that **they** will be responsible to carry out. **They** have brought this against themselves because **they** had rejected **Moses** and the prophets (**6:18-19**).

In the place of the **Torah**, **Judah** had merely substituted cultic Temple ritual. **What do I care about increase from Sheba or sweet calamus from a distant land? What good were these things without faith? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fe - The Burnt Offering**); **your sacrifices do not please Me** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fp - The Altar of Incense in the Sanctuary: Christ: Our Advocate with the Father**). **While sacrifices were demanded and commanded by ADONAI through the Torah, they were worthless without obedience.** The prophet **Samuel** had said, "What is more pleasing to the **LORD**: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams (**First Samuel 15:22**). And **Samuel** was not the only prophet to point this out (**Isaiah 1:11-14; Hosea 2:11; Amos 5:21-23**). **Micah**, particularly, had asked: **And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to**

love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (6:8). Thus this is what ADONAI says: I will put obstacles before this people. Parents and children alike will stumble over them; neighbors and friends will perish (6:20-21). **This verse does not deny free will, which all the pleading, exhortations and denunciations of the prophet emphatically affirm.**

These verses describe the powerful coming of the invading threat authorized by YHVH. **Look, an army is coming from the land of the north; a great nation is being stirred up from the ends of the earth. They are armed with bow and spear; they are cruel and show no mercy. They are experienced, experts in the art of warfare and will accomplish their goal. They sound like the roaring sea as they ride on their horses; they come like men in battle formation to attack you, Daughter of Tziyon (6:22-23).** Judah's response was to be paralyzed with fear. It is not the action of the invading army, but simply reports of it that reduce Judah to trembling. **She** was just as unprepared for battle as a weak, defenseless woman in birth pains before a powerfully built, fully equipped soldier.

We have heard reports about them, and our hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped us, pain like that of a woman in labor (6:24). **Jeremiah expresses the feelings of his countrymen about the enemy.** There was no protection anywhere: **Do not go out to the fields or walk on the roads, for the enemy has a sword, and there is magor-missabib, or terror on every side (Jeremiah 20:3-4 and 10, 46:5, 49:29; Psalm 31:13; Lamentations 2:22).** In fact, it becomes a proper name, **Pash'chur**, in 20:3.

6:22, 23 and 24 are almost identical as 50:41, 42 and 43.

In the **near historical future** 6:23 . . . to attack you, Daughter of Tziyon

In the **far eschatological future** 50:42 . . . to attack you, Daughter of Babylon

The point is that what **Babylon** will do now to **Jerusalem** will someday be done to **Babylon**. Whereas one nation will come against **Jerusalem**, many nations will come against **Babylon**.

There was only one thing left for **Judah** to do: **Put on sackcloth, My people, and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter wailing as for an only son (the severest bereavement a Jew could suffer), for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us (6:26).** **All your preparations will avail you nothing. When the invader attacks he will brush aside your defenses as though you were caught unprepared.** This is a lament for the nation. Lamenting for an only son is the most bitter kind of lament. If you have only one son and he dies, that means there will be no prosperity. No seed. No continuance of the family. No descendants (**Amos 8:10; Zechariah 12:10**).

**Jeremiah** now receives another job. **God said: I have made you strong to resist all attacks from the people you denounce; therefore, you can fearlessly pronounce judgment upon their evil.** In 1:10 the prophet was appointed as an overseer and now he is appointed as a tester of his own people (**Malachi 3:2-3**). **God declared: I have made you a tester of metals and My people the ore, that you may observe and test their conduct, or literally, their ways (6:27).**

**Jeremiah** had no doubt that **they** deserved the coming judgment. **They are so hardened they are likened to bronze and iron – they all act corruptly. The bellows blow fiercely to burn away the lead with fire, but the refining goes on in vain; the wicked are not purged out. They are all hardened rebels, going about to slander (6:28-29). God asked Yirmeyahu to go through the streets of Tziyon to see whether he could find anyone who acted justly or who sought the truth (5:1-9). Not only did he not find anyone worthy, but the closer he tested the people of the "Holy" City, the more he realized the awful truth that the people had hardened their hearts to sin. They were beyond refining or purifying. The ore was impure and no silver could be found. Breakdowns of the covenant were to be found everywhere. Rebellion, evil talk, and corruption had replaced justice and truth!**<sup>79</sup>

Sometimes suffering brings out the best in people, but that wouldn't happen in the siege of **Jerusalem**. When **YHVH** turned on the furnace, it would reveal **the people** had rejected becoming **the silver** and chose instead to become **the dross**. But **God** wasn't purifying them; **He** was punishing them. **They** weren't being refined; **they** were being **rejected**.<sup>80</sup> **They are called rejected silver, because ADONAI has rejected them (6:30). Once they had been silver (Deuteronomy 5:27-29), but their silver had become dross (Isaiah 1:22); not merely second or third grade silver, but absolutely worthless dross. And as they had rejected Him - so their God had rejected them.**