

Jer. 14:1 ¶ The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.

“dearth” = restraint of rain; drought

It would seem that the LORD is going to explain to Jeremiah the reason for the time of drought that Judah was experiencing at that time.

Jer. 14:2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.

Jer. 14:3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, *and* found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.

Jer. 14:4 Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.

Jer. 14:5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook *it*, because there was no grass.

Jer. 14:6 And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because *there was* no grass.

In this section of verses the people of Judah are pictured in mourning because of the lack of rain. “Black unto the ground” references *mourning* in the Hebrew. Even those in positions of power among the people, the nobles, who usually congregate around the gates of the city find that they are without any influence when it comes to getting water. Their children and/or servants are returning home from the wells with empty water pails just like everyone else. The people are disappointed (from the Hebrew for “ashamed”) and hurt/confused by the situation. Covering their heads was a sign of mourning. Those who were attempting to plow the earth for planting were disappointed because the ground is dry and cracked; agriculture is basically at a standstill. Even the animals were feeling the desperation of the situation. When the deer (usually known for taking good care of their young) gave birth, they abandoned their young because of the lack of grass for food. The wild asses went to the high places to sniff the wind and scan the countryside looking for grass, but they could see nothing to eat.

It is quite clear that the land and people of Judah were experiencing a severe time of drought, and the LORD wanted to make sure that the people recognized that it was in judgment for their sin.

Jer. 14:7 O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou *it* for thy name’s sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

Jer. 14:8 O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man *that* turneth aside to tarry for a night?

Jer. 14:9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man *that* cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, *art* in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

It seems the people realized that God was aware of their sins. So, instead of

approaching God on their own behalf, they decided to address Him regarding the honor of His name. They knew that the nations around them would interpret these conditions as due to the inability of Judah's "God" to provide for them properly. They even go so far as to admit that their sins are "many" and have been committed "against Thee" [the LORD]. They appeal to the LORD as "the hope of Israel," their "savior" in times of trouble. They question why He should decide to treat them like strangers or like any foreign traveler who might be passing through the land. They question why He is presenting Himself as one who is surprised at the condition of His people and is helpless to do anything on their behalf. They are aware that His covenant with Abraham is sure and that He has not totally abandoned them. They continue to appeal to Him on the fact that they are called by His name. His honor is at stake among the nations. It seems that suffering all of a sudden reminded the people of their history and they decided to model their prayer after those recorded by Moses in which he sought God's mercy and/or forgiveness of the people based on His honor among the nations.

Numbers 14:11–16 "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."

Jer. 14:10 ¶ Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

The LORD sends his answer to the people through His prophet. It's interesting that He says "this" people, and not "My" people. He basically says that since the people so love to wander outside His will and act in disobedience according to their own will, He no longer takes pleasure in them. The time has come for them to be judged according to their sins.

The people of Israel/Judah had taken their relationship with God for granted and mistakenly thought that His love and mercy would override their need for punishment/judgment. I think that is often the mistake of many in the church today.

God is the source of love, and true love is motivated by what is right and best for those He loves. Sometimes love is best manifested in what is known as "tough love"—actions meant to put an end to bad behavior and bring about good behavior—actions that will result in future blessing, not cursing.

Jer. 14:11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for *their* good.
Jer. 14:12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

The LORD's response seems harsh and determined. It would seem that the pleadings of the people were being made with an insincere heart. He commands Jeremiah that he is not to pray on behalf of his people again. The LORD is declaring that His ears are closed to the cries of the people and He will not accept their offerings and gifts. Instead, He intends to destroy the people by sword, famine and pestilence.

This wording is interesting because I believe God still uses these judgments today. Most would regard these as simply the evil actions of men against other men or normal cycles of nature—and sometimes they are. But I think one should always soberly consider the possibility that God is trying to get man's attention—both reprobate and man of faith. Scripture is replete with references to the Creator making use of His creation to get the attention of both His people and His enemies, the enemies of His people.

Jer. 14:13 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

The tenderhearted Jeremiah tries to intercede with the LORD based on the lies that had been prophesied by the false prophets in His name. They had told the people that the LORD was going to give them peace, provide for them and protect them from the attack of their enemies.

Jer. 14:14 Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

The LORD stands firm. He declares that these prophets had not been sent by Him nor did they speak for Him. They were declaring false visions using witchcraft and deceit.

I believe they had opened themselves to and were being used by evil spirits.

Jer. 14:15 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

Jer. 14:16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

YHWH now declares that these false prophets would die at the hands of their enemies or from hunger. Those who listened to their prophecies would meet the same end. Death would come so suddenly to so many that there would not be enough people left to bury the dead. The LORD was going to give them over to the consequences of their wickedness.

I think it is significant to note that the LORD always holds His people accountable for discernment regarding those they choose to believe. He had revealed His will through Moses regarding what was acceptable and unacceptable behavior before Him. The people had chosen to reject His will and follow their own. The fact that they had been deceived by false prophets was a direct consequence of choosing to disobey God. That this was the choice of the people was revealed earlier in this study.

Jeremiah 5:31 "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so:"

The same is true today. God has revealed His truth and preserved it for the nations through His word. Even those without His word have the revelation of creation regarding the Creator, and God declares that sufficient to make them without excuse. His word is clear that those who seek Him will be found by Him.

Romans 1:19–20 "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

Psalms 9:9–10 "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

Jeremiah 29:13 "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Jer. 14:17 ¶ Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

Jer. 14:18 If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

Jer. 14:19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul lothed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and *there is no healing for us?* we looked for peace, and *there is no good;* and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

In this section of verses the Lord is declaring His sorrow in light of the sins of His people. Maybe He is allowing Jeremiah to express His heart as he weeps for his people. Their sin had caused a great break in their relationship with the LORD

and had resulted in severe judgment. The fields would be covered with the dead killed by the enemy. Those that had remained in the city would perish from hunger. The prophets and priests had been failures.

Because they listened to the false prophets it seemed that God had rejected Judah; the people wonder—Is it forever? Had God totally cast off His people? They also seemed to question why He would judge them so harshly and wonder if He is going to restore them to covenant relationship. They were expecting peace and healing, not war and trouble.

This is always the result of listening to false teachers. It establishes unrealistic expectations based on lies and deceit.

Jer. 14:20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, *and* the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.

Following the previous verses this seems a bit confusing. On the one hand, the people wonder why God would judge them; on the other hand, they acknowledge their sin and wickedness against the LORD.

Jer. 14:21 Do not abhor *us*, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

Jer. 14:22 Are there *any* among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? *art* not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these *things*.

Again, the people plead with God based on His honor before the nations. They implore Him not to break covenant with them. It seems that they try to bribe Him by acknowledging that He is mighty in comparison to the “gods” of the heathen nations. He can cause rains at His will. In the light of His judgment they now declare that their trust is in Him.

It's interesting that the people are quick to remind God about keeping covenant with them even though they had broken covenant with Him. It reminds me of those today who refuse to show any effort at trying to please God or serve Him in any way; yet when disaster comes, they are so ready to blame Him for allowing these bad things to happen. We always want to make God accountable for His actions without being held accountable for our actions, and we want that accountability to be according to our own standards—not His.