

Jeremiah 14:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? This verse represents Jeremiah's bold intercession during a severe drought and national crisis. The Hebrew word for "astonied" (damam, דָּמַם) means dumbfounded, stunned into silence, or helpless. Jeremiah questions why God would appear passive or powerless like a shocked human unable to act, or like a warrior (gibbor, גִּבּוֹר) who lacks strength to deliver.

The rhetorical question reveals both the prophet's perplexity and his underlying faith. Jeremiah knows God is mighty and can save, yet current circumstances make divine inaction seem inexplicable. This honest wrestling with God's apparent silence mirrors Job, the Psalmists, and Habakkuk—faithful believers struggling to reconcile God's character with His mysterious ways.

The affirmation "yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name" anchors Jeremiah's plea in covenant relationship. The phrase "called by thy name" (shem qara, שֵׁם קָרָא) indicates ownership and identification—Israel belongs to Yahweh and bears His reputation. The final cry "leave us not" (al taniach, אַל תַּנִּיחַנוּ) pleads for continued divine presence despite deserved judgment. This prayer anticipates Christ's intercession for His people (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25).

Historical Context

This passage comes from a prayer during a catastrophic drought that brought famine and desperation to Judah (Jeremiah 14:1-6). The drought served as divine judgment for persistent idolatry and covenant violation. Jeremiah, though called to announce judgment, also served as intercessor—a tension that marked his entire ministry.

The historical context likely dates to the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598 BCE), a period marked by political instability, Egyptian and Babylonian threats, and spiritual apostasy. The people maintained external religious observance while their hearts remained far from God. The drought exposed their helplessness and the futility of their idols (Jeremiah 14:22).

God's response to Jeremiah's intercession was sobering: even if Moses and Samuel (Israel's greatest intercessors) prayed, judgment must proceed (Jeremiah 15:1). This illustrates that while God welcomes intercession, there comes a point when persistent rebellion exhausts divine patience. The historical parallel is profound—just as the drought preceded Babylon's invasion, spiritual drought precedes divine judgment. Yet God's promise of future restoration (Jeremiah 31-33) shows that judgment is not God's final word for His covenant people.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How should believers respond when God seems silent or inactive in the face of crisis?
2. What does Jeremiah's honest, questioning prayer teach us about authentic communication with God?

3. In what ways does bearing God's name create both privilege and responsibility for His people?
4. How do we balance intercession for mercy with acceptance of God's righteous judgment?
5. What does this passage reveal about the relationship between national sin and corporate suffering?

Interlinear Text

לָמָה	תְּהִיָּה	כָּאִישׁ	נִדְהָם	כְּגִבּוֹר	לֹא
H4100	H1961	H376	H1724	H1368	H3808
		Why shouldst thou be as a man	astonied	as a mighty man	
יֹכֵל	לְהוֹשִׁיעַ	וְאַתָּה	בְּקִרְבִּי	יְהוָה	וּשְׁמִי
H3201	H3467	H859	H7130	H3068	H8034
that cannot	save	art in the midst	yet thou O LORD	by thy name	
עַל יְנוּ	נִקְרָא	אֵל	תִּנְחַנּוּ:		
H5921	H7121	H408	H3240		
	of us and we are called	leave			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 59:1 (Salvation): Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

Isaiah 63:19 (Parallel theme): We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

Psalms 46:5 (Parallel theme): God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

Jeremiah 15:16 (References Lord): Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Numbers 11:23 (References Lord): And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

Hebrews 13:5 (Parallel theme): Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (Parallel theme): And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

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