

# Jeremiah 18:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

## Analysis

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The crucial qualification: "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." This conditional "if" transforms the threatened judgment into a warning rather than an unconditional decree. God's willingness to "repent" (Hebrew *nacham*, נחַם—relent, change course, have compassion) demonstrates divine responsiveness to human repentance.

The phrase "I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" requires careful theological interpretation. God's "repenting" doesn't indicate He made a mistake or changed His mind capriciously. Rather, it describes His consistent character responding appropriately to changed human circumstances. When humans repent, God's response changes from judgment to mercy—not because He's fickle but because He's faithful to His character as merciful and gracious (Ex 34:6-7).

This verse grounds the entire prophetic ministry of warning. If judgment were unconditionally decreed, prophetic preaching would be pointless. But because God genuinely offers the possibility of averting judgment through repentance, prophets urgently call for repentance. Jonah's ministry to Nineveh perfectly illustrates this principle (Jonah 3:10). God's desire is always to save, not destroy—making Christ's coming the ultimate expression of divine compassion.

## Historical Context

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Biblical examples of nations averting judgment through repentance include Nineveh (Jonah 3) and, to a degree, Judah under Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18-19, Isa 36-39). God's willingness to relent of threatened judgment appears throughout Scripture (Ex 32:14, Amos 7:3, 6). False prophets exploited this principle by promising peace without repentance (Jer 6:14, 8:11), but true prophets maintained that only genuine repentance averts judgment.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's willingness to relent of judgment when people repent demonstrate His character and purposes?
2. What does this verse teach about the purpose of prophetic warnings and preaching?
3. How should this principle of conditional judgment shape Christian witness and evangelism?

## Interlinear Text

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וְשָׁב      הֲגַי      הֵהוּא      הֶרְעָה      אֶשְׂרָר  
**turn**      **If that nation**      H1931      **from their evil**      H834  
H7725      H1471      H7451

                 דָּבַרְתִּי      עַל יוֹ      וְנִחַמְתִּי      עַל      הֶרְעָה      אֶשְׂרָר  
**against whom I have pronounced**      H5921      **I will repent**      H5921      **from their evil**      H834  
H1696      H5162      H7451

                 הָשָׁבְתִי      לַעֲשׂוֹת      לוֹ:  
**that I thought**      **to do**      H0  
H2803      H6213

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ezekiel 18:21** (Evil): But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

**Jeremiah 26:13** (Repentance): Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

**Hosea 11:8** (Repentance): How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

**Jeremiah 26:3** (Repentance): If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

**Judges 2:18** (Repentance): And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

**Psalms 106:45** (Repentance): And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

**Psalms 90:13** (Repentance): Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

**Psalms 135:14** (Repentance): For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

**Exodus 32:12** (Repentance): Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

**Deuteronomy 32:36** (Repentance): For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.

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