

Jeremiah 20:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying,
A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

Analysis

Jeremiah extends his curse from the day to the messenger: 'Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father.' In ancient culture, announcing a son's birth (especially a male heir) was joyous occasion deserving reward. Jeremiah curses this messenger for bringing news that brought his father gladness ('making him very glad,' same'ach, **ְנָעֵשׂ**). The irrationality here is deliberate—the messenger did nothing wrong, and Jeremiah's father's joy was appropriate. This hyperbolic curse expresses how deeply Jeremiah wishes his birth had never occurred. This isn't theological statement about birth's value but emotional cry from depths of suffering. Similar expressions appear in Job 3:3 ('Let the day perish wherein I was born') and Ecclesiastes during Qoheleth's existential crisis. These texts teach that Scripture validates the full range of human emotion, including despair that leads to irrational statements. God doesn't condemn Jeremiah for this outburst; He allows the prophet to express his pain. This pastoral sensitivity is important—people in crisis say things they don't fully mean, and loving response is not immediate correction but compassionate presence. Jesus wept (John 11:35), was 'deeply troubled' (John 12:27), and cried 'Why?' from the cross (Matthew 27:46), validating human emotional experience.

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern culture, birth announcements were significant social occasions. The messenger bringing news of a son's birth would typically receive a gift or reward (see 2 Samuel 4:10, 18:20). Fathers rejoiced at sons particularly

because sons carried the family name, inherited property, and cared for parents in old age. Jeremiah's curse on this innocent messenger and his father's legitimate joy reveals the depth of his anguish—he's not thinking rationally but crying out from pain. This is similar to Job cursing his birth (Job 3) after losing everything. Ancient readers would recognize this as extreme lament language, not literal curse. The biblical tradition of lament included hyperbolic expressions of suffering. Church history records similar expressions from saints in times of trial—John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon—all experienced seasons of profound despair while maintaining faith. Jeremiah's preservation of this lament has given voice to suffering believers throughout history.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jeremiah's irrational curse on an innocent messenger illustrate that profound suffering can lead to expressions that aren't theologically precise but are emotionally honest?
2. What does God's non-condemnation of this lament teach us about how to respond to others (and ourselves) during times of deep emotional and spiritual crisis?
3. In what ways does Scripture's inclusion of such raw, unfiltered emotion validate the full range of human experience and provide language for our own suffering?

Interlinear Text

לְאָמֵן רָאָבָא וְאָבִי אָתָּה בְּשָׁרָב אֲשֶׁר יָשַׁרְתָּ

Cursed **be the man** H834 **who brought tidings** H1319 **to my father** H1 **saying** H559

H779 H376

H853

H1

H559

שָׁמְךָהָנָן שָׁמַעַת בְּנֵי לְבָבָךְ

is born **child** **A man** H8056 H8056

H3205

H0

H1121 H2145

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