

# Jeremiah 23:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.

## Analysis

**And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD?** The Hebrew מַשָּׂא (massa, 'burden/oracle/pronouncement') is a wordplay—it means both 'prophetic oracle' and 'heavy burden.' False prophets trivialized this term, using it casually. God responds: **What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD** (מַה־מַּשָּׂא וְנָטַשְׁתִּי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה) (mah-massa v'natashti etkhem ne'um-YHWH). The pun suggests: 'You want a burden? The burden is that I will abandon you!'

The verb נָטַשׁ (natash, 'forsake/abandon/cast off') represents covenant divorce—God withdrawing His presence. This is the ultimate burden: not judgment itself but God's absence. The flippant use of sacred terminology (מַשָּׂא) provokes divine anger. When people treat prophecy as entertainment or casual conversation ('What's God's latest oracle?'), they profane holy things. The severest judgment is divine abandonment—'I will forsake you.' Paul echoes this: 'God gave them over' (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Nothing is more terrifying than getting what you demand—a God who leaves you alone.

## Historical Context

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By Jeremiah's era, the term massa had become common religious jargon, emptied of weight and reverence. People asked 'What is the massa of the LORD?' like asking for gossip or news. This casual treatment of prophetic oracles reflected broader covenant disregard. God's response—'I will forsake you'—predicted the exile when divine presence would depart the temple (Ezekiel 10:18-19) and God would abandon Jerusalem to Babylon.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How might you be treating divine revelation casually, as religious trivia rather than weighty truth?
2. What would it mean for God to 'forsake' you—withdrawing His presence and leaving you to your choices?
3. In what ways does flippant religious language profane sacred realities?

## Interlinear Text

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וְכִי H3588	יִשְׁאַלְךָ H7592	וְהָעָם H5971	הַזֶּה H2088	אוֹ H176	הַנָּבִיא H5030	אוֹ H176
	shall ask	And when this people			or the prophet	
כֹּהֵן H3548	וְאָמַרְתָּ H559	מָה H4100	מַשָּׁא H4853	יְהוָה: H3068	וְאָמַרְתָּ H559	
or a priest	thee saying	What is the burden		of the LORD	thee saying	
אֲלֵיהֶם H413	אֶת H853	מָה H4100	מַשָּׁא H4853	וְנִטְשֶׁתִּי H5203	אֶתְּךָ H853	נָא H5002
		What is the burden		I will even forsake		you saith
				יְהוָה: H3068		
				of the LORD		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Malachi 1:1** (References Lord): The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

**Isaiah 13:1** (Parallel theme): The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

**Jeremiah 12:7** (Parallel theme): I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

**Nahum 1:1** (Parallel theme): The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

**Habakkuk 1:1** (Prophecy): The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

**Hosea 9:12** (Parallel theme): Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

