

Jeremiah 32:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face:
though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet
they have not hearkened to receive instruction.

Analysis

They have turned unto me the back, and not the face (פָּנוּ אֵלַי עֲרֹךְ וְלֹא פָנִים)—A vivid Hebrew idiom for contemptuous rejection. To show someone your back was deliberate disrespect; turning your face toward someone showed honor and attention. Despite God **rising up early and teaching them** (הִשְׁכַּחַם וְלִמַּד)—a Jeremic phrase (7:13, 25:3-4, 35:14) depicting God's eager, persistent instruction like a teacher arriving before dawn—**yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction** (וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ מִן הַיְּהוָה, musar, discipline/correction).

The pathos is profound: God portrays Himself as a diligent, rejected teacher whose students deliberately ignore Him. The phrase 'rising up early' anthropomorphically depicts divine passion and initiative. Israel's refusal of musar (corrective discipline) is spiritual unteachability. Proverbs repeatedly warns that despising musar leads to destruction (Proverbs 1:7, 5:12, 15:32).

Historical Context

God 'taught' Israel through the Law (Torah), prophetic warnings, and disciplinary judgments. Despite 40 years of wilderness lessons, conquest-era miracles, and centuries of prophetic ministry, the nation remained obstinate. This willful unteachability necessitated the exile as ultimate musar.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life are you showing God 'your back' rather than your face?
2. How do you respond to God's 'early rising'—His persistent attempts to teach and correct you?
3. What makes people unteachable, and how can you cultivate a heart receptive to *musar*?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּפְּנוּ	אֵלַי	עַד רִבִּי	וְלֹא	פָּנֵי יָם
And they have turned	H413	unto me the back	H3808	and not the face
H6437		H6203		H6440
וְלִמָּד	אֹתָם	הִשְׁכֵּחַ	וְלִמָּד	וְאֵינָם
and teaching	H853	them rising up early	and teaching	H369
H3925		H7925	H3925	
שְׁמָעַם יָם		לִקְחַת	מוֹסָר:	
them yet they have not hearkened		to receive	instruction	
H8085		H3947	H4148	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 7:13 (Sin): And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

Jeremiah 2:27 (Parallel theme): Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

Ezekiel 8:16 (Parallel theme): And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

Jeremiah 26:5 (Sin): To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened;

Jeremiah 7:24 (Parallel theme): But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

Jeremiah 35:15 (Sin): I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

John 8:2 (Parallel theme): And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.