

Jeremiah 8:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

Analysis

This verse transitions to portraying the people's response to coming invasion: 'Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities.' The Hebrew question 'al-mah anachnu yoshevim' (על-מה אנחנו יושבים) reflects sudden awareness that inaction means death. 'Defenced cities' (arei hamibtzar, ערים הפתצרים) were fortified urban centers offering military protection. Yet the bitter recognition follows: 'for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink.' 'Put to silence' (demamnu, דממו) means to be dumb, destroyed, cut off. 'Water of gall' (mei-rosh, מים רוש) indicates poisoned water, possibly hemlock—divine judgment bringing bitter death. 'Because we have sinned against the LORD' acknowledges the cause—their own covenant violation.

Historical Context

During Babylon's invasions, rural populations fled to fortified cities like Jerusalem, Lachish, and Azekah (Jeremiah 34:7). Archaeological evidence from the Lachish Letters shows desperate communications between these besieged cities. The phrase 'water of gall' appears also in Jeremiah 9:15 and 23:15, indicating God forcing judgment upon the unfaithful. The people's acknowledgment 'we have sinned' may reflect too-late repentance as doom approached.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 – God is love

Study Questions

1. When does recognition of sin come too late to avert judgment's consequences?
2. How does this verse's acknowledgment of sin contrast with the shamelessness described in verse 12?

Interlinear Text

עַל	מָה	חָנוּ	אָנוּ	יְשַׁבְּ	וְאָסַף	אָנוּ	וְאַתֶּם
H5921	H4100	H587		Why do we sit still	assemble		yourselves and let us enter
				H3427	H622		H935
אָל	שָׁרֵךְ	רְמִבְצָר	נוֹ	בְּקָדְמָנוֹ	שִׁם	כִּי	לִיהְיוֹה:
H413	cities	into the defenced	and let us be silent	H8033	H3588		against the LORD
H5892	H4013		H1826				H3068
אֱלֹהֵינוּ	נוֹ	בְּקָדְמָנוֹ	מַיִם	רְאֵשֶׁת	כִּי		
our God	and let us be silent	to drink	and given us water	of gall			H3588
H430	H1826	H8248	H4325	H7219			
פָּטָן אָנוּ	לִיהְיוֹה:						
because we have sinned	against the LORD						
H2398	H3068						

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 23:15 (References Lord): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them

drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

Jeremiah 9:15 (References God): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

Jeremiah 35:11 (Parallel theme): But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

Lamentations 3:19 (Parallel theme): Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

Psalms 69:21 (Parallel theme): They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Matthew 27:34 (Parallel theme): They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Deuteronomy 29:18 (References God): Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

2 Samuel 20:6 (References Lord): And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.