

Jeremiah 8:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

Analysis

God's lament intensifies: 'Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?' The Hebrew meshuvah nitsachat (מְשׁוּבָה נִצְחָת) combines meshuvah (backsliding, apostasy, turning away) with nitsachat (perpetual, enduring, complete). This isn't temporary wandering but entrenched, settled apostasy. 'They hold fast deceit' uses chazaq (חִזֶּק, to strengthen, seize firmly) with tarmit (תַּרְמִית, deceit, treachery). They cling to lies with determination that should characterize faithfulness to God. 'They refuse to return' employs me'anu (מְאָנוּ), indicating willful refusal, not inability. The Hebrew ma'an suggests stubborn determination against repentance. This verse exposes the heart problem: Judah's apostasy wasn't weakness but willfulness, not ignorance but intentional rebellion.

Historical Context

Jeremiah's ministry spanned Judah's final decades, witnessing repeated opportunities for national repentance squandered. Josiah's reforms (622 BC) produced external change without heart transformation. After his death at Megiddo (609 BC), his successors Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah led the nation back into covenant unfaithfulness. Each Babylonian incursion (605, 597 BC) should have prompted repentance but instead hardened resistance.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What distinguishes 'perpetual backsliding' from occasional spiritual failure, and how can we avoid entrenched patterns of sin?
2. How does 'holding fast to deceit' describe the self-deception that accompanies persistent sin?

Interlinear Text

מִשְׁבַּת	יְרוּשָׁלָם	בַּעַד	לִשְׁׁוֹבֵן	מִדְבָּר
H4878	H3389	H2088	H7725	H4069
backsliding	of Jerusalem	the people	Why then is this	slidden back

נִצְחָת	מִאֱנָן	בְּפִרְמָמָה	יְתִת	לִשְׁׁוֹבֵן
by a perpetual	they hold	fast deceit	they refuse	slidden back
H5329	H2388	H8649	H3985	H7725

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 9:6 (Parallel theme): Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 5:3 (Parallel theme): O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

Zechariah 7:11 (Parallel theme): But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

Hebrews 12:25 (Parallel theme): See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Isaiah 30:10 (Parallel theme): Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:

Isaiah 44:20 (Parallel theme): He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Jeremiah 5:27 (Parallel theme): As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

John 5:40 (Parallel theme): And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Hosea 11:7 (Parallel theme): And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.