

Jeremiah 8:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

Analysis

God describes His careful observation of Judah's behavior: 'I hearkened and heard' uses qashav (קָשַׁב, to attend carefully) and shama (עָמַד, to hear). God listened intently for evidence of repentance. 'But they spake not aright' (lo-ken yedabberu, לא-肯 ידברו)—literally 'they do not speak rightly/correctly.' 'No man repented him of his wickedness' reveals the absence of genuine contrition anywhere in the nation. The phrase 'saying, What have I done?' represents the self-examination that should characterize repentance but was absent. Instead, 'every one turned to his course' uses shav (שָׁב, turned) with meruts (מְרֻטָּס, running, course)—like a horse rushing headlong into battle. The imagery suggests unthinking, unstoppable momentum toward destruction.

Historical Context

This observation reflects Jeremiah's forty-year ministry during which he searched for genuine repentance among the people. His search for one righteous person (Jeremiah 5:1) parallels Abraham's intercession for Sodom. The horse-in-battle metaphor resonated with Judah's militaristic culture as they vacillated between Egyptian and Babylonian alliances. Archaeological evidence shows Judah maintained significant cavalry forces during this period.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does God's careful listening for repentance challenge our assumptions about divine awareness of our hearts?
2. What does the failure to ask 'What have I done?' reveal about the spiritual blindness that accompanies unrepentant sin?

Interlinear Text

I hearkened	and heard	הִקְשַׁתְּ בְתִי	לֹא	אֲשָׁמָע	כִּי	רֹא	יִדְבֶּךְ	אֵין	אֵשׁ
H7181	H8085	H3808	H3651	but they speak not aright	H1696	H369	H376	no man	
repented	him of	his wickedness	עַל	בְּעֵת	וְ	רַאֲמָר	מֵה	שָׁעַת	כָּל
H5162	H5921	H7451				H4100	H6213	What have I done	H3605
every one turned	to his course	בְּמַרְכָּבָה	שָׁוֹטֵף	כָּסֵס	וְ	שָׁבַב	בְּמַלְכָּמָה:	rusheth	into the battle
H7725	H4794		H5483			H7857		H4421	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 14:2 (Parallel theme): The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

Ezekiel 18:28 (Parallel theme): Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

2 Peter 3:9 (Repentance): The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

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