

Jeremiah 9:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This verse announces specific judgment: 'Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood.' The Hebrew *la'anah* (לַעֲנָה, wormwood) is a bitter plant, possibly poisonous, representing bitterness and judgment. 'And give them water of gall to drink' (*mei-rosh*) indicates poisoned water. The imagery suggests forced consumption of bitter, deadly substances—the taste of judgment matching the bitterness of their sin. God as the One 'feeding' them indicates divine agency in judgment. The phrase 'LORD of hosts, the God of Israel' combines military might (hosts) with covenant relationship (Israel)—the covenant God commands armies to execute judgment on His own people.

Historical Context

Wormwood (*Artemisia*) grows throughout Palestine; its extreme bitterness made it proverbial for hardship and sorrow. 'Gall' may refer to poisonous hemlock. Both substances appear in judgment contexts throughout Scripture (Deuteronomy 29:18, Lamentations 3:15, 19, Amos 5:7, 6:12). The exile's bitter experiences—deportation, slavery, humiliation—fulfilled this prophecy literally.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the forced consumption of bitter judgment reflect the principle that we taste the consequences of our choices?
2. What does God's personal agency in judgment ('I will feed them') reveal about His active involvement in human history?

Interlinear Text

לְכֹן	כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	צְבָאוֹת	אֱלֹהֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל
H3651	H3541	Therefore thus saith	the LORD	of hosts	the God	of Israel
		H559	H3068	H6635	H430	H3478
הִנֵּנִי	מֵאֲכִילֵם	אֶת	הָעָם	הַזֶּה	לֶעֱנָה	
H2005	Behold I will feed	H853	them even this people	H2088	with wormwood	
	H398		H5971		H3939	
וְהִשְׁקִיתִם	מִי	רָאשׁ:				
to drink	and give them water	of gall				
H8248	H4325	H7219				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 8:14 (References God): 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.

Psalms 80:5 (Parallel theme): Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

Lamentations 3:15 (Parallel theme): He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

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.

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