

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* (לְעַנָּה, 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

ישָׁרָאָה לְאֱלֹהִים צָבָאות יְהֹוָה אֶת־רֹאשֵׁי אַمּוּנָה כִּי לְכָךְ |
H3651 H3541 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts the God of Israel

לְאַתָּה מִאַכְּלָל מִן־הַנֶּגֶב אֶת־פָּעָם בְּעֵמָה הַנְּגָדֵל |
H2005 Behold I will feed them even this people with wormwood

רְאֵשׁ מִי וַיְשַׁקֵּת יָם וְשַׁקֵּית יָם
to drink and give them water of gall

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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