

# Jeremiah

## Chapter 9

Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! 2 Oh that I had in the desert a travelers' lodging place, that I might leave my people and go away from them! For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men. 3 They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, declares the LORD. 4 Let everyone beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a deceiver, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. 5 Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. 6 Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the LORD. 7 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do, because of my people? 8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him. 9 Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this? 10 "I will take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard; both the birds of the air and the beasts have fled and are gone. 11 I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant." 12 Who is the man so wise that he can understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? 13 And the LORD says: "Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it, 14 but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them. 15 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed this people with bitter food, and give them poisonous water to drink. 16 I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them." 17 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider, and call for the mourning women to come; send for the skillful women to come; 18 let them make haste and raise a wailing over us, that our eyes may run down with tears and our eyelids flow with water. 19 For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion: 'How we are ruined! We are utterly shamed, because we have left the land, because they have cast down our dwellings.'" 20 Hear, O women, the word of the LORD, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth; teach to your daughters a lament, and each to her neighbor a dirge. 21 For death has come up into our windows; it has entered our palaces, cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares. 22 Speak: "Thus declares the LORD, 'The dead bodies of men shall fall like dung upon the open field, like sheaves after the reaper, and none shall gather them.'" 23 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD." 25 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh— 26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart."

9:1–2† The prophet's grief is highlighted as he speaks of his countrymen with tender sympathy in v. 1 and with indignant disgust in v. 2. (CSB)

**9:1†** Jeremiah is often called the “weeping prophet” (see v. 10; the book of Lamentations; cf. 2Sa 18:33; Mt 23:37; Ro 9:2–4; 10:1). (CSB)

*head were waters* – An inexhaustible reservoir. (Kretzmann)

*fountain of tears* – Flowing in an endless stream. (Kretzmann)

*slain...of my people* – Those who have become victims of their own foolishness in transgressing the Law of the Lord. Although the apostate Jews had fully deserved the punishment which came upon them, the prophet was still filled with deep compassion for them. At the same time his feeling of right and duty causes him to draw back in horror from every contact with them. (Kretzmann)

**9:2** The prophet wants to get as far away from his wicked countrymen as possible (cf. Ps 55:6–8). (CSB)

*travelers’ lodging place* – Lodge or caravansary, such as are found in the Orient. (Kretzmann)

*adulterers*. Infidelity to God (idolatry) was the root cause of the catalog of crimes against fellow human beings listed in the following verses. (TLSB)

*company*. The Hebrew for this word is always used elsewhere in the OT in the sense of a solemn religious assembly (see, e.g., Dt 16:8), sometimes perverted by the worshipers and therefore falling under divine judgment (see Isa 1:13; Am 5:21). (CSB)

**9:3–9** The Lord speaks. (CSB)

**9:3** *tongue like a bow*. So that lies are the arrows which they send to their mark. (Kretzmann)

*do not know me*. They do not even recognize or acknowledge the Lord and so cannot trust in Him. (TLSB)

**9:4** *deceiver*. Israel reverted to the deceptive nature of their ancestor Jacob. (TLSB)

**9:6** *refuse to know*. The situation has deteriorated even further (v. 3 says simply “do not acknowledge me”). (CSB)

**9:7** *refine and test*. The Lord will test his people “in the furnace of affliction.” (CSB)

Test them in the fire of tribulation, as the refiner tests metals in his furnace. (Kretzmann)

**9:10–11** Jeremiah speaks the words of v 10; then quotes the Lord in v 11. (TLSB)

**9:10** *weeping and wailing*. The prophet once more taking up his lament. (Kretzmann)

*pastures of the wilderness*. Good for poor grazing at best (see 1Sa 17:28; cf. Ex 3:1). (CSB)

**9:11** The Lord speaks. (CSB)

*lair of jackals*. See 10:22; 49:33; 51:37; Ps 44:19; Isa 13:21–22; La 5:18; Eze 13:4; Mal 1:3; contrast Isa 35:7. (CSB)

**9:12** The prophet asks a series of questions. (CSB)

**9:13** The Lord answers the prophet and then continues to speak through v. 19. (CSB)

*law, which I set before them.* In the days of Moses (see Dt 4:8). (CSB)

The message brought by the true prophets, neither walked therein, not making the Word of the Lord their one rule of life. (Kretzmann)

**9:15** *eat bitter food and drink poisoned water.* Centuries earlier, Moses had warned the Israelites concerning just such a fate (see Dt 29:18). (CSB)

**9:16** *I will scatter them.* See 13:24; 18:17; 30:11; 46:28. This warning was given in Dt 28:64 as one of the covenant curses. (CSB)

*consumed.* A large number of them thus being destroyed, especially among those who sought the shelter of Egypt, against the warning of God. Cp. chap. 44, 27. (Kretzmann)

**9:17** *mourning women.* Professionals, paid to mourn at funerals and other sorrowful occasions (see 2Ch 35:25; Ecc 12:5; Am 5:16). (CSB)

Those hired to give expression to their grief by plaintive cries and a general mournful behavior, found also in the New Testament, Matt. 9, 23. (Kretzmann)

*skillful women.* Trained to lead the mourning at funerals (cf Mt 9:23). (TLSB)

**9:18** The purpose of the professional mourners was to arouse the bereaved to weep and lament. (CSB)

*eyes may run down with tears.* In the strongest expression of excessive sorrow. (Kretzmann)

**9:19** *How we are ruined.* God's inspired spokesman not only predicts the Babylonian exile but also anticipates how disgraced the exiles will be after their defeat. (TLSB)

In a lamentation over the city's pitiful fate, but without a true repentance of the heart. (Kretzmann)

**9:20–21** The prophet speaks. (CSB)

**9:20** The wailing women will have to teach their daughters how to lament, so great will be the need for their services. (CSB)

So that the older generation of mourning women might quickly be replaced, and that there might always be a sufficient number of professional mourners in view of the coming slaughter. (Kretzmann)

**9:21** *Death.* Personified here (as in Hab 2:5). Canaanite mythology included a deity named Mot (a word related to the Hebrew word for "death"), the god of infertility and the netherworld. (CSB)

Death is personified to dramatize wholesale slaughter by the enemy. Cf 15:7–9; 18:21. (TLSB)

*into our windows it has entered..* Said of enemy soldiers in Joel 2:9. (CSB)

Unexpectedly, stealthily, like a thief in the night, and is entered into our palaces, for the soldiers of the invading army, finding the doors barred, would gain admission through openings which are not so firmly barred. (Kretzmann)

*children ... young men.* Thus death would take its harvest both in the houses and outside, in the streets and market-places. (Kretzmann)

**9:22 reaper.** The concept of death as the “grim reaper” comes largely from this verse. (CSB)

There would be neither a gathering of the bundles nor the labor of gleaners to take care of this grain. The words imply utter destruction, an utter casting aside on the part of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

**9:23** *Let not ... the rich man boast of his riches.* An almost exact parallel occurs in the Aramaic. (CSB)

All these resources would fail to deliver the Jews from the calamities which God was about to bring upon them. (CB)

1 Corinthians 3:19, “or the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”

Psalms 49:17, “for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him.”

1 Peter 1:24, “For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall.”

*Words of Ahiqar*, written about a century after Jeremiah’s time: “Let not the rich man say, ‘In my riches I am glorious.’” (CSB)

**9:24** 1Co 1:31 summarizes: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.” (CSB)

*this ... these.* Ultimately, only God and our knowledge of and love for him are worthwhile. (CSB)

*understands and knows.* Ger: “Knowledge is not merely historical but also practical, not of the letter but of the spirit, not unworking and idle but working and effective, that is, it embraces true faith in Christ inwardly in the heart [Jn 17:3] and commends itself outwardly through a zeal for good works” (ThC E2 § 3). (TLSB)

Me, that he has learned to know the true God, the Triune God and the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the one Messiah of the world. (Kretzmann)

*I am the LORD.* Ex 6:2–8, a key passage on the doctrine of redemption, begins and ends with this statement of divine self-disclosure. (CSB)

*kindness.* The Hebrew for this word is translated “devotion” in 2:2 (see note there). (CSB)

His grace and mercy occupying first place in His attitude over against us. (Kretzmann)

*in these things I delight.* See Ps 11:7; 33:5; 99:4; 103:6; Mic 6:8; 7:18. (CSB)

He Himself is active in exercising His bliss in them, and He is anxious to have His children and all men walk in them. (Kretzmann)

**9:25** *circumcised merely in the flesh.* Though physically marked by the sign of the covenant (Gn 17:11), the people were no better than the heathen. (TLSB)

Literally, "every circumcision in foreskin," that is, He would visit in anger all men whose heart was not turned to Him in the true obedience of faith, whether they had submitted to the rite of circumcision or not. (Kretzmann)

**9:26** *who dwell in the desert.* Arab tribes (see 25:23; 49:32), later to be attacked by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (see 49:28–33). (CSB)

Israelites were not the only people to circumcise. (TLSB)

*cut the corners of their hair.* A forbidden heathen custom. (TLSB)

Literally, "all having their hair," that is, their beard, "clipped at the corners," a custom in use among the heathen nations, but expressly forbidden to the Israelites, Lev. 19,27; 21,5. (Kretzmann)

*uncircumcised in heart.* That is, in their case the outward observance of the formerly significant rite had lost its meaning, since they had not turned to the Lord in true repentance. Without such change of heart the rite of acceptance into the outward membership in Israel was of no avail, just as the Sacrament of Baptism has no value in the case of those who do not believe. A mere outward observance of the customs of religion will not bring men to true fellowship with the Lord. (Kretzmann)

**8:18–9:26** The Lord grieves over the sin of His people, which will cause their destruction. Although it breaks His heart, God must punish unrepentant sinners because He is just and righteous. Yet the Lord yearns to forgive His people. Today, repent and turn to Him with all your heart. Though the Lord's testing is painful, He promises to refine you through Christ. • Teach us, O Lord, to rely on You alone for our salvation, and lead us every day to live our faith in thought, word, and deed, through Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)