

God Fails Not

Key Verses: *“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”*

—*Lamentations*
3:21,22

Selected Scripture:
Lamentations 3:16-26

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

has been called the “weeping prophet” because he foretold the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. In our lesson we find metaphorical expressions of the distress of God’s people due to their disobedience. They were like ones living on gritty bread fit more for breaking teeth than giving nourishment, and they were in a state of great mourning like ones covered in ashes.—Lam. 3:16

In II Chronicles 35:25 we read, “Jeremiah composed

laments for Josiah, and to this day all the male and female singers commemorate Josiah in the laments. These became a tradition in Israel and are written in the Laments.” (*New International Version*) The meaning of “laments” in these verses is “a dirge, chant, or elegy.” It was customary for the Jews to make lamentations or mournful chants at the death of a great leader. Jeremiah recognized in King Josiah a genuine faithfulness to Jehovah that merited a special observance.

The Book of Lamentations is one of the five “Scrolls” in the Hebrew Bible, the others being the Books of Esther, Song of Solomon, Ruth, and Ecclesiastes. Each of these scrolls is read in synagogues on a different Jewish holy day. The Book of Lamentations is read

annually on Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the month Av, in both morning and evening synagogue services. This is a special day of communal mourning on the Jewish calendar. Rabbis have claimed that God ordained this day as one of punishment for the lack of faith evidenced by the Israelites during their desert wanderings after the Exodus from Egypt. Other events mourned on this day are the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.

Known as Judaism's saddest day of the year, Tisha B'Av is a means of raising awareness of personal failings. It is a time of introspection to reconnect with spiritual rather than fleshly needs. The sadness of Lamentations reminds Jews of the importance of not only mourning over personal sin, but asking the Lord for his forgiveness when they fail. Jeremiah was also a prophet of hope. He reminds us in today's Key Verse that we are not lost in our past failings: "I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease."—*New Living Translation*

As Christians following in the footsteps of Jesus, we are likewise instructed to put away fleshly deeds and strengthen our spiritual connection with the Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul admonishes us: "Put all these things behind you. No more evil temper or furious rage: no more evil thoughts or words about others, no more evil thoughts or words about God, and no more filthy conversation. Don't tell each other lies any more, for you have finished with the old man and all he did and have begun life as the new man, who is out to learn what he ought to be, according to the plan of God."—Col. 3:8-10, *J.B. Phillips New Testament*

If ever we feel hopeless and disconnected from the Lord, or overcome with a feeling of guilt, may Jeremiah's words of consolation and hope encourage us: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."—Lam. 3:26 ■