

This is the second of the **Three [Haftarot] of Affliction (Aramaic: תלת דפורענותא)**, describing the destruction of Judah, Jerusalem, and the First Temple in 586 BCE. They are recited¹ on consecutive Shabbatot of the “Three Weeks”, between the fasts of the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B’Av.

Three of Affliction #2 (Matot or Masei): Jeremiah 2:4-28, and 3:4 or 4:1-2

[Last week’s Haftarah](#) presented Jeremiah’s call to prophecy in 626 BCE, and his Divine mission to warn Judah of imminent destruction and inspire it to return wholly to God. Its concluding verses instructed Jeremiah to remind the people, in God’s Name, of their loyalty to God in the wilderness after the Exodus, and of His promise to destroy those who attack them.

Continuing with the very next verse, this Haftarah is how Jeremiah begins to deliver that message to the entire nation, including its exiled tribes, with particular emphasis on its political and spiritual leaders. Invoking the heavens and even other nations’ loyalty to their false gods, he expresses astonishment at centuries of Israelite ingratitude for God’s kindnesses after the Exodus. With searing images and derision, Jeremiah lambasts the people for their lustful enthusiasm for local idols. Their idolatry betrays God’s kindness, defiles the land He gave them, distances them from His protection, and leads to the Land’s destruction. As in the past, idolatrous allies will not only betray Judah, they will attack it. Contrary to the astonishing suggestion that even repentance cannot help them (v. 22), the Haftarah skips many verses in order to conclude with a tenuous call for repentance.

Haftarah Breakdown

Verses 2:4-8: Jeremiah reminds Judean and Northern Kingdom exiles that God redeemed them from Egypt, sustained them in the wilderness, and brought them to a good Land- but ungrateful generations of priests, prophets, Torah leaders, and societal leaders have abandoned God and defiled the Land with idolatry.

Jeremiah 2:8	ירמיהו ב:ח
I [God] brought you to a plentiful country, to eat its fruit and its bounty [but] you came and defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination.	וְאָבִיא אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַפְּרִמָּה לְאָכַל פְּרִיָּהּ וְטוֹבָהּ וְתַבְּאֹה וְתַטְמְאוּ אֶת-אֶרֶצִי וְנִחַלְתִּי שְׁמִתְּכֶם לְתוֹעֵבָה:

Verses 2:9-13: For exchanging the source of life, God, for worthless, foreign gods, God will prosecute His people now and in the future. No other nation has committed such a crime; even the heavens are astounded.

Jeremiah 2:11	ירמיהו ב:יא
Has a nation [ever] exchanged its god, [even though] they are not gods? [Yet] My people exchanged its glory for that which helps not.	הֲהִימִיר גּוֹי אֱלֹהִים וְהִקְמָה לֹא אֱלֹהִים וְעַמִּי הִמִּיר כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּלֹא יוֹשִׁיל:

Verses 2:14-17: Judah’s own abandonment of God’s path causes Him to abandon Judah, leaving it as prey and victims for Egypt and other ferocious enemies to kill, lay waste, humiliate, and take captives.

Jeremiah 2:17	ירמיהו ב:יז
Is this not what you have done to yourself [due to] your abandoning the Lord, your God, as He led you in the [i.e., His] way?	הֲלוֹא-זֹאת תַּעֲשֶׂה-לְךָ עֲזַבְךָ אֶת-ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּעֵת מוֹלְכֶךָ בְּדַרְךָ:

¹ In years when Rosh Chodesh Av coincides with Shabbat, some communities read this Haftarah. Others read the Haftarah for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, Isaiah 66:1-24. A third group reads this Haftarah followed by verses from the Haftarah for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh.

Verses 2:18-19: Having left God's path and lost His protection, Judah instead trods paths to Assyria and Egypt to seek security in alliances. Judah's lack of fear of God and backsliding from Him will cause it to suffer.

Jeremiah 2:18	ירמיהו ב:י"ח
And now, what do you [Judah, seek] on the road to Egypt to drink the water of the Shihor [Nile]? What do you [seek] on the road to Assyria to drink the water of [the Euphrates]?	ועתה מה-לך לְגֵרָד מִצְרַיִם לְשׁוֹת מֵי שִׁחֹר וּמֵה-לְךָ לְגֵרָד אֲשׁוּר לְשׁוֹת מֵי נָהָר:

Verses 2:20-24: God's "true seed," His people, lustily abandoned Him for hilltop idols long ago. Their visible tracks in Jerusalem's Gehinnom Valley betray their denials of idolatry and render useless their attempts to repent.

Jeremiah 2:23	ירמיהו ב:כ"ג
How do you [Judah] say, "I have not been defiled; I have not gone after the Baalim [idols]"? See your way in the Valley, know what you have done- [like] a lustful young she-camel, determinedly traveling her paths!	אֵיךְ תֹאמְרִי לֹא נִטְמָאתִי אַחֲרֵי הַבְּעָלִים לֹא הִלַּכְתִּי רָאִי דַרְכְּךָ בְּגֵיא דְעֵי מִה עֲשִׂית בְּכֶרֶה קִלְה מִשְׁרַכַּת דְּרָכֶיהָ:

Verses 2:25: Judah scorns God's warning that its actions will cause it to suffer, instead reiterating its love for pursuing idolatry.

Jeremiah 2:25	ירמיהו ב:כ"ה
[God told you, Judah, to] "withhold your foot from going barefoot and your throat from thirst!" [Yet] you said, "Despair! No! For I love strangers, and I will follow them."	מִנְעֵי רַגְלְךָ מִיֵּחָף וּגּוֹרֵךְ [וּגְרוֹנְךָ] מִצְמָאָה וְתֹאמְרִי נוֹאֵשׁ לֹא כִּי-אֶהְרֶבְתִּי זָרִים וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם אֵלֶךְ:

Verses 2:26-28: Judah and its temporal and religious leaders consider idols to be their parents and turn to God only as a last resort in times of trouble. God's mocking reply: Let your idols, as numerous as your cities, save you!

Jeremiah 2:27	ירמיהו ב:כ"ז
They say to the wood, "You are my father," and to the stone, "You bore us," for they turned their nape to Me and not their face. [Yet] when evil befalls them, they say [to Me], "Arise and save us!"	אֲמָרִים לְעֵץ אָבִי אֶתְּהָ וְלִאֲבָן אֶת יִלְדֹתָנִי [יִלְדֹתָנִי] כִּי-פָנּוּ אֵלַי עֲרַף וְלֹא פָגַם וּבָעַת רַעְתֶּם לְאִמְרֵי קוֹמָה וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנו:

Verses 3:4², 4:1-2: Despite Judah's sins, it can and must still return to God. Judah's fulfillment of its oath to God to act with truth, righteousness, and judgment will cause all nations to regard Israel and God as sources of blessing and glory for them.

Jeremiah 4:2	ירמיהו ד:ב
You will swear "As the Lord lives" in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness. [Then] the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory.	וְנִשְׁבַּעְתָּ חַיֵּה! בְּאֵמֶת בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבְצִדְקָה וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בוֹ גּוֹיִם וּבוֹ יִתְהַלְלוּ:

With emendations, all translations are from Sefaria.org. To dedicate, comment, or subscribe, email haftarahhelper@gmail.com.

² The caption above summarizes 4:1-2, read by Sepharadim. Ashkenazim read 3:4: "From now on, you [Judah] should call Me, 'Father [as] You are [my] Guide since my youth.'" In the context of its surrounding verses, this verse criticizes Judah for what it **should - but does not, due to its idolatry** - say about God when beseeching Him to save them from drought. Plucked from that context in order to end the Haftarah with a single, uplifting verse, however, it relates how those hearing the Haftarah **should - truly, as righteous believers** - relate to God.