

## **Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Session 10, Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 – Repentance/Return Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Yates, Jeremiah, Session 10, Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 – Repentance/Return, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture by Dr. Gary Yates analyzes Jeremiah chapters 3 and 4, focusing on the repeated calls to repentance addressed to Judah and Israel. The lecture uses the Hebrew word *shub* (to return or repent) as a key concept, examining its significance within the context of God's covenant relationship with his people and the implications of their unfaithfulness. The analysis explores the implications of Deuteronomy's divorce law as a metaphor for God's relationship with his people and considers whether reconciliation is possible. Finally, the lecture highlights the consequences of Judah's and Israel's failure to repent, emphasizing the theme of a missed opportunity for divine mercy and forgiveness.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 10 – Double click icon to play in  
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]  
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →  
Major Prophets → Jeremiah).**



**Yates\_Jeremiah\_Ses  
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### **3. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 10, Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 – Repentance/Return**

#### **Jeremiah 3:1-4:4: A Call to Repentance**

#### **Review Quiz**

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each:

1. What are the two main components of a prophetic call to repentance?
2. According to Dr. Yates, what is the ultimate goal of prophetic preaching, beyond simply announcing impending judgment?
3. What does the word "shub" mean, and what are its positive and negative connotations?
4. How does Jeremiah 3:1 use the analogy of divorce to highlight Judah's unfaithfulness?
5. What does the divorce law in Deuteronomy 24 stipulate about the possibility of remarriage after a second marriage?
6. How does the concept of "Tameh" or defilement relate to Judah's actions and the divorce analogy?
7. According to the lecture, why was Judah's sin considered worse than Israel's?
8. What specific call to repentance is issued to Israel in Jeremiah 3:12, and what is the only condition?
9. What does God promise to do for his people if they return to him in Jeremiah 3:15-18?
10. According to the lecture, what is the significance of the imagery of breaking up the fallow ground and circumcising the heart?

#### **Quiz Answer Key**

1. A prophetic call to repentance includes an appeal to change one's ways and motivations as to why that change should happen, either through positive promises of blessing or negative warnings of punishment.

2. The ultimate goal of prophetic preaching is to persuade the people to change their ways and turn back to God, as God provides a warning before enacting judgment, thereby leaving the opportunity to avoid it through repentance.
3. "Shub" means to turn or to repent. Its negative connotation refers to turning away from God, and its positive connotation means turning back to God and changing one's ways.
4. Jeremiah 3:1 uses the divorce analogy to ask if it's even possible for God to take back a faithless wife (Judah) who has "married" other gods, in light of the divorce law in the Torah.
5. Deuteronomy 24 stipulates that a man could not remarry his former wife if she had married another man, even if that second marriage ended in divorce or the death of her second husband.
6. "Tameh" refers to the defilement or pollution of the land that occurs when a woman is unfaithful. In the analogy, it reflects how Judah's unfaithfulness has defiled the land and made reconciliation seemingly impossible.
7. Judah's sin was considered worse than Israel's because they had witnessed the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness and still continued in their sinful ways. They should have learned from Israel's mistakes but chose not to.
8. In Jeremiah 3:12, the call to repentance is "Return, faithless Israel." The only condition for being restored to God is to acknowledge their guilt and rebellion against God and stop following other gods.
9. If God's people return to him, he promises to give them shepherds after his own heart who will lead them with knowledge and understanding. He also promises a future restoration where Jerusalem will be his throne and all nations will gather to him.
10. The images of breaking up fallow ground and circumcising the heart represent the need for a complete transformation of one's inner being, which is necessary to truly turn back to God and allow his word to produce fruit in their lives.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the use of the marriage metaphor and the divorce law in Deuteronomy 24 as it pertains to understanding the relationship between God and his people in Jeremiah 3:1-4:4. What does this legal framework reveal about the nature of God's faithfulness and Judah's infidelity?
2. Discuss the significance of the repeated calls to "shub" (return/repent) in Jeremiah 3:1-4:4. What do these calls reveal about the character of God, his desire for his people, and the opportunities available for reconciliation?
3. Compare and contrast the positive and negative motivations in the prophetic call to repentance found in Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 and Amos 5. How do these motivational aspects work together to emphasize the seriousness of the choice that the people face?
4. Examine how the concept of the Abrahamic covenant is used in Jeremiah 3-4 to emphasize the consequences of Judah's sin for the nation and the world. What does this reveal about the purpose of Israel?
5. Evaluate the significance of the imagery found in Jeremiah 4:3-4, including the breaking up of fallow ground, not sowing among the thorns, and the circumcising of the heart. How do these images help the reader to understand what true repentance looks like?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Shub:** The Hebrew verb meaning “to turn” or “to return.” It has both positive connotations (repentance, returning to God) and negative connotations (turning away from God, backsliding).
- **Call to Repentance:** A common prophetic genre in the Old Testament, consisting of an appeal to change one’s ways and offering motivations for that change (positive blessings or negative punishments).
- **Hesed:** A Hebrew term referring to God's steadfast love, mercy, and covenantal faithfulness.
- **Tameh:** A Hebrew word meaning “unclean,” “defiled,” or “polluted.” In the context of Jeremiah, it refers to how Judah's unfaithfulness defiled the land.
- **Fallow Ground:** Unplowed or neglected land, metaphorically representing a hardened heart that needs to be broken up to receive God’s word.
- **Circumcision of the Heart:** A metaphor for spiritual transformation in the Old Testament, requiring cutting away the resistance to God and turning to him completely.
- **Abrahamic Covenant:** The covenant God made with Abraham, promising to make him a great nation, give him a land, and bless all nations through him. This covenant establishes the role of the Israelites as mediators of blessing to other nations.
- **Divorce Law (Deuteronomy 24):** The Mosaic law that permitted divorce under certain conditions. In Deuteronomy 24, the law stipulates that a man may not take back his first wife if she has married another man, even if that marriage ends, which is a key concept used by the prophet Jeremiah.
- **Matzah:** Hebrew word for "found." In context, it can mean "found fault" and is used in Jeremiah to make a connection to the divorce law in Deuteronomy 24.

## 4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Yates\_Jer\_En\_Lecture10.pdf":

### Briefing Document: Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 - The Call to Repentance (Shub)

#### Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. Gary Yates' lecture on Jeremiah 3:1-4:4, focusing on the theme of repentance ("shub" in Hebrew). This passage is presented as a "call to repentance" following God's indictment of Judah for unfaithfulness in chapter 2. The lecture highlights God's willingness to offer forgiveness and restoration despite Judah's repeated sins, emphasizing the tension between divine judgment and mercy. The key term "shub" is explored in its dual meaning: turning away from God (backsliding) and turning back to Him (repentance).

#### Key Themes and Ideas:

##### 1. The Legal Context: Adultery and Divorce:

- **Guilt:** Judah is found guilty of adultery against God, a capital offense in ancient Israel. This is framed in terms of marital unfaithfulness, with God as the husband and Judah as the wife.
- **Unexpected Mercy:** Instead of immediate judgment, God offers a chance to repent, similar to instances found in Isaiah 1 and Micah where God reasons with his people. "But as we see at the end of the last session, God, as the judge, often after these courtroom scenes, is willing to bring the people back to his chambers and to negotiate with them and allow them to have the opportunity to repent, to change their ways, and to avoid judgment."
- **The Call to Repentance Genre:** This section of Jeremiah utilizes a prophetic genre of "calls to repentance" which always includes an appeal to change and motivations (positive – blessings, or negative – punishments).
- **Amos as Precedent:** The lecture cites Amos 5 as an example of a call to repentance, including the choice between "seek me and live" versus divine judgment. Dr Yates also points out the prophet's objection to ritual when it is not accompanied by a change of behavior. "Get rid of the empty ritual and instead do the things that God has commanded you. And if you do that, there's always the possibility that you will live."

## 1. God's Character: Mercy and Patience:

- **Relentless Forgiveness:** God's character is defined by his willingness to forgive and be merciful, even after repeated offenses. This is highlighted by his actions after the golden calf incident (Exodus 34), revealing himself as "merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in hesed."
- **Flexible Deadlines:** God is portrayed as having a "flexible deadline," giving multiple chances to repent, despite seemingly final pronouncements of judgment. Examples include the times of Hezekiah and Josiah who turned back to the Lord, resulting in God relenting from planned judgments.
- **Misconceptions about God:** The lecture challenges the idea of the Old Testament God as solely wrathful, emphasizing His loving and merciful nature. Yates cites Goldengate who says, "the God of the Old Testament, he's more the forgiving grandfather many times." This contrasts with the New Testament's call to repentance.

## 1. The Significance of "Shub":

- **Dual Meaning:** The Hebrew word "shub" is central, meaning both "to turn away" (backsliding) and "to turn back" (repentance). "The positive connotation is that shuv means to repent, change one's ways, or turn back to God."
- **Prevalence:** The root "shub" is used 17 times in this section (Jeremiah 3:1-4:4), highlighting the central theme of return.

## 1. The Challenge of Repentance:

- **Divorce Law as Metaphor:** Jeremiah uses the divorce law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to illustrate the severity of Judah's unfaithfulness. According to the law, a divorced woman who marries another man could never return to her first husband. "the possibility of Judah coming back to God doesn't seem likely."
- **Hopelessness?:** The law and the severity of Judah's actions make the possibility of restoration seem impossible. However, God's love is so great that he's willing to set aside the law to take his people back. "God loves Judah so much that he is willing to set aside his own divorce law to take his people back."
- **Israel's Example:** The example of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (also referred to as "faithless" and "turning away") which received a "certificate of divorce", serves as a warning. Judah saw this yet did not turn from their sins, making them worse than Israel.

- **Hardened Hearts:** The people show no shame or remorse, and their actions contradict their words, further complicating the prospect of their repentance. "They continue to practice these sins and these adulteries. They have a hard heart. They're not even ashamed of what they've done."

#### 1. **God's Calls to Return and Promises:**

- **Repeated Appeals:** Despite the unlikelihood, God repeatedly calls on Israel to return. The specific calls include:
  - "Return, faithless Israel" (3:12) after they acknowledge their sin.
  - "Return, O faithless children" (3:14)
  - "Return, O faithless ones...and I will heal your turning away" (3:22)
  - "If you return, O Israel...to me, you should return" (4:1)
- **Positive Motivations:** The positive motivations for returning include the promise of shepherds who will feed them with knowledge and understanding (3:15). He also promises to restore them to Zion, and that Jerusalem would become the throne of the Lord.
- **Restoration:** The restoration that is promised also envisions blessings that would extend to all nations (4:2)
- **Inner Transformation:** If they returned, God promised to heal their "turning away" and change their hearts from hard soil, to a heart that could receive the word of God. (3:22; 4:3-4) "Break up your fallow ground and sow not among the thorns... circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your hearts."

#### 1. **Consequences of Unrepentance:**

- **Warning:** If the people refuse to return, God's wrath will break out like fire (4:4), just as it did with the example of the Northern Kingdom.
- **Missed Opportunity:** The tragedy is that the judgment is unnecessary, and the people are missing out on the blessings of repentance. "The tragedy of this missed opportunity to avoid judgment is that it's an awful thing that the judgment occurs. The more tragic thing is to realize and understand that the judgment was absolutely unnecessary."



- **Plot Setup:** Jeremiah's ministry was ultimately a failure in human terms due to the people's refusal to repent. The book's narrative arc will explore the consequences of this refusal.
- **Future Prophecies:** The people's failure to turn back is foreshadowed in Jeremiah 8:4-5, where they are described as having "perpetual turning away" and a refusal to return.
- **Uncircumcised Hearts:** Jeremiah 6:10 illustrates their hardened hearts and inability to listen. "Their ears are uncircumcised. They cannot listen. Behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn."

#### 1. **The Structure of Jeremiah and the Call to Return:**

- **Call to Return Predominates:** The calls to return are prominent in the early chapters of Jeremiah (2-10) but then diminish greatly through the book, suggesting the people's rejection of the offer. This leads to the eventual destruction of Jerusalem. "What O'Connor notes, though, is that in chapters 10 to 20 in Jeremiah, there are only three calls to return, only three specific places. And then, as we move from chapters 21 to 25, essentially, those calls to return disappear." **Conclusion:**

This passage in Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 serves as a crucial moment in the book, setting up the plot with the people having an opportunity to repent and receive blessings, or refuse and receive judgement. The focus on "shub" emphasizes the need for a complete turning back to God, both in action and in heart. Despite the people's unfaithfulness and the legal implications of divorce, God's love and mercy are presented as the main motivator for the calls to return. This sets up the narrative tension between God's offer of forgiveness and the people's ultimate rejection of it, resulting in devastating consequences. The lecture highlights the timeless importance of repentance and recognizing God's grace and patience.

## 5. FAQs on Yates, Jeremiah, Session 10, Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 – Repentance/Return, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Jeremiah 3:1-4:4, The Call to Repentance

1. **What is the primary literary form of Jeremiah 3:1-4:4, and what is its central theme?** This section of Jeremiah is primarily a "call to repentance." The central theme revolves around the concept of *shub*, a Hebrew word meaning to "turn" or "return," particularly in the context of turning back to God after straying. This section explores the possibility of Judah's repentance and restoration after their covenantal infidelity. The idea is that God offers the people a chance to change and avoid judgment.
2. **How does the metaphor of marriage and divorce relate to God's relationship with Israel and Judah in this passage?** The passage employs the metaphor of marriage and divorce to illustrate the covenant relationship between God and His people. God is portrayed as a husband and Israel/Judah as an unfaithful wife who has committed spiritual adultery by turning to other gods. This metaphor highlights the broken covenant and Judah's unfaithfulness. God's question, "Would you return to me?" alludes to the divorce laws of Deuteronomy 24 that would prohibit a divorced woman from returning to her first husband if she had remarried, therefore making it seem impossible for God to take Israel/Judah back.
3. **What is the significance of the word *shub* in this section of Jeremiah?** The word *shub* (turn/return/repent) is a key theological term in the book of Jeremiah. It appears frequently in this section, emphasizing the call for the people to turn away from their sinful ways and back to God. *Shub* can be used negatively to mean "turning away from God," describing backsliding, or positively to mean "turning back to God," emphasizing repentance and a change of heart and life. The repetition of this word highlights the core message of repentance.
4. **What are the positive and negative motivations presented in the call to repentance?** The call to repentance includes both positive and negative motivations. Positive motivations are the promise of blessings, restoration, and a renewed relationship with God if the people repent and return. Negative motivations involve warnings of judgment, punishment, and the withholding of blessings if they refuse to change their ways. This provides the people a clear choice of either life or death, blessing or judgment.

5. **Why does it initially seem impossible for Judah to return to God, according to the passage?** The divorce law in Deuteronomy 24, which forbids a divorced woman who remarried from returning to her first husband, makes it seem legally impossible for God to take back his people, who have been unfaithful and "married" to other gods. Additionally, the history of both Israel and Judah is full of turning away from God. In the present day, the people are not even ashamed of their sins.
6. **How does the call for the people to "circumcise their hearts" relate to the theme of repentance?** The image of circumcision, a physical sign of covenant with God, is used metaphorically to call for the circumcision of the heart. This signifies that repentance requires more than outward change; it involves a deep, internal transformation. It is a call to remove whatever resists turning back to God, allowing the word of God to produce fruit in the lives of the people.
7. **What is the significance of the historical examples of God's willingness to relent from judgment, and how does this inform understanding of God's character?** The text highlights historical examples, such as Hezekiah's and Josiah's reigns, where God relented from judgment when the people turned back to Him. These examples demonstrate God's willingness to forgive and restore a broken relationship and that he is merciful and slow to anger. These instances emphasize that while God is just and will punish sin, he is also merciful and consistently offers opportunities for repentance. The ultimate tragedy is the judgement is completely avoidable.
8. **What is the overall plot development suggested by the early chapters of Jeremiah, and what is the expected response of the people based on chapter 8?** The early chapters of Jeremiah set up the central plot of the book, which revolves around God's call for His people to return to Him. Despite God's persistent offers of repentance and restoration, the book, specifically chapter 8 verses 4 and 5, indicates that the people will refuse to return to the Lord. This refusal sets the stage for the unfolding tragedy of Jerusalem's destruction and the exile, which is the direct consequence of their unrepentant heart.