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Jeremiah

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| Principal Contributor | Imre Tokics |
| Editor | Soraya Homayouni |
| Contributing Editors | George Belser, Esther Doss |
| Publication Manager | Lea Alexander Greve |
| Editorial Assistant | Sharon Thomas-Crews |
| Art and Design | Lars Justinen |
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Introduction



Mi-Yittan

As with most languages, the Hebrew language of the Bible has many words that mean something different from what they really say. *Mi-yittan* is one example. It is made from two Hebrew words: *mi*, which asks “who?” The other word, *yittan*, means “will give.” So, we have “who will give?”

In the Hebrew Bible, the words *mi-yittan* teach the idea of a wish, of a desire, of someone wanting something badly. For example, after their escape from Egypt, the children of Israel faced tough challenges in the wilderness. They said: “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt!” (Exodus 16:3, NIV). The wording “if only” comes from *mi-yittan*. In Psalm 14:7, David cries, “Oh [if only] the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!” The Hebrew language does not say, “Oh.” It says *mi-yittan*. In Job 6:8, when Job complains, “Oh, [if only] I might have my request [what I am asking for]” (NIV), “Oh” is from *mi-yittan*.

Another example is in Deuteronomy 5:29. Moses is going over historical examples of God’s watch care. Moses reminds the children of Israel of how they asked that he, Moses, talk to the Lord for them so that they would not die. According to Moses, the Lord was pleased that the people had asked this of Moses. The Lord said: “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments” (NKJV).

The word translated “Oh”? Yes, it is *mi-yittan*.

Unbelievable! Here is the Lord—the Creator God, the One who made space, time, and matter. He is the One who spoke our world into life. He is the One who breathed into Adam the breath of life. And here He is speaking the words that tell us of the

weaknesses and limitations of all humans!

Talk about how real free will is. Talk about the limits of what God can do in the middle of the great war between Christ and Satan. This use of *mi-yittan* teaches that even God will not take away free will. (Suppose He did; then we would no longer be free.)

Now, if there is ever one book of the Old Testament that teaches God's desire for humans to obey Him, it would be the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah is the subject of our study this quarter. Great changes in world politics happened in the Near East during Jeremiah's lifetime. The book reviews the ministry (work done for God) and message of the prophet (special messenger) as he preached God's message to a people who did not want to hear it.

Starting with the prophet's call, the book takes us through many years of Bible history as the Lord used this young (and then old) man to preach the basic truths that have been the message of the Bible from the beginning. And of all the spiritual truths taught in the book, these words catch much of the important message of what the Lord seeks from His people: "The LORD says, 'Do not let a wise man brag [boast] about how wise he is. Do not let a strong man boast about how strong he is. Do not let a rich person brag about how rich he is. But here is what the one who brags should boast about. He should brag that he has understanding and knows me. I want him to know that I am the LORD. No matter what I do on earth, I am always kind, fair and right. And I take delight in that,' announces the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24, NIV).

To read the book of Jeremiah is to take a trip. This is a spiritual trip that goes back and forth from the lowest and worst of the human spirit to the greatest glory (praise and honor) of the Lord. The Lord is the One who cries out to all of us: *Mi-yittan (Oh) that such a heart would be in you!*

The Lord cries out to us in our sinful condition: Oh, that such a heart of obedience would be in you!

Imre Tokics, PhD, is the head of the Old Testament Department at the Adventist Theological College, Pecel, Hungary. He is a professor of Old Testament and Jewish religious sciences and also has a doctor of law (LLD) degree.