

## A BIBLICAL STUDY ON JEREMIAH

### LESSON NINETEEN: KING JOSIAH'S TARGET

by Sandy Harber

**"And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images that were on high above them, he cut down, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem." II Chronicles 34:4-5**

Twenty-year-old King Josiah was on a mission to purge idolatry from the land that God had given to His people approximately 800 years prior. The land of Canaan had been filled with false religions, whose objects of worship were made of stone, metal, and wood. The rites of worship of those idols were abominable in the sight of God (Deut. 18:9). The Israelites were instructed to conquer Canaan by eliminating the inhabitants down to the last child. It was in the best interest of the Hebrew people to leave no survivors (Deut. 20:16-17). Why? So that "they teach you not to do after their abominations, which they have done unto their gods" (Deut. 20:18).

The abominations that God warned His people about were practices that He had strictly forbidden in their Law. The "gods" of the people of Canaan, Moab, Ammon, etc. were actually demons (Deut. 32:17). All false religions have Satan at the center. This explains why the rites and practices of these pagan religions were unnatural, immoral, and detrimental to the human race. Satan hates humanity and wants to destroy God's highest creation. If he can get us to harm ourselves that is a victory for him. Thus, every type of sexual perversion was part and parcel of these demon-influenced man-made religions: bestiality, sodomy, prostitution, adultery, and incest. All behaviors that God had pronounced a curse upon (Deut. 27:20-23; 23:17). But, Satan has deceived people into believing that these immoral activities are natural and promote happiness (II Corinthians 4:4). In reality, they bring disease, pain, suffering, hurt feelings, and broken families (Galatians 6:8a). They can lead to worse sins, including violence, rape and murder (James 1:15).

Pagan idolatrous practices included child sacrifice, which was abominable to God (Deut. 12:31). The priests of Moab would cut up children and place their body parts on the altar of Chemosh. A fire kindled under the altar turned the children into burnt sacrifices. Hollow statues of the ox-headed god Molech were heated red-hot. Then, while priests beat on their drums to cover the sounds of crying, infants were placed in Molech's outstretched arms where they were cooked alive. In the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, located beyond the Dung Gate in Jerusalem, rows of Molech idols stood side by side within an enclosure called "Topheth." Fires were kindled in all of the statues at the same time and children would be forced to walk the path between the rows of heated idols. The children perished in the heat and flames. King Josiah and his soldiers destroyed the statues of Molech (II Kings 23:10). By Jesus' day the Valley of the Son of Hinnom had been turned into a garbage dump for burning refuse. It became an ever-present reminder of hell, where "the fire is not quenched and the worm dieth not" (Mark 9:43-48). It is from the Hebrew "Ge-Hinnom," which means "the Valley of Tophet," we get the Greek word "gehenna" that is translated "hell" twelve times in the New Testament. Eleven of those times it is Jesus Who is speaking, warning of fire, torment, punishment, and eternity without God (Luke 16:19-31).

Today, we don't bow down to statues made of wood, stone, or metal. Nevertheless, we have our own "gods." We sacrifice our unborn children on the altar of Convenience. We give ourselves over to the pursuit of Pleasure. We deify man and stand in awe of our own intelligence and accomplishments. We devote all our time and attention to amassing a fortune, bowing at the altar of the great god, Mammon (material wealth or possessions). We don't have a King Josiah to destroy the idols in our land and lead us in the path back to our Creator God. We have to destroy our own idols. The first step is to identify what we have substituted in the place of the God of the Bible. What do you spend your time and money on? Where is your focus? Is there a small g "god" in your life that you need to eradicate? Have you drifted away from the God you once faithfully served and worshipped?

*"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Colossians 2:8*