

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—The Visit to the Potter (c. 620–609 BC)

Jeremiah 18

The Message of the Potter

- 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying,
2 “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will announce My words to you.”
3 Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.
4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.
5 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,
6 “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter *does*?” declares the LORD. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.
7 At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy *it*;
8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.
9 Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant *it*;
10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.
11 So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.”’
12 “But they will say, ‘It’s hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’

Punishment of a Forgetful People

- 13 “Therefore thus says the LORD,
‘Ask now among the nations,
Who ever heard the like of this?
The virgin of Israel
Has done a most appalling thing.
14 ‘Does the snow of Lebanon forsake the rock of the open country?
Or is the cold flowing water *from* a foreign *land* ever snatched away?
15 ‘For My people have forgotten Me,
They burn incense to worthless gods
And they have stumbled from their ways,
From the ancient paths,
To walk in bypaths,
Not on a highway,
16 To make their land a desolation,
An object of perpetual hissing;
Everyone who passes by it will be astonished
And shake his head.
17 ‘Like an east wind I will scatter them
Before the enemy;
I will show them My back and not *My* face
In the day of their calamity.’”

A Plot against Jeremiah

18 Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the *divine* word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with *our* tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words.”

- 19 Do give heed to me, O LORD,
And listen to what my opponents are saying!
- 20 Should good be repaid with evil?
For they have dug a pit for me.
Remember how I stood before You
To speak good on their behalf,
So as to turn away Your wrath from them.
- 21 Therefore, give their children over to famine
And deliver them up to the power of the sword;
And let their wives become childless and widowed.
Let their men also be smitten to death,
Their young men struck down by the sword in battle.
- 22 May an outcry be heard from their houses,
When You suddenly bring raiders upon them;
For they have dug a pit to capture me
And hidden snares for my feet.
- 23 Yet You, O LORD, know
All their deadly designs against me;
Do not forgive their iniquity
Or blot out their sin from Your sight.
But may they be overthrown before You;
Deal with them in the time of Your anger!

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—Lessons from a Broken Clay Jar (c. 620–609 BC)

Jeremiah 19

Assembling at the Valley of Ben Hinnom

- 1 Thus says the LORD, “Go and buy a potter’s earthenware jar, and *take* some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests.
- 2 Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you,
- 3 and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.
- 4 Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had *ever* known, and *because* they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent
- 5 and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it *ever* enter My mind;
- 6 therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.
- 7 I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

8 I will also make this city a desolation and an *object of hissing*; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters.

9 I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them.”

The Broken Jar and Its Symbolic Meaning

10 “Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you

11 and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no *other* place for burial.

12 This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants,” declares the LORD, “so as to make this city like Topheth.

13 The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out drink offerings to other gods.””

14 Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD's house and said to all the people:

15 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am about to bring on this city and all its towns the entire calamity that I have declared against it, because they have stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words.”

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—Jeremiah's Humiliation and Despair (c. 620–609 BC)

Jeremiah 20

Pashhur's Punishment of Jeremiah

1 When Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things,

2 Pashhur had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put him in the stocks that were at the upper Benjamin Gate, which was by the house of the LORD.

3 On the next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, “Pashhur is not the name the LORD has called you, but rather Magor-missabib.

4 For thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am going to make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; and while your eyes look on, they will fall by the sword of their enemies. So I will give over all Judah to the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will carry them away as exiles to Babylon and will slay them with the sword.

5 I will also give over all the wealth of this city, all its produce and all its costly things; even all the treasures of the kings of Judah I will give over to the hand of their enemies, and they will plunder them, take them away and bring them to Babylon.

6 And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into captivity; and you will enter Babylon, and there you will die and there you will be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have falsely prophesied.”

Jeremiah Bemoans His Lot

7 O LORD, You have deceived me and I was deceived;
You have overcome me and prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all day long;
Everyone mocks me.

8 For each time I speak, I cry aloud;
I proclaim violence and destruction,

- Because for me the word of the LORD has resulted
In reproach and derision all day long.
- 9 But if I say, "I will not remember Him
Or speak anymore in His name,"
Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
And I am weary of holding *it* in,
And I cannot endure *it*.
- 10 For I have heard the whispering of many,
"Terror on every side!
Denounce *him*; yes, let us denounce him!"
All my trusted friends,
Watching for my fall, say:
"Perhaps he will be deceived, so that we may prevail against him
And take our revenge on him."

Jeremiah Prays for Vengeance

- 11 But the LORD is with me like a dread champion;
Therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.
They will be utterly ashamed, because they have failed,
With an everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten.
- 12 Yet, O LORD of hosts, You who test the righteous,
Who see the mind and the heart;
Let me see Your vengeance on them;
For to You I have set forth my cause.
- 13 Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD!
For He has delivered the soul of the needy one
From the hand of evildoers.

Jeremiah's Curses the Day of His Birth (Echoes of Job)

- 14 Cursed be the day when I was born;
Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me!
- 15 Cursed be the man who brought the news
To my father, saying,
"A baby boy has been born to you!"
And made him very happy.
- 16 But let that man be like the cities
Which the LORD overthrew without relenting,
And let him hear an outcry in the morning
And a shout of alarm at noon;
- 17 Because he did not kill me before birth,
So that my mother would have been my grave,
And her womb ever pregnant.
- 18 Why did I ever come forth from the womb
To look on trouble and sorrow,
So that my days have been spent in shame?