

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—Further Warnings and Exhortations (c. 620–609 BC)

Jeremiah 17

Judah's Indelible Sin

- 1 The sin of Judah is engraved with an iron chisel
on their stone-hard hearts.
It is inscribed with a diamond point
on the horns of their altars.
- 2 Their children are always thinking about their altars
and their sacred poles dedicated to the goddess Asherah,
set up beside the green trees on the high hills
- 3 and on the mountains and in the fields.
I will give your wealth and all your treasures away as plunder.
I will give it away as the price for the sins you have committed throughout your land.
- 4 You will lose your hold on the land
which I gave to you as a permanent possession.
I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you know nothing about.
For you have made my anger burn like a fire that will never be put out.”

A Choice of Curse or Blessing

5 The LORD says,

- “I will put a curse on people
who trust in mere human beings,
who depend on mere flesh and blood for their strength,
and whose hearts have turned away from the LORD.
- 6 They will be like a shrub in the desert.
They will not experience good things even when they happen.
It will be as though they were growing in the desert,
in a salt land where no one can live.
 - 7 My blessing is on those people who trust in me,
who put their confidence in me.
 - 8 They will be like a tree planted near a stream
whose roots spread out toward the water.
It has nothing to fear when the heat comes.
Its leaves are always green.
It has no need to be concerned in a year of drought.
It does not stop bearing fruit. [cf. [Ps 1:3](#)]

The Incurable Condition of the Human Heart

- 9 The human mind [heart] is more deceitful than anything else.
It is incurably bad. Who can understand it?
- 10 I, the LORD, probe into people's minds.
I examine people's hearts.
I deal with each person according to how he has behaved.
I give them what they deserve based on what they have done.
- 11 The person who gathers wealth by unjust means
is like the partridge that broods over eggs but does not hatch them.
Before his life is half over he will lose his ill-gotten gains.
At the end of his life it will be clear he was a fool.”

Jeremiah's Appeal for Vindication

12 Then I said,

- “LORD, from the very beginning
you have been seated on your glorious throne on high.
You are the place where we can find refuge.
- 13 You are the one in whom Israel may find hope.
All who leave you will suffer shame.

Those who turn away from you will be consigned to the netherworld.
For they have rejected you, the LORD, the fountain of life.

- 14 LORD, grant me relief from my suffering
so that I may have some relief.
Rescue me from those who persecute me
so that I may be rescued.
- 15 Listen to what they are saying to me.
They are saying, "Where are the things the LORD threatens us with?
Come on! Let's see them happen!"
- 16 But I have not pestered you to bring disaster.
I have not desired the time of irreparable devastation.
You know that.
You are fully aware of every word that I have spoken.
- 17 Do not cause me dismay!
You are my source of safety in times of trouble.
- 18 May those who persecute me be disgraced.
Do not let me be disgraced.
May they be dismayed.
Do not let me be dismayed.
Bring days of disaster on them.
Bring on them the destruction they deserve."

Warning About Sabbath Observance

- 19 The LORD told me, "Go and stand in the People's Gate through which the kings of Judah enter and leave the city. Then go and stand in all the other gates of the city of Jerusalem.
- 20 As you stand in those places announce, 'Listen, all you people who pass through these gates. Listen, all you kings of Judah, all you people of Judah and all you citizens of Jerusalem. Listen to what the LORD says.
- 21 The LORD says, 'Be very careful if you value your lives! Do not carry any loads in through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day.
- 22 Do not carry any loads out of your houses or do any work on the Sabbath day. But observe the Sabbath day as a day set apart to the LORD, as I commanded your ancestors.
- 23 Your ancestors, however, did not listen to me or pay any attention to me. They stubbornly refused to pay attention or to respond to any discipline.'
- 24 The LORD says, 'You must make sure to obey me. You must not bring any loads through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day. You must set the Sabbath day apart to me. You must not do any work on that day.
- 25 If you do this, then the kings and princes who follow in David's succession and ride in chariots or on horses will continue to enter through these gates, as well as their officials and the people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem. This city will always be filled with people.
- 26 Then people will come here from the towns in Judah, from the villages surrounding Jerusalem, from the territory of Benjamin, from the western foothills, from the southern hill country, and from the southern part of Judah. They will come bringing offerings to the temple of the LORD: burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, and incense along with their thank offerings.
- 27 But you must obey me and set the Sabbath day apart to me. You must not carry any loads in through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. If you disobey, I will set the gates of Jerusalem on fire. It will burn down all the fortified dwellings in Jerusalem and no one will be able to put it out."

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

Jeremiah 18

The Message of the Potter

- 1 The LORD said to Jeremiah:
- 2 "Go down at once to the potter's house. I will speak to you further there."
- 3 So I went down to the potter's house and found him working at his wheel.
- 4 Now and then there would be something wrong with the pot he was molding from the clay with his hands. So he would rework the clay into another kind of pot as he saw fit.
- 5 Then the LORD said to me,
- 6 "I, the LORD, say: 'O nation of Israel, can I not deal with you as this potter deals with the clay? In my hands, you, O nation of Israel, are just like the clay in this potter's hand.'
- 7 There are times, Jeremiah, when I threaten to uproot, tear down, and destroy a nation or kingdom.

8 But if that nation I threatened stops doing wrong, I will cancel the destruction I intended to do to it.

9 And there are times when I promise to build up and establish a nation or kingdom.

10 But if that nation does what displeases me and does not obey me, then I will cancel the good I promised to do to it.

11 So now, tell the people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem this: The LORD says, 'I am preparing to bring disaster on you! I am making plans to punish you. So, every one of you, stop the evil things you have been doing. Correct the way you have been living and do what is right.'

12 But they just keep saying, 'We do not care what you say! We will do whatever we want to do! We will continue to behave wickedly and stubbornly!'"

Punishment of a Forgetful People

13 Therefore, the LORD says,

"Ask the people of other nations
whether they have heard of anything like this.
Israel should have been like a virgin.

But she has done something utterly revolting!

14 Does the snow ever completely vanish from the rocky slopes of Lebanon?
Do the cool waters from those distant mountains ever cease to flow?

15 Yet my people have forgotten me
and offered sacrifices to worthless idols!
This makes them stumble along in the way they live
and leave the old reliable path of their fathers.
They have left them to walk in bypaths,
in roads that are not smooth and level.

16 So their land will become an object of horror.
People will forever hiss out their scorn over it.
All who pass that way will be filled with horror
and will shake their heads in derision.

17 I will scatter them before their enemies
like dust blowing in front of a burning east wind.
I will turn my back on them and not look favorably on them
when disaster strikes them."

A Plot against Jeremiah

18 Then some people said, "Come on! Let us consider how to deal with Jeremiah! There will still be priests to instruct us, wise men to give us advice, and prophets to declare God's word. Come on! Let's bring charges against him and get rid of him! Then we will not need to pay attention to anything he says."

19 Then I said,

"LORD, pay attention to me.
Listen to what my enemies are saying.

20 Should good be paid back with evil?
Yet they are virtually digging a pit to kill me.
Just remember how I stood before you
pleading on their behalf
to keep you from venting your anger on them.

21 So let their children die of starvation.
Let them be cut down by the sword.
Let their wives lose their husbands and children.
Let the older men die of disease
and the younger men die by the sword in battle.

22 Let cries of terror be heard in their houses
when you send bands of raiders unexpectedly to plunder them.
For they have virtually dug a pit to capture me
and have hidden traps for me to step into.

23 But you, LORD, know
all their plots to kill me.

Do not pardon their crimes!
 Do not ignore their sins as though you had erased them!
 Let them be brought down in defeat before you!
 Deal with them while you are still angry!

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 The LORD told Jeremiah, "Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take with you some of the leaders of the people and some of the leaders of the priests.
 2 Go out to the part of the Hinnom Valley which is near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. Announce there what I tell you.
 3 Say, 'Listen to what the LORD says, you kings of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem! The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says, "I will bring a disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it ring!
 4 I will do so because these people have rejected me and have defiled this place. They have offered sacrifices in it to other gods which neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah knew anything about. They have filled it with the blood of innocent children.
 5 They have built places here for worship of the god Baal so that they could sacrifice their children as burnt offerings to him in the fire. Such sacrifices are something I never commanded them to make! They are something I never told them to do! Indeed, such a thing never even entered my mind!
 6 So I, the LORD, say: "The time will soon come that people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Hinnom Valley. But they will call this valley the Valley of Slaughter!
 7 In this place I will thwart the plans of the people of Judah and Jerusalem. I will deliver them over to the power of their enemies who are seeking to kill them. They will die by the sword at the hands of their enemies. I will make their dead bodies food for the birds and wild beasts to eat.
 8 I will make this city an object of horror, a thing to be hissed at. All who pass by it will be filled with horror and will hiss out their scorn because of all the disasters that have happened to it.
 9 I will reduce the people of this city to desperate straits during the siege imposed on it by their enemies who are seeking to kill them. I will make them so desperate that they will eat the flesh of their own sons and daughters and the flesh of one another.'"

The Broken Jar and Its Symbolic Meaning

10 The LORD continued, "Now break the jar in front of those who have come here with you.
 11 Tell them the LORD who rules over all says, 'I will do just as Jeremiah has done. I will smash this nation and this city as though it were a potter's vessel which is broken beyond repair. The dead will be buried here in Topheth until there is no more room to bury them.'
 12 I, the LORD, say: 'That is how I will deal with this city and its citizens. I will make it like Topheth.
 13 The houses in Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled by dead bodies just like this place, Topheth. For they offered sacrifice to the stars and poured out drink offerings to other gods on the roofs of those houses.'
 14 Then Jeremiah left Topheth where the LORD had sent him to give that prophecy. He went to the LORD's temple and stood in its courtyard and called out to all the people.
 15 "The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says, 'I will soon bring on this city and all the towns surrounding it all the disaster I threatened to do to it. I will do so because they have stubbornly refused to pay any attention to what I have said!'"

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

Jeremiah 20

Pashhur's Punishment of Jeremiah

1 Now Pashhur son of Immer heard Jeremiah prophesy these things. He was the priest who was chief of security in the LORD's temple.
 2 When he heard Jeremiah's prophecy, he had the prophet flogged. Then he put him in the stocks which were at the Upper Gate of Benjamin in the LORD's temple.
 3 But the next day Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks. When he did, Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD's name for you is not 'Pashhur' but 'Terror is Everywhere.'
 4 For the LORD says, 'I will make both you and your friends terrified of what will happen to you. You will see all of them die by the swords of their enemies. I will hand all the people of Judah over to the king of Babylon. He will carry some of them away into exile in Babylon and he will kill others of them with the sword.
 5 I will hand over all the wealth of this city to their enemies. I will hand over to them all the fruits of the labor of the people of this city and all their prized possessions, as well as all the treasures of the kings of Judah. Their enemies will seize it all as plunder and carry it off to Babylon.

6 You, Pashhur, and all your household will go into exile in Babylon. You will die there and you will be buried there. The same thing will happen to all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.”

Jeremiah Bemoans His Lot

- 7 LORD, you coerced me into being a prophet,
and I allowed you to do it.
You overcame my resistance and prevailed over me.
Now I have become a constant laughingstock.
Everyone ridicules me.
- 8 For whenever I prophesy, I must cry out,
“Violence and destruction are coming!”
This message from the LORD has made me
an object of continual insults and derision.
- 9 Sometimes I think, “I will make no mention of his message.
I will not speak as his messenger any more.”
But then his message becomes like a fire
locked up inside of me, burning in my heart and soul.
I grow weary of trying to hold it in;
I cannot contain it.
- 10 I hear many whispering words of intrigue against me.
those who would cause me terror are everywhere!
They are saying, “Come on, let’s publicly denounce him!”
All my so-called friends are just watching for
something that would lead to my downfall.
They say, “Perhaps he can be enticed into slipping up,
so we can prevail over him and get our revenge on him.

Jeremiah Prays for Vengeance

- 11 But the LORD is with me to help me like an awe-inspiring warrior.
Therefore those who persecute me will fail and will not prevail over me.
They will be thoroughly disgraced because they did not succeed.
Their disgrace will never be forgotten.
- 12 O LORD who rules over all, you test and prove the righteous.
You see into people’s hearts and minds.
Pay them back for what they have done
because I trust you to vindicate my cause.
- 13 Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD!
For he rescues the oppressed from the clutches of evildoers.

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

- 14 Cursed be the day I was born!
May that day not be blessed when my mother gave birth to me.
- 15 Cursed be the man
who made my father very glad
when he brought him the news
that a baby boy had been born to him!
- 16 May that man be like the cities
that the LORD destroyed without showing any mercy.
May he hear a cry of distress in the morning
and a battle cry at noon.
- 17 For he did not kill me before I came from the womb,
making my pregnant mother’s womb my grave forever.
- 18 Why did I ever come forth from my mother’s womb?
All I experience is trouble and grief,
and I spend my days in shame.