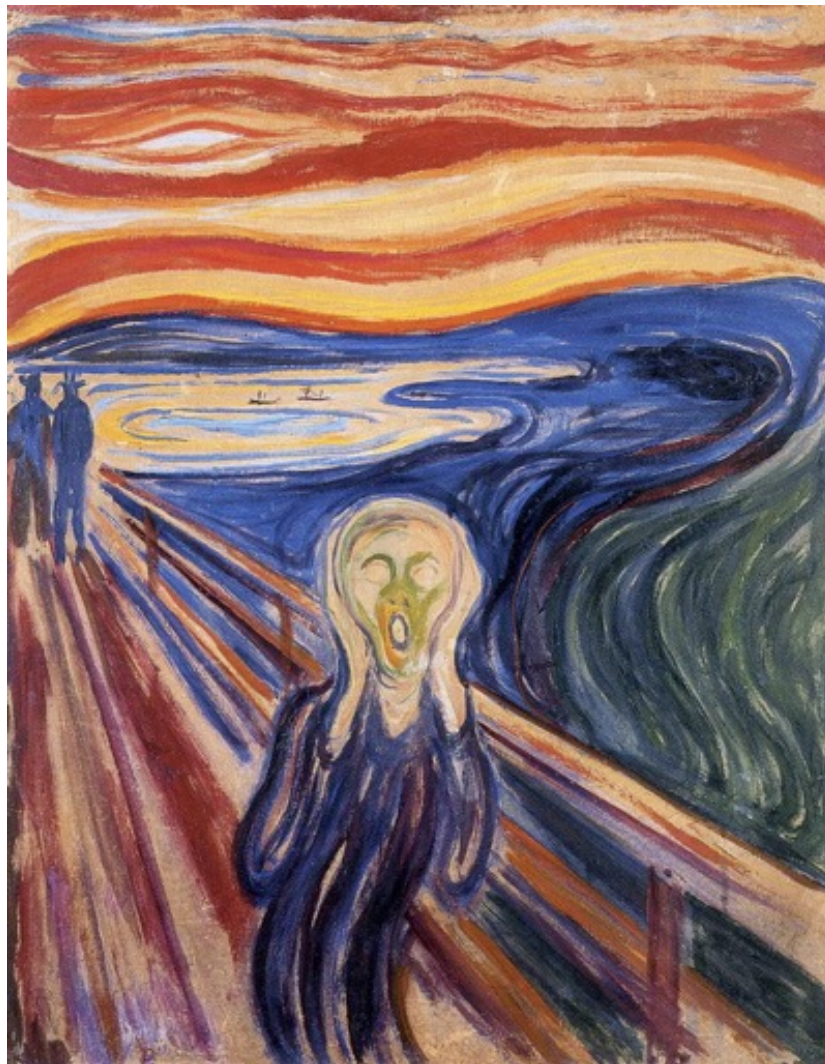


## II. Jeremiah 21-25



## Jeremiah 21:1-6

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from YHWH, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur (not 20:1) son of Malchiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, saying, “Please inquire of YHWH on our behalf, for King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon is making war against us; perhaps YHWH will perform a wonderful deed for us, as he has often done, and will make him withdraw from us.”

Then Jeremiah said to them: Thus you shall say to Zedekiah: Thus says YHWH, the God of Israel: I am going to turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands and with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the walls; and I will bring them together into the centre of this city. I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and mighty arm (Deut 26:8; Ps 136:12), in anger, in fury, and in great wrath. And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both human beings and animals; they shall die of a great pestilence.

## Jeremiah 21:7-10

Afterward, says YHWH, I will give King Zedekiah of Judah, and his servants, and the people in this city – those who survive the pestilence, sword, and famine – into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, into the hands of their enemies, into the hands of those who seek their lives. He shall strike them down with the edge of the sword; he shall not pity them, or spare them, or have compassion.

And to this people you shall say: Thus says YHWH: **See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death** (Deut 30:15). Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who go out and surrender to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live and shall have their lives as a prize of war. For I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good, says YHWH: it shall be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

## Jeremiah 21:11-14

To the house of the king of Judah say: Hear the word of YHWH,  
O house of David! Thus says YHWH: Execute **justice** in the morning,  
and deliver from the hand of the oppressor  
anyone who has been robbed,  
or else my wrath will go forth like fire,  
and burn, with no one to quench it, because of your evil doings.

See, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley,  
O rock of the plain, says YHWH;  
you who say, “Who can come down against us,  
or who can enter our places of refuge?”

I will punish you according to the fruit of your behaviour, says YHWH  
I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all that is around it.

## Jeremiah 22:1-5

Thus says YHWH: Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say: Hear the word of YHWH, O King of Judah sitting on the throne of David – you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates.

Thus says YHWH: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place.

For if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says YHWH, that this house shall become a desolation.

## Jeremiah 22:6-9

For thus says YHWH concerning the house of the king of Judah:

You are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon;

but I swear that I will make you a desert, an uninhabited city.

I will prepare destroyers against you, all with their weapons;

they shall cut down your choicest cedars and cast them into the fire.

And many nations will pass by this city, and all of them will say one to another, “Why has YHWH dealt in this way with that great city?”

And they will answer, “Because they abandoned the covenant of YHWH their God, and worshiped other gods and served them.”

## Jeremiah 22:10-12

Do not weep for him who is dead, nor bemoan him;  
weep rather for him who goes away,  
for he shall return no more to see his native land.

For thus says YHWH concerning Shallum son of King Josiah of Judah, who succeeded his father Josiah, and who went away from this place: He shall return here no more, but in the place where they have carried him captive he shall die, and he shall never see this land again.

Shallum took the throne upon the death of his father in 609.

He took the throne name, Jehoahaz. However the Egyptian pariah, Neco, replaced him in favour of his brother Eliakim, who took the throne name, Jehoiakim (see 2Kings 23:34). Shalom was exiled to Egypt.

Jeremiah goes to the heart of Yahwism when, in the tradition of the prophets who went before him, he challenges his contemporaries to live justly. In one of his more powerful statements he challenges King Jehoiakim to follow the example of his father, Josiah:

‘Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbours work for nothing, and does not give them their wages; who says, “I will build myself a spacious house with large upper rooms,” and who cuts out windows for it, panelling it with cedar, and painting it with vermilion. Are you a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says YHWH. But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence’(22:13-17).



## Jeremiah 22:18-22

Therefore thus says YHWH concerning King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah: They shall not lament for him, saying,

“Alas, my brother!” or “Alas, sister!”

They shall not lament for him, saying,

“Alas, lord!” or “Alas, his majesty!”

With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried – (But 2Kings 24:6!)  
dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Go up to Lebanon, and cry out, and lift up your voice in Bashan;

cry out from Abarim (Moab), for all your lovers (gods) are crushed.

I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, “I will not listen.”

This has been your way from your youth,

for you have not obeyed my voice.

The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds,

and your lovers shall go into captivity.

Then you will be ashamed and dismayed because of all your wickedness.

## Jeremiah 22:23-27

O inhabitant of Lebanon, nested among the cedars,  
how you will groan when pangs come upon you,  
pain as of a woman in labour!

As I live, says YHWH, even if King Coniah (=Jeconiah = Jehoiachin) son of Jehoiakim of Judah were the signet ring on my right hand, even from there I would tear you off and give you into the hands of those who seek your life, into the hands of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and into the hands of the Chaldeans.

I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die. But they shall not return to the land to which they long to return.

## Jeremiah 22:28-30

Is this man Coniah a despised broken pot,  
a vessel no one wants?

Why are he and his offspring hurled out  
and cast away in a land that they do not know?

O land, land, land,

hear the word of YHWH! Thus says YHWH:

Record this man as childless,

a man who shall not succeed in his days;

for none of his offspring (1Chronicles 3:17-18) shall succeed

in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah.

Zerubbabel was Jeconiah's grandson (1Chronicles 3:17-18).

He was governor, not king

## Jeremiah 23:1-4

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says YHWH.

Therefore thus says YHWH, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says YHWH.

Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says YHWH.

## Jeremiah 23:5-8

The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: “YHWH is our righteousness.”

(יְהוָה צְדִיקֵנוּ)

Therefore, the days are surely coming, says YHWH, when it shall no longer be said, “As YHWH lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt,” but “As YHWH lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.” Then they shall live in their own land.

Mattaniah (Josiah's son and Jeconiah's uncle, see 2Kings 24:17) took on the throne name Zedekiah (צִדְקִיָּהוּ). The Messiah will be what Zedekiah failed to be: one who shows that 'YHWH is our righteousness (צִדְקָנוּ יְהוָה) – reversing the elements in the name 'Zedekiah'. The Davidic king is called to mediate the righteousness of YHWH (see Jeremiah 21:12; 22:13-19; 2Samuel 12:1-7; 15:1-6).

## Jeremiah 23:9-12

Concerning the prophets:

My heart is crushed within me, all my bones shake;  
I have become like a drunkard, like one overcome by wine,  
because of YHWH and because of his holy words.

For the land is full of adulterers;  
because of the curse the land mourns,  
and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up.

Their course has been evil, and their might is not right.

Both prophet and priest are ungodly;  
even in my house I have found their wickedness, says YHWH.

Therefore their way shall be to them  
like slippery paths in the darkness,  
into which they shall be driven and fall;

for I will bring disaster upon them  
in the year of their punishment, says YHWH.

## Jeremiah 23:13-15

In the prophets of Samaria I saw a disgusting thing:

they prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray.

But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a more shocking thing:

they commit adultery and walk in lies;

they strengthen the hands of evildoers,

so that no one turns from wickedness.

All of them have become like Sodom to me,

and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.

Therefore thus says YHWH of hosts concerning the prophets:

“I am going to make them eat wormwood,

and give them poisoned water to drink;

for from the prophets of Jerusalem

ungodliness has spread throughout the land.”



## Jeremiah 23:16-19

Thus says YHWH of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you; they are deluding you. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of YHWH. They keep saying to those who despise the word of YHWH, “It shall be well with you”; and to all who stubbornly follow their own stubborn hearts, they say, “No calamity shall come upon you.”

For who has stood in the council of YHWH  
so as to see and to hear his word?

Who has given heed to his word so as to proclaim it?

Look, the storm of YHWH!

Wrath has gone forth,  
a whirling tempest;  
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

## Jeremiah 23:20-24

The anger of YHWH will not turn back  
until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his mind.  
In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

I did not send the prophets, yet they ran;  
I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.  
But if they had stood in my council,  
then they would have proclaimed my words to my people,  
and they would have turned them from their evil way,  
and from the evil of their doings.

Am I a God near by, says YHWH, and not a God far off?  
Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? says YHWH.  
Do I not fill heaven and earth? says YHWH.

## Jeremiah 23:25-29

I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed!” How long?

Will the hearts of the prophets ever turn back – those who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart?

They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal.

Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully.

What has straw in common with wheat? says YHWH

Is not my word like fire, says YHWH,

and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?

Verse 29 is the only verse that attempts to establish criteria for making this discernment. It has been understood in various ways.

One way is to look at the effect that inspiration has on the prophet. The word of YHWH overwhelms the prophet, burning away all that is of his own imagining, and shattering the prophet's own preferred way of thinking. Another way is to think of the effects which the prophetic word has on those who hear it. Either way there is a power in the word of YHWH that is not found in the flights of fancy of those who claim to speak in YHWH's name but whose words comfort without making demands. In the history of Rabbinic interpretation we find constant reference to verse 29. They thought of a hammer striking flint, and the myriad of sparks that shot forth. Because the word of God was thought of as being rich in mysterious meanings, they hoped to discern a 'thousand' meanings in the word, a 'thousand' shafts of light coming from the genuine words of prophecy, enlightening those who read and study it in countless ways. Since their origin is in God, one should expect these words to hold infinite meanings and power.

## Jeremiah 23:30-34

See, therefore, I am against the prophets, says YHWH, who steal my words from one another. See, I am against the prophets, says YHWH, who use their own tongues and say, “Says YHWH.” See, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says YHWH, and who tell them, and who lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or appoint them; so they do not profit this people at all, says YHWH.

When this people, or a prophet, or a priest asks you, “What is the burden (נִשְׁבַּע. Also means ‘oracle’) of YHWH?” you shall say to them, “You are the burden, and I will cast you off, says YHWH.”

And as for the prophet, priest, or the people who say, “The burden of YHWH” I will punish them and their households.

## Jeremiah 23:35-40

Thus shall you say to one another, among yourselves, “What has YHWH answered?” or “What has YHWH spoken?” But “the burden of YHWH” you shall mention no more, for the burden is everyone’s own word, and so you pervert the words of the living God, YHWH of hosts, our God. Thus you shall ask the prophet, “What has YHWH answered you?” or “What has YHWH spoken?”

But if you say, “the burden of YHWH,” thus says YHWH: Because you have said these words, “the burden of YHWH,” when I sent to you, saying, You shall not say, “the burden of YHWH,” therefore, I will surely lift you up and cast you away from my presence, you and the city that I gave to you and your ancestors. And I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

## Jeremiah 24:1-5

YHWH showed me two baskets of figs placed before the temple of YHWH. This was after King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the artisans, and the smiths, and had brought them to Babylon.

One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. YHWH said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I said, “Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten.”

Then the word of YHWH came to me: Thus says tYHWH, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans.

Because it is YHWH who is punishing, Jeremiah knows that the deserved punishment cannot be the final word. YHWH will bring the exiles home and restore 'his land'(7:3), 'his heritage'(12:8), 'his vineyard'(12:10).

Jeremiah 24:6-7

'I will set my eyes upon them for good,  
and I will bring them back to this land.

I will build them up, and not tear them down;

I will plant them, and not pluck them up.

I will give them a heart to know that I am YHWH;  
and they shall be my people and I will be their God,  
for they shall return to me with their whole heart.'



## Jeremiah 24:8-10

But thus says YHWH: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who live in the land of Egypt. I will make them a horror, an evil thing, to all the kingdoms of the earth – a disgrace, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them. And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they are utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their ancestors.

## Jeremiah 25:1-6

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah (that was the first year of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon) (605), which the prophet Jeremiah spoke to all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah (627), to this day, the word of YHWH has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened. And though YHWH persistently sent you all his servants the prophets, you have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear when they said, “Turn now, everyone of you, from your evil way and wicked doings, and you will remain upon the land that YHWH has given to you and your ancestors from of old and forever; do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, and do not provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.”

## Jeremiah 25:7-11

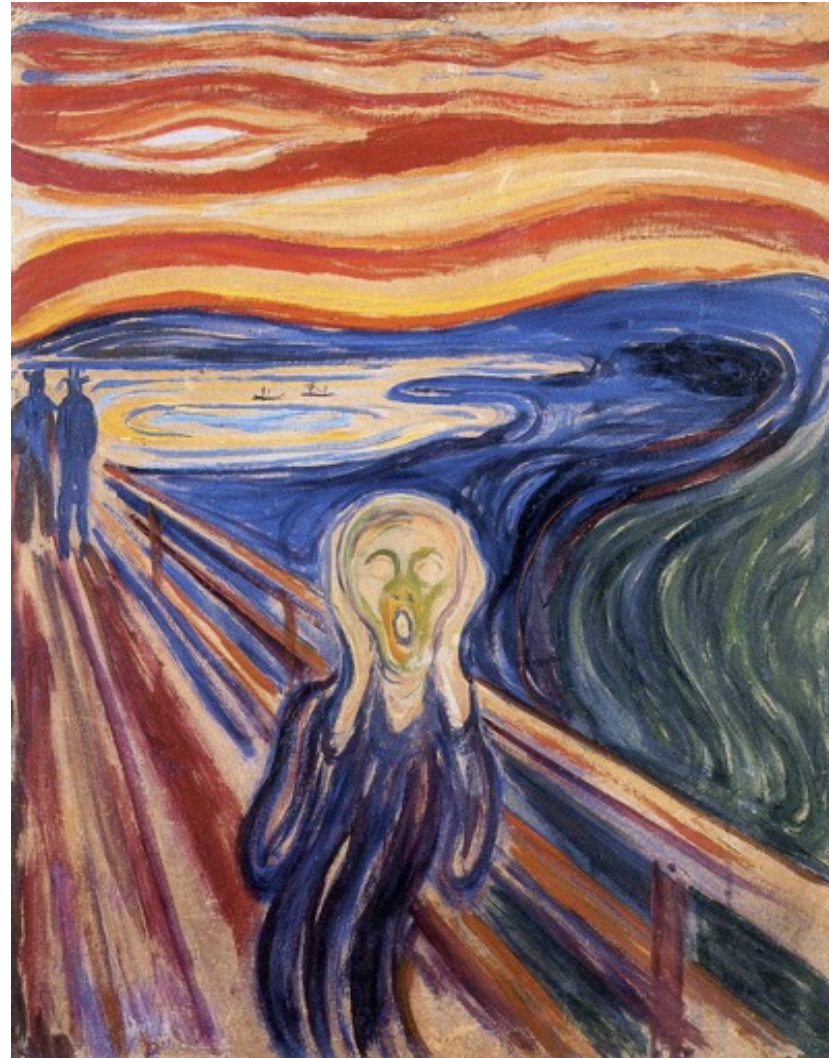
Yet you did not listen to me, says YHWH, and so you have provoked me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm. Therefore thus says YHWH of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, I am going to send for all the tribes of the north, says YHWH, even for King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, **my servant**, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these nations around; I will utterly destroy them, and make them an object of horror and of hissing, and an everlasting disgrace.

And I will banish from them the sound of mirth and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years**. (587-516?)

## Jeremiah 25:12-14

Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says YHWH, making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations.

For many nations and great kings shall make slaves of them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.



Calm me Lord