

# 09. Jeremiah 15-17





## Jeremiah 15:1-4

Then YHWH said to me: Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! And when they say to you, “Where shall we go?” you shall say to them: Thus says YHWH:

Those destined for pestilence, to pestilence,  
and those destined for the sword, to the sword;  
those destined for famine, to famine,  
and those destined for captivity, to captivity.

And I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, says YHWH: the sword to kill, the dogs to drag away, and the birds of the air and the wild animals of the earth to devour and destroy. I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what King **Manasseh** son of Hezekiah of Judah did in Jerusalem.

(The Deuteronomic judgment: 2Kings 21:11-17; 23:26; 24:3)



## Jeremiah 15:5-7

Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem, or who will bemoan you?

Who will turn aside to ask about your welfare?

You have rejected me, says YHWH, you are going backward;

so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you –

I am weary of relenting.

I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork in the gates of the land;

I have bereaved them, I have destroyed my people;

they did not turn from their ways.



## Jeremiah 15:8-9

Their widows became more numerous than the sand of the seas;  
I have brought against the mothers of youths a destroyer at noonday;  
I have made anguish and terror fall upon her suddenly.  
She who bore seven has languished; she has swooned away.  
Her sun went down while it was yet day;  
she has been shamed and disgraced.

The rest of them

I will give to the sword before their enemies, says YHWH.



## Jeremiah 15:10-14

Woe is me, my mother, that you ever bore me,  
a man of strife and contention to the whole land!  
I have not lent, nor have I borrowed,  
yet all of them treat me with contempt.

YHWH said: Surely I have intervened in your life for good  
in a time of trouble and in a time of distress.

Can you (people of Judah) break iron from the north and bronze?

‘You will break them with a rod of iron’ (Psalm 2:9)

Your wealth and your treasures I will give as plunder,  
without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory.  
I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not  
know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.



## Jeremiah 15:15-16

YHWH, you know; remember me and visit me,  
and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors.  
In your forbearance do not take me away;  
know that on your account I suffer insult.

Your words were found, and I ate them,  
and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart.  
For I bear your name, YHWH, God of hosts. (bride metaphor?)



## Jeremiah 15:17-18

I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice.

Under the weight of your hand I sat alone,  
for you had filled me with indignation.

Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?  
Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail.





## Jeremiah's intimacy with God

**Constancy** in proclaiming his unpopular message, and the **trust** that he had in **YHWH**. He has quite a lot to say about so-called prophets who do not listen to God and so do not proclaim God's word.

Along with this radical trust went an **honesty** in expressing his personal suffering and the doubts he experienced as well as the **anger** he felt at God's giving him his ministry and then appearing to leave him high and dry, especially when the situation made it appear that his words were not being fulfilled. He felt used and even deceived. In no other prophetic scroll do we find such feelings expressed as powerfully and convincingly.



Jeremiah's words were important for the exiles in Babylon and for those who returned to Yehud, only to find that their high hopes were not realised as they continued to languish, politically, and economically.

Jeremiah's **complaining** was in the context of his continued belief in God's goodness and fidelity.





## Jeremiah 15:19-21

Therefore thus says YHWH:

If you turn back and I take you back, you will stand before me.

If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,  
you will serve as my mouth.

It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them.

And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze.

They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you,  
for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says YHWH.

I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,

and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.



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‘Yahweh implies that though he continues to direct Jeremiah’s life, the course of that life involves pain (vv 11–12). Jeremiah not only asks “why?” (v 18), but accuses Yahweh of deception (v 18); and Yahweh suggests that Jeremiah needs to repent (v 19). The relationship of Jeremiah and Yahweh is under strain. The relation continues but is ruptured by Jeremiah’s accusation that Yahweh is unfaithful and by Yahweh’s counterproposal that Jeremiah must mend the relation which he, Jeremiah, has ruptured by his accusation.



## Jeremiah 16:1-2

The word of YHWH came to me: You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.

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‘ Hosea married a harlot to demonstrate the corruption of Israel’s relation to Yahweh, while Jeremiah married no one at all to demonstrate the end of Yahweh’s relation to Israel ... The poignancy of Jeremiah’s sacrifice appears to have been particularly keen, given the number of references to bride and bridegroom (2:32; 7:34; 25:10). But Jeremiah’s sense of having been Yahweh’s man from birth (1:5) made it appropriate that by his life he should symbolise the death of his people.



## Jeremiah 16:3-4

For thus says YHWH concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bear them and the fathers who beget them in this land: They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall become like dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth.



## Jeremiah 16:5-6

For thus says YHWH: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament, or bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, says YHWH, my covenant love and mercy.

Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them; there shall be no gashing, no shaving of the head for them.



## Jeremiah 15:7-9

No one shall break bread for the mourner, to offer comfort for the dead; nor shall anyone give them the cup of consolation to drink for their fathers or their mothers. You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink.

For thus says YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to banish from this place, in your days and before your eyes, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.



## Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Who am I? They often tell me  
I would step from my cell's confinement  
calmly, cheerfully, firmly,  
like a squire from his country-house.

Who am I? They often tell me  
I would talk to my warders  
freely and friendly and clearly,  
as though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me  
I would bear the days of misfortune  
equably, smilingly, proudly,  
like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really all that which other men tell of?



Or am I only what I know of myself,  
restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,  
struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,  
yearning for colours, for flowers, for the voices of birds,  
thirsting for words of kindness, for neighbourliness,  
trembling with anger at despotisms and petty humiliation,  
tossing in expectation of great events,  
powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,  
weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,  
faint, and ready to say farewell to it all?



Who am I? This or the other?

Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?

Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,  
and before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?

Or is something within me still like a beaten army,  
fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.

Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.



## Jeremiah 16:10-13

When you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, “Why has YHWH pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against YHWH our God?” then you shall say to them: It is because your ancestors have forsaken me, says YHWH, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law; and because you have behaved worse than your ancestors, for here you are, every one of you, following your stubborn evil will, refusing to listen to me.

Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favour.



Jeremiah 16:14-15 (see 23:7-8)

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 the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.”

For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their ancestors.



## Jeremiah 16:16-18

I am now sending for many fishermen, says YHWH, and they will catch them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my presence, nor is their iniquity concealed from my sight.

And I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin (597 & 587), because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations.



## Jeremiah 16:19-21

YHWH, my strength and my stronghold,  
my refuge in the day of trouble,  
to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say:  
Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies,  
worthless things in which there is no profit.  
Can mortals make for themselves gods? Such are no gods!

“Therefore I am surely going to teach them, this time I am going to teach them my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is YHWH.”

The danger was that the collapse of Judah would be read as a sign of the weakness of Judah's God. The interpretation given here is that, on the contrary, the nations, seeing the power of YHWH in punishing Judah, will be amazed and turn to him.



## Jeremiah 17:1-4 (not in Septuagint)

The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen; with an emery point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts (contrast 31:33, covenant), and on the horns of their altars, while their children remember their altars and their sacred poles (Asherahs), beside every green tree, and on the high hills, on the mountains in the open country. Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your sin throughout all your territory. By your own act you shall lose the heritage that I gave you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.



## Jeremiah 17:5-6

Thus says YHWH: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals  
and make mere flesh their strength,  
whose hearts turn away from YHWH.

They shall be like a shrub in the desert,  
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,  
in an uninhabited salt land.



## Jeremiah 17:7-8

Blessed are those who trust in YHWH, whose trust is YHWH.

They will be like a tree planted by water, (see Psalm 1)

sending out its roots by the stream.

It will not fear when heat comes,

and its leaves will stay green;

in the year of drought it is not anxious,

and it does not cease to bear fruit.



## Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is devious above all else;  
it is perverse – who can understand it?

## Genesis 6:5

‘YHWH saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.’

## Psalms 64:6

Who can search out our crimes?

We have thought out a cunningly conceived plot.”

For the human heart and mind are deep.



## Jeremiah 17:10

I YHWH test the mind and search the heart,  
to give to all according to their ways,  
according to the fruit of their behaviour.

## Jeremiah 4:18

Your ways and your doings  
have brought this upon you.  
This is your doom; how bitter it is!  
It has reached your very heart.”

## Psalms 7:9

O let the evil of the wicked come to an end,  
but establish the righteous,  
you who test the minds and hearts,  
O righteous God.



## Jeremiah 17:11-13

Like the partridge that broods but does not hatch,  
so are all who amass wealth unjustly.

In mid-life it will leave them,  
and at their end they will prove to be fools.

O glorious throne, exalted from the beginning, shrine of our sanctuary!

O hope of Israel! YHWH!

All who forsake you shall be put to shame;

those who turn away from you shall be recorded in the underworld,  
for they have forsaken the fountain of living water, YHWH. (see 2:13)



## Jeremiah 17:14-15

Heal me YHWH, and I shall be healed;  
save me, and I shall be saved; for you are my only hope.

See how they say to me,

“Where is the word of YHWH? Let it come!”



## Jeremiah 17:16-18

But I have not run away from being a shepherd in your service,  
nor have I desired the fatal day.

You know what came from my lips;  
it was before your face.

Do not become a terror to me;  
you are my refuge in the day of disaster;

Let my persecutors be shamed,  
but do not let me be shamed;

let them be dismayed,  
but do not let me be dismayed;

bring on them the day of disaster;  
destroy them with double destruction!

Jeremiah's anguished plea is met by silence!



## Jeremiah 17:19-23

The importance of the Sabbath in post-exilic Judah (Yehud)  
(Isaiah 56; Nehemiah 13:15-22)

Thus said YHWH to me: Go and stand in the People's Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, and say to them: Hear the word of YHWH, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates.

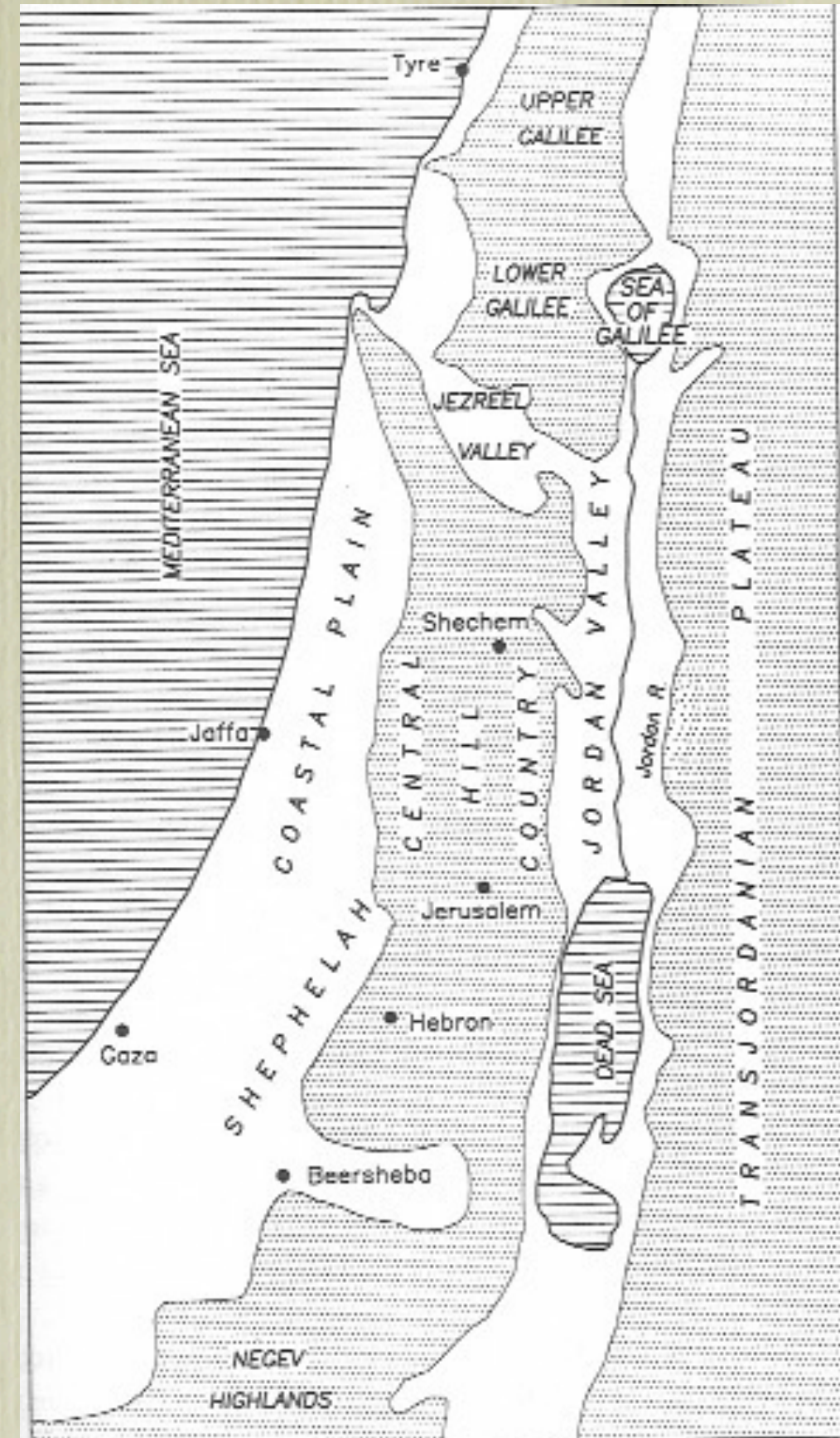
Thus says YHWH: For the sake of your lives, take care that you do not bear a burden on **the sabbath day** or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the sabbath or do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors.

Yet they did not listen or incline their ear; they stiffened their necks and would not hear or receive instruction.



## Jeremiah 17:24-26

If you listen to me, says YHWH, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but keep the sabbath day holy and do no work on it, then there will enter by the gates of this city kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city will be inhabited forever. And people will come from the towns of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of YHWH.





## Jeremiah 17:27

But if you do not listen to me, to keep the sabbath day holy, and to carry in no burden through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates; it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.