

Welcome to the church at Bethel, where we gather for one reason and one reason only: the gospel. Jesus Christ in our place. His righteousness for our sin. His death for our judgment. His resurrection for our hope.

To those joining us online and to our guests in the room today, we are grateful you are here. Church family, can we welcome them this morning?

Today, in the book of Jeremiah, we come to one of the most important words in all of Scripture. In fact, it is one of Jeremiah's favorite words. It appears more than 1,000 times throughout the Old Testament and over 100 times in the book of Jeremiah alone. It is the word "**return.**"

The Hebrew word is שׁוּב (shuv). It means to **turn back, to come home, or to return again**. And this word sits at the very center of Jeremiah's message. Jeremiah is preaching to a people who have **drifted** from God. Their affections have been given to **broken cisterns that cannot hold water** (Jer. 2:13). Yet into their rebellion, God speaks with both warning and mercy:

**"If you return, Israel — this is the LORD's declaration — you will return to me."** (Jer. 4:1)

Return is the heartbeat of **repentance**. Repentance is more than feeling guilty over sin or being sorry life fell apart. True repentance is a turning — a returning — a coming home to God. As Charles Spurgeon once said, "**Repentance is not what saves me. It is Christ who saves me. Repentance is the sign that I have been saved.**"

And here in Jeremiah 4, the Lord lovingly asks a question that still confronts every wandering heart today: *Will you continue running from God, or will you finally return home?*

### **Return All the Way Home (Jeremiah 4:1-2)**

If you read through Jeremiah, especially the Temple Sermon in Jeremiah 7, you encounter a sobering reality: God continually calls His people to **return**, yet they continually refuse. **Judgment** and **repentance** are not opposites in Jeremiah — they are intertwined. The warning of judgment is itself an invitation to **repent**. The message is clear: every generation, and every person, participates in the blessings of God not **through heritage or religion**, but **through faith** evidenced by obedience to the Word of God.

**Why do we need to return? (Jer. 4:1)** The word "**return**" tells the truth about us: you cannot return somewhere unless you have first left. You return a book to the library

because you took it away. Some of you remember returning VHS tapes to Blockbuster, making sure they were rewound so you would not face the dreaded fine. The point is simple: returning assumes departure. And this is what **sin** does. **Sin** is not merely a mistake; it is a rebellion of the heart from the God who made us, loves us, and formed us for His glory. By our sin, we have departed God's glory. So, the call of Jeremiah 4 is not vague religious improvement. It is God saying to wandering sinners: "**Come back.**"

**Take home:** Repentance begins when we admit that sin has taken us away from God, and grace is calling us home.

**To whom do we return? (Jeremiah 4:1)** The Lord says, "If you return, Israel... return to me." That is the heart of repentance. We do not return to religion, respectability, excuses, or self-improvement. We return to the Lord Himself. And this is mercy beyond measure: the God we abandoned is the God who invites us back. But we must return to Him alone, and we must return on His terms, not ours. Richard Sibbes said, "Repentance is the soul's farewell to sin and its return unto God." True repentance does not negotiate with sin while trying to keep God close.

**Take home:** Real repentance is not turning over a new leaf; it is turning back to the Lord (alone).

**How do we repent? Repentance requires a turn.** The language of Jeremiah 4 is deeply personal: "Return to the Lord." The word itself gives the definition: re-turn. Repentance is not merely thinking differently about sin; it is turning away from self and turning toward God. In Mark 1:4, John the Baptist appears in the wilderness "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Why? Because forgiveness begins when sinners stop trusting themselves and turn to the mercy of God. No one turns from self until they realize salvation cannot be found within themselves. Repentance begins when the Spirit opens our eyes to the ugliness of sin and the beauty of Christ.

**Take home:** You will never truly turn to Christ until you stop believing you can save yourself.

**How do we repent? Repentance requires a change.** The New Testament uses different words to describe repentance. One word, metamelomai, describes **regret** or remorse over sin. It is the word used of **Judas** after betraying Jesus. He felt sorrow, but his sorrow did not lead him back to God. Another word, metanoia, describes true repentance — a godly sorrow that leads to a changed mind, changed heart, changed purpose, and ultimately a changed life. This is why Paul the Apostle writes, "For godly (Jesus) grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly (Judas) grief

produces death” (2 Cor. 7:10). Many people feel bad about sin. Few truly hate their sin because it dishonors God and are willing to change no matter the cost.

**TH:** “Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life.” — Wiersbe

**How do we repent? Repentance requires surrender.** This is the great dilemma in Jeremiah. The people claimed the name of the Lord, but they had never truly surrendered to Him. They wanted the blessings of covenant without submission to the God of the covenant. In *Jeremiah 5:1*, the Lord searches Jerusalem for **even one person who acts justly and seeks truth**. Their religion was external, but their hearts remained rebellious.

The New Testament carries the same assumption. When the crowd cried out in Acts 2, Peter answered, “Repent and be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Biblical repentance is not adding Jesus to your life; it is surrendering your life to Jesus as Lord.

**Take-Home:** “Repentance is the relinquishment of any claim upon self and the recognition of absolute submission to God.” – Oswald Chambers

**Who needs to repent? Sinners walking the broad road to destruction.** Jeremiah reminds us that the **judgment** of God is real, holy, and eternal. In Jeremiah 7, the Lord warns of coming judgment in a place called Topheth (fire pot) (Jer. 7:32), located in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom — a place associated with fire, death, and rebellion against God. Over time, this valley became a picture of final judgment and **hell** itself. The message of Jeremiah is clear: sin is not small, and judgment is not symbolic. Apart from repentance, sinners remain on the broad road that leads to destruction and hell.

**Take-Home:** God warns because God saves. The same Lord who speaks of judgment also calls sinners to return before it is too late. If you will not turn from sin, you will one day face the judgment of God for sin.

**Who needs to repent? Even God’s people.** Notice who Jeremiah is preaching to in Jeremiah 7. This is the Temple Sermon. Jeremiah is not speaking to pagans outside the covenant community; he is speaking to the people of Yahweh gathered at the Temple. They had religion, tradition, and outward worship, yet their hearts had drifted far from God. The call to repent was not just for the nations — it was for God’s own people. The same is true in the New Testament. When Jesus calls people to repent, He is describing the ongoing posture of the Christian life. Martin Luther famously wrote that

the **entire life of the believer should be one of repentance**. Repentance is not just how the Christian life **begins**; it is how the Christian life **grows**.

**Take-Home:** You never move beyond repentance. “**Repentance grows as faith grows. Do not make any mistake about it.**” – Sinclair Ferguson

It’s possible to hear this message of Jeremiah and think, “Oh no, am I truly saved?” Is my repentance genuine or merely lip service? How can you really know? The Scriptures give us a helpful diagnostic.

1. True repentance begins with a real sense of your **guilt (guilt vs shame)** before God. You stop excusing sin, minimizing sin, or comparing yourself to others.
2. True repentance clings to the **mercy** of God in Christ. Repentance is not despair (**Oh God**); it is running to grace (**Oh my God and Savior**). The repentant heart believes there is mercy at the feet of Jesus.
3. True repentance produces a **hatred for sin** and a turning away from it. Not merely sorrow over consequences, but grief that we have sinned against God Himself. “**The more you love Jesus Christ, the more you will hate the sins that caused His death.**” — Charles Spurgeon
4. True repentance results in a growing **pursuit of holiness**. The repentant person is not **sinless**, but they are **different**. There is now a desire to walk with God, obey His Word, and follow Christ more faithfully day by day.

So, ask yourself: Do I grieve my sin? Do I trust the mercy of Christ? Do I hate the sin I once loved? Do I desire to walk with God?

## Exegetical Notes (Jeremiah 4-7)

### Key Verses

**Jer. 4:1**      **If you return, Israel— this is the LORD’s declaration—you will return to me, if you remove your abhorrent idols from my presence and do not waver,**

If Israel does these things, then all nations will be blessed by her. Some think that no amount of theological explanation can account for the contradictory messages calling for repentance when her divorce is already complete and final.

It is most true that one can only partíciple (not transmit) in the blessings of Yahweh by faith. Thus, covenant is dependent on the faith of each generation.

Some think that no amount of theological or exegetical explanation can account for the contradictory messages calling for repentance with that same message also noting the northern nation's rejection and when her divorce is already complete and final. Explanations that attempt to answer this dilemma by assigning all the absolute promises in the Abrahamic-Davidic covenants only to a southern (read: Judean) tradition, while making just the northern tradition contingent on obedience, are contrived and without textual or theological support. Therefore, instead of assuming that there are two opposite or even contradictory strains here, the text argues for one coordinated response. For even within the Davidic covenant, each individual descendant in each generation does not automatically enjoy the blessings and promises given to the Davidic house; rather, it is true that often they must transmit the blessings to the next generation, but they can only participate in those blessings by faith, which is evidenced by obedience to the word of God (2 Sam 7:14). See Kaiser, 77.

### Return

The return should be to God and no one else (TOTC, 91).

Two images are used to speak of the call to repentance. The first stresses more outward realities; the second uses an image that cuts into a person and removes those impediments to being a member of the people of God. The people are first to break up their unplowed soil (see Hos 10:12) to rid it of thorns and briars (Isa 5:6). By so doing, they will not sow their seed among thorns on unprepared and hard ground (see Matt 13:7; Mark 4:1-9) and will be better able to get a good crop.

Second, the people are to circumcise (=remove the foreskin of) their hearts—the person as a thinking, deciding individual-to the LORD, a metaphor for repentance (see 9:26). See Fretheim, 89)

If the second colon is an apodosis (see above), then the first occurrence of “shoov/turn” (in the first colon) is potentially ambivalent: Israel is capable of turning to evil from Yahweh, or from evil to Yahweh (compare the usage in 3:19 and 22 and compare the opposites in 8:4). These occurrences of “turn” here thus sum up in a nutshell the repeated expressions of the concern for repentance that occur in chapter 3 (Holladay, 127).

We have cited simply the basic meaning of שׁוּב but as we shall see the verb branches into not a few different nuances. It is the twelfth most frequently used verb in the OT, appearing just over 1050 times (TWOT).

It appears most often in Jeremiah (111 times) followed by Psalms (seventy-one times), Genesis (sixty-eight times), Ezekiel (sixty-two times), 1 Kgs (sixty-two times), 2 Chronicles (sixty-one times), 2 Kgs (fifty-five times), Isaiah (fifty-one times).

The Bible is rich in idioms describing man’s responsibility in the process of repentance. Such phrases would include the following: “incline your heart unto the Lord your God” (Josh 24:23); “circumcise yourselves to the Lord” (Jer 4:4); “wash your heart from wickedness” (4:14); “break up your fallow ground” (Hos 10:12) and so forth. All these expressions of man’s penitential activity, however, are subsumed and summarized by this one verb שׁוּב. For better than any other verb it combines in itself the two requisites of repentance: to turn from evil and to turn to the good.

Taking all stems into consideration, Holladay (p. 117) concludes that there are a total of 164 uses of שׁוּב in a covenantal context. The majority of them, as one might expect, are to be found in the classical literary prophets 113 times, with Jeremiah leading the way (forty-eight times).

**New Testament** Repentance was the keynote of the preaching of John the Baptist, referring to a complete turn from self to God. A note of urgency is attached to the message, “The kingdom of heaven has come near!” (Matt. 3:2 HCSB). Those who were prepared to make such a radical reorientation of their lives demonstrated that by being baptized (Mark 1:4). This complete redirection of their lives was to be demonstrated by profound changes in lifestyle and relationships (Luke 3:8-14).

The emphasis upon a total life change continues in the ministry of Jesus. The message of repentance was at the heart of His preaching (Mark 1:15). When describing the focus of His mission, Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32 HCSB).

The call to repentance is a call to absolute surrender to the purposes of God and to live in this awareness. This radical turning to God is required of all people: “Unless you repent, you will all perish” (Luke 13:3). Those who had witnessed the ministry of Jesus, the reality of God, and His claims on their lives faced serious jeopardy if they failed to repent. Jesus warned of serious consequences for those where His ministry had been rejected: “He proceeded to denounce the towns where most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent” (Matt. 11:20 HCSB). On the other hand, for the one sinner who repents, there is great “joy in heaven” (Luke 15:7). In His final words to the disciples, Jesus demanded that the same message of repentance He had preached would be preached to all nations (Luke 24:47).

The term remained in use as the early church began to take shape. The preaching in the book of Acts contains the call to repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22). On the one hand, Paul’s discourse at Athens reveals God as the one who “commands all people everywhere to repent” (17:30 HCSB). On the other hand, repentance is shown to be the result of the initiative of God: “God has granted repentance resulting in life to even the Gentiles” (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). The abundance of NT references makes clear that repentance is an essential element in the salvation experience. In response to the call of God in one’s life, there must be repentance, that is, the willful determination to turn from a life of sin and self-rule to a life ruled by God and lived in His righteousness. Repentance can be said to have occurred when someone has been convicted of the reality of their personal sinfulness, rejects and renounces that life of sin, and turns to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Repentance is so central that when Paul summarized his ministry, he could say, “I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:21 HCSB). The experience of repentance precedes salvation (2 Pet. 3:9).

While the majority of calls to repentance are directed to unbelievers, repentance sometimes refers to believers. Paul wrote of a letter sent to the Corinthians which caused them grief, but which ultimately led them to repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-13). Several times in the letters to the churches in Revelation, repentance is called for (Rev. 2:5,16,21-22; 3:3,19), in order that these believers and churches might bring their lives into greater conformity to the will of God. Individual believers, as well as churches, must constantly engage in self-examination, allowing the Spirit of God to point out areas

where change is needed. Repentance is more than just remorse (Holman Bible Dictionary).

**Repentance** (See Easton's Bible Dictionary): There are three Greek words used in the New Testament to denote repentance.

(1.) The verb *metamelomai* is used of a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse on account of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart. This word is used with reference to the repentance of Judas (Matt. 27:3).

(2.) *Metanoeo*, meaning to change one's mind and purpose, as the result of after knowledge. This verb, with (3) the cognate noun *metanoia*, is used of true repentance, a change of mind and purpose and life, to which remission of sin is promised.

Evangelical repentance consists of (1) a true sense of one's own guilt and sinfulness; (2) an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ; (3) an actual hatred of sin (Ps. 119:128; Job 42:5, 6; 2 Cor. 7:10) and turning from it to God; and (4) a persistent endeavor after a holy life in a walking with God in the way of his commandments.

Martin Luther asserted in the first of his ninety-five theses, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Matt. 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Luther's words tend to come as a surprise to Christians, then and now, who are more accustomed to thinking of repentance as being for nonbelievers. The OT's reasoning for believers to learn repentance as a posture toward life is more comprehensively given in Jeremiah 3:6-4:4. See ESV, 462.

The window for repentance is closing, but this passage concludes by highlighting Yahweh's willingness to forgive despite centuries of sin. The commands to repent that precede are intended to stir Israel's conscience and avert a fearful encounter with the other side of Yahweh's character: "lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds" (Jer. 4:4).

<sup>2</sup> **then you can swear, "As the LORD lives," in truth, justice, and righteousness, and then the nations will be blessed by him and will boast in him.**

This echoes God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 22:18. and through you shall they be praised. This probably means, as Rashi observes, that they will consider it a merit for themselves to be associated with Israel (Alter, 867).

**Jer. 5:1      Roam through the streets of Jerusalem. Investigate; search in her squares. If you find one person, any who acts justly, who pursues faithfulness, then I will forgive her.**

If you find a man, / if there be a man doing justice. Yair Hoffman detects an echo here of Abraham's dialogue with God in Genesis 18 over whether Sodom can be spared if ten just men can be found in it. That allusion mobilizes the trope of Israel as Sodom (compare Isaiah 1) and also makes the terms more generous: God would forgive Jerusalem if a single just man could be found there (Alter, 872).

It is not an everyday that an offer comes along to save one's civilization, but in this case all it would take is for Jeremiah to locate in their midst just only truly righteous man. See Genesis 18:26-33.

The word for forgive is used exclusively of God's forgiveness in the OT not humanity.

If one citizen could be found who had real integrity, and who followed Yahweh, God would "for-give" the sins of the entire city (v. if). This word for "forgive" (nḇḡ) is used exclusively of God's forgiveness in the Old Testament; other Heb. words are used for human forgiveness (Kaiser, 97).

## **Roam**

The opening imperative,(212 polel) is not a common verb; it occurs four times otherwise, twice of God's eyes "ranging" or "roaming" through the whole earth (Zech 4:10; 2 Chr 16:9) and once (Amos 8:12) of people wandering from north to east to seeking the word of Yahweh (the fourth instance, Dan 12:4, is difficult and thus does not aid a definition). The qal stem is used once in the imperative, in 2 Sam 24:20, where David commands Joab to go through (i.e., work through) all the tribes of Israel to take a census. In short, the impression given by the first colon is of military orders for a "search" mission, and this grim impression is shifted only in the second tricolon, when it becomes clear that Yahweh wants not prisoners of war but an honest man (Holladay, 177).

<sup>3</sup>      **LORD, don't your eyes look for faithfulness? You have struck them, but they felt no pain. You finished them off, but they refused to accept discipline. They made their faces harder than rock, and they refused to return.**

Not even one is found. Jeremiah can apparently take as long as he needed.

6:14 **They have treated my people's brokenness superficially, claiming, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.**

"And they would heal My people's wound easily saying, "All is well, all is well," but it is not well."

Jeremiah in the meantime has all he can take. Yet God enlarges Jeremiah's audience from young to old.

For all of the society's ills, religious leaders come up with the wrong remedies. The religious leaders are false messengers, quack doctors (Holladay, 217).

**Jer. 7:1** This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "Stand in the gate of the house of the LORD and there call out this word: 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who enter through these gates to worship the LORD.

7:1-2 It was unusual to be stopped by a sermon as one was going into the courts of the house of God to worship, but that is what Jeremiah is instructed to do. He is to stand by the gate to the house of God and proclaim this message. It is as if the people are being greeted with the message that internal preparation is needed as a prior condition for meeting with God, or even before they thought of entering the house of God, or even while they were getting ready to attempt to worship him (Kaiser, 120).

Jeremiah 7:1-15 consists of oracles that God commands Jeremiah to give at the entrance to the temple precincts (-gate of the LORD': house, v. 2). These verses are often called "the temple sermon," though only God speaks here. A shorter version (with a somewhat different focus) appears in 26:1-6, where the sermon is dated at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim (609 BC), shortly after the death of King Josiah and the deposing of his son Jehoahaz (who ruled for only three months). From 609-605 BC, Israel was under Egyptian control. The specific occasion for the sermon may have been the celebration of a festival, probably Tabernacles, at which time pilgrims came from various parts of the land to worship at the temple (Fretheim, 133).

7:1 This is the book's first instance in which Yahweh's word-event comes "to Jeremiah" (v. 1) rather than "to me" (cf. 1:2, 4, 6; 2:1). This difference indicates that what follows is a third-person account of divine speech through Jeremiah rather than a literary collection of oracles to him (as found in chs. 2-6). In chapter 7 the Temple Sermon is parallel to the narrative account in Jeremiah 26, a passage that adds the historical note

that the prophet preaches this message in the temple of Jerusalem at the beginning of King Jehoiakim's reign. Such information sets Jeremiah 7; 26 around 609 BC, shortly after Josiah is abruptly slain in a battle against Egypt (2 Kings 23:29-30), as well as after the troubled three-month reign of his son Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:31-33). As the following verses show, the spiritual revival started by Josiah is overturned by a people who revert quickly to pagan ways. The efforts of Josiah succeed only in effecting skin-deep changes; they do not transform Judah's sinful heart (ESV, 490).

**Jer. 7:3**        **“This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Correct your ways and your actions, and I will allow you to live in this place. <sup>4</sup> Do not trust deceitful words, chanting, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.”**

Stand in the gate of the house of the Lord. The position is strategic: crowds of worshippers, presumably having a fetishistic notion of the intrinsic efficacy of the Temple (verse 3), would pass through this gate on their way to worship, "to bow to the Lord (Alter, 852).

Personal holiness becomes a priority and a prerequisite to mere attendance at the house of God.

A person's ways and deeds are open to inspection by God.

### **Correct your ways**

the heart of the prophet's message is "Reform your ways and your actions" (v. 3). As a result, personal holiness becomes a priority and a prerequisite to mere attendance at the house of God. Thus, both the tilt of a person's "way" of living and thinking as well as his or her actual "deeds" are open for inspection before God; both call for an appropriate change that resulted in repentance (Kaiser, 121).

### **Temple**

Here is the temple sermon. It was a notable event in Jrm's ministry. Though the style has struck many as "Deuteronomistic" (see Setting), it is a style Jrm found appropriate to his critique of the use made of Deuteronomy by his hearers (Holladay, 241).

**Jer. 7:21** This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: “Add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices, and eat the meat yourselves,

In a deep sarcastic and ironic tone.

Ultimately, says Yahweh, sacrificial observance is for you simply a pretext for eating meat: "Eat, then, and stuff your stomachs; nothing of this belongs to me" (Calvin). The word in 11:15 is similar. Paul will have an analogous word for the church in Corinth when its members used the Lord's Supper as an occasion for eating and drinking (1 Cor 11:20-22). See Holladay, 261.

**Jer. 7:32** “Therefore, look, the days are coming”—the LORD’s declaration— “when this place will no longer be called Topheth and Ben Hinnom Valley, but Slaughter Valley. Topheth will become a cemetery, because there will be no other burial place.

### **Topheth**

The high places of Topheth, which are in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom. All that is known about Topheth is that it is a place where child sacrifices in fire were offered. The vocalization of the name in Hebrew follows that of boshet, "shame," and so is probably an alteration of the original pronunciation.

The word here translated "The Fire-pit," conventionally transliterated "Topheth" (nph1), appears in four passages: 2 Kgs 23:10; Isa 30:33; here in Jer 7:31-32; and 19:6-14. In Isa 30:34 the noun, without article (but with possessive pronoun? —see BHS), seems to be generalized, "funeral-pyre" or the like, but in the other three passages it has reference to a specific location "which is in the Valley of Ben- (or Bene-) Hinnom." The Aramaic cognate of the word means "fireplace, cook-stove," and the Hebrew word doubtless originally carried different vowels. This was the designation given to a place outside the walls of Jerusalem where child sacrifice took place: 2 Kgs 23:10 states that that sacrifice was "to Molech (Holladay, 267)."

### **Ben Hinnom**

The Valley of Ben-Hinnom is just to the west of what was the ancient city of Jerusalem. The Hebrew name, *gei Hinnom*, through the Greek of the New Testament, *Gehenna*, came to be a term for hell. "Topheth" in later Hebrew equally was used for hell (Alter, 885).

## **Slaughter Valley**

32. Valley of the Killing. Because of the reference to piled-up unburied corpses, this name records not the child sacrifice practiced in this place but the ghastly measure-for-measure retribution to come, in which the masses of pagan sacrificers will be slaughtered (Alter, 885).

So great will be the slaughter that scavenging birds and animals will be able to eat all they want (1 Sam 17:43-46).  
All sounds of joy and gladness will cease.

**Jer 4:1** If you return, Israel—  
this is the LORD's declaration—  
you will return to me,  
if you remove your abhorrent idols  
from my presence  
and do not waver,  
2 then you can swear, "As the LORD lives,"  
in truth, justice, and righteousness,  
and then the nations will be blessed by him  
and will boast in him.

If Israel does these things, then all nations will be blessed by her. Some think that no amount of theological explanation can account for the contradictory messages calling for repentance when her divorce is already complete and final.

It is most true that one can only partíciple (not transmit) in the blessings of Yahweh by faith. Thus, covenant is dependent on the faith of each generation.

**Jer 4:3** For this is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:  
Break up the unplowed ground;  
do not sow among the thorns.  
4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD;  
remove the foreskin of your hearts,  
men of Judah and residents of Jerusalem.  
Otherwise, my wrath will break out like fire  
and burn with no one to extinguish it  
because of your evil deeds.

These verses summarize the message of repentance and turning to Yahweh. Jeremiah uses two powerful images:

The plowing of virgin ground (Hosea 10:12)

The circumcision of the heart (Gen. 17:9-14; Deuteronomy 10:16).

Fallow or unplowed ground is not suitable for sowing seed or for reaping a harvest.

The call for revival in this text is the same as had been issued earlier by the prophet Hosea.

**Jer 4:5** Declare in Judah, proclaim in Jerusalem, and say,  
Blow the ram's horn throughout the land.

**Cry out loudly and say,  
“Assemble yourselves,  
and let’s flee to the fortified cities.”**

One can almost hear the prophet’s breathless warning with plural imperatives.

**6 Lift up a signal flag toward Zion.  
Run for cover! Don’t stand still!  
For I am bringing disaster from the north—  
a crushing blow.**

Six times Jeremiah announces that Yah is going to bring a great destruction (6:1; 14:17; 48:3)

Crushing blow:

1. For a bone fracture (10:19)
2. For the shattering of pottery (18:10)
3. For the breaking down of physical infrastructure

**7 A lion has gone up from his thicket;  
a destroyer of nations has set out.  
He has left his lair  
to make your land a waste.  
Your cities will be reduced to uninhabited ruins.**

**8 Because of this, put on sackcloth;  
mourn and wail,  
for the LORD’s burning anger  
has not turned away from us.**

Sackcloth- often made out of goat or camel’s hair suggests deep repentance. See Jonah 3:5.

**Jer 4:9 “On that day”—this is the LORD’s declaration— “the king and the officials will lose their courage. The priests will tremble in fear, and the prophets will be scared speechless.”**

On that day- not messianic here but refers to the preceding warning.

**Jer 4:10 I said, “Oh no, Lord GOD, you have certainly deceived this people and Jerusalem, by announcing, ‘You will have peace,’ while a sword is at our throats.”**

Almost spontaneously the prophet reacts by saying “This is unfair!”

Uses unusual construct Adonai Yah which is used almost exclusively when God refers to the Abrahamic promises (15:2) or David (2 Sam. 7:18)

**Jer 4:11** “At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, ‘A searing wind blows from the barren heights in the wilderness on the way to my dear people. It comes not to winnow or to sift; 12 a wind too strong for this comes at my call. Now I will also pronounce judgments against them.’”

Jeremiah here describes the coming judgment under the figure of a wind known as sirocco. An oppressive eastern wind from the desert that is neither cooling nor good for sifting wheat.

**13** Look, he advances like clouds;  
his chariots are like a storm.  
His horses are swifter than eagles.  
Woe to us, for we are ruined!

Often in Scripture God is depicted as advancing in judgment as if he were riding in the clouds (Ps 18:7; Nah. 1:3).

**14** Wash the evil from your heart, Jerusalem,  
so that you will be delivered.  
How long will you harbor  
malicious thoughts?  
**15** For a voice announces from Dan,  
proclaiming malice from Mount Ephraim.  
**16** Warn the nations: Look!  
Proclaim to Jerusalem:  
Those who besiege are coming  
from a distant land;  
they raise their voices  
against the cities of Judah.

The juggernaut is advancing closer and closer until it reaches Jerusalem. Dan is the northernmost territory and the headwaters of the Jordan.

**17** They have her surrounded  
like those who guard a field,

**because she has rebelled against me.**

**This is the LORD's declaration.**

There is strong theological reason that these things were happening.

**18 Your way and your actions  
have brought this on you.  
This is your punishment. It is very bitter,  
because it has reached your heart!**

To put it more bluntly, all this is happening because of Judah's own conduct and her own actions against Yah.

**Jer 4:19 My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in agony!  
Oh, the pain in my heart!  
My heart pounds;  
I cannot be silent.  
For you, my soul,  
have heard the sound of the ram's horn—  
the shout of battle.**

**20 Disaster after disaster is reported  
because the whole land is destroyed.  
Suddenly my tents are destroyed,  
my tent curtains, in a moment.**

**21 How long must I see the signal flag  
and hear the sound of the ram's horn?**

**Jer 4:22 "For my people are fools;  
they do not know me.  
They are foolish children,  
without understanding.  
They are skilled in doing what is evil,  
but they do not know how to do what is good."**

The speaker of the verses could be Yah, but the verse could also fit the prophet.

They come as a form of lament as the physical effect of what the speaker sees happening in the future.

One retched experience follows hard after the previous one.

**Jer 4:23** I looked at the earth,  
and it was formless and empty.  
I looked to the heavens,  
and their light was gone.

**24** I looked at the mountains,  
and they were quaking;  
all the hills shook.

**25** I looked, and there was no human being,  
and all the birds of the sky had fled.

**26** I looked, and the fertile field was a wilderness.  
All its cities were torn down  
because of the LORD  
and his burning anger.

In some of the most moving poetry in the Bible, the coming ruin of the land is depicted as if it involves cosmic conflagration.

The land is described very much as in the creation narrative in Genesis 1. In a very real sense what will happen is a reversal of creation.

**Jer 4:27** For this is what the LORD says:  
“The whole land will be a desolation,  
but I will not finish it off.  
**28** Because of this, the earth will mourn;  
the skies above will grow dark.  
I have spoken; I have planned,  
and I will not relent or turn back from it.”

Even if the whole land becomes ruined, God will not make a complete end to it.

What a gracious God, there will be a remnant.

- Jer 4:29** Every city flees  
at the sound of the horseman and the archer.  
They enter the thickets  
and climb among the rocks.  
Every city is abandoned;  
no inhabitant is left.
- 30** And you, devastated one, what are you doing  
that you dress yourself in scarlet,  
that you adorn yourself with gold jewelry,  
that you enhance your eyes with makeup?  
You beautify yourself for nothing.  
Your lovers reject you;  
they intend to take your life.
- 31** I hear a cry like a woman in labor,  
a cry of anguish like one bearing her first child.  
The cry of Daughter Zion gasping for breath,  
stretching out her hands:  
“Woe is me, for my life is weary  
because of the murderers!”

Once again, the image changes as Yah’s daughter of Zion are figurately described, this time as a prostitute dressed up for her suitors.

As is the case with all humanity, Judah is prone to think that predictions of disaster do not apply to her.

- Jer 5:1** Roam through the streets of Jerusalem.  
Investigate;  
search in her squares.  
If you find one person,  
any who acts justly,  
who pursues faithfulness,  
then I will forgive her.

It is not an everyday that an offer comes along to save one's civilization, but in this case all it would take is for Jeremiah to locate in their midst just only truly righteous man. See Genesis 18:26-33.

The word for forgive is used exclusively of God's forgiveness in the OT not humanity.

- 2     When they say, "As the LORD lives,"  
      they are swearing falsely.**
- 3     LORD, don't your eyes look for faithfulness?  
      You have struck them, but they felt no pain.  
      You finished them off,  
      but they refused to accept discipline.  
      They made their faces harder than rock,  
      and they refused to return.**

Not even one is found. Jeremiah can apparently take as long as he needed.

- Jer 5:4   Then I thought:  
          They are just the poor;  
          they have been foolish.  
          For they don't understand the way of the LORD,  
          the justice of their God.**

Jeremiah began with the common folk. Poverty here is not economic but a poverty of knowledge or understanding.

- 5     I will go to the powerful  
      and speak to them.  
      Surely, they know the way of the LORD,  
      the justice of their God.  
      However, these also had broken the yoke  
      and torn off the chains.**
  
- 6     Therefore, a lion from the forest will strike them down.  
      A wolf from arid plains will ravage them.  
      A leopard stalks their cities.**

**Anyone who leaves them will be torn to pieces  
because their rebellious acts are many,  
their unfaithful deeds numerous.**

As distinct from the poor, the great ones are those who have attained certain stations in life. If reform had achieved anything, there seems to have been little evidence of it left among either group.

**Jer 5:7        Why should I forgive you?  
Your children have abandoned me  
and sworn by those who are not gods.  
I satisfied their needs, yet they committed adultery;  
they gashed themselves at the prostitute's house.**

**8        They are well-fed, eager stallions,  
each neighing after someone else's wife.  
9        Should I not punish them for these things?  
          This is the LORD's declaration.  
Should I not avenge myself  
on such a nation as this?**

God's search for one righteous person continues. This offer is even more generous than the offer God made to Abraham.

**Jer 5:10      Go up among her vineyard terraces and destroy them,  
but do not finish them off.  
Prune away her shoots,  
for they do not belong to the LORD.**

In an amazing way this section is bracketed by an inclusion 10-18 with a theme that Yah will not destroy Judah completely.

**11      They, the house of Israel and the house of Judah,  
have dealt very treacherously with me.  
          This is the LORD's declaration.  
12      They have contradicted the LORD  
and insisted, "It won't happen.  
Harm won't come to us;**

- we won't see sword or famine."**
- 13 The prophets become only wind,  
for the LORD's word is not in them.  
This will in fact happen to them.**

**Jer 5:14 Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD of Armies says:  
Because you have spoken this word,  
I am going to make my words  
become fire in your mouth.  
These people are the wood,  
and the fire will consume them.**

This is the first time since 3:18 that both northern Israel and Judah are mentioned.

There is not an attempt to deny that God existed but more of a denial that God would intervene in such a way as Jeremiah depicted.

To reject God's word is to openly court God's repudiation of the words, actions, and lives of these rejecters of God's revelation.

- 15 I am about to bring a nation  
from far away against you,  
house of Israel.  
This is the LORD's declaration.  
It is an established nation,  
an ancient nation,  
a nation whose language you do not know  
and whose speech you do not understand.**

Where will the judgement come from? From foreign nations.

That they will be ancient nations likely points to Babylon and not the Sythians.

- 16 Their quiver is like an open grave;  
they are all warriors.**
- 17 They will consume your harvest and your food.  
They will consume your sons and your daughters.  
They will consume your flocks and your herds.  
They will consume your vines and your fig trees.  
With the sword they will destroy**

**your fortified cities in which you trust.**

As a result, they will both forage (to sustain their army) and plunder (in wanton destruction) all they see.

**Jer 5:18** “But even in those days”—this is the LORD’s declaration— “I will not finish you off. **19** When people ask, ‘For what offense has the LORD our God done all these things to us?’ You will respond to them, ‘Just as you abandoned me and served foreign gods in your land, so will you serve strangers in a land that is not yours.’

Why has God done all this? The answer is twofold

1. God will not remove his promise to his covenant people.
2. God will be faithful in his threatened judgment as he is in promise.

**Jer 5:20** “Declare this in the house of Jacob; proclaim it in Judah, saying:

**21** Hear this,  
you foolish and senseless people.  
They have eyes, but they don’t see.  
They have ears, but they don’t hear.

Once again, the prophet returns to the theme of denouncing the people for their foolishness and their failure of heart.

Israel has a real problem in that they are being spiritually insensitive.

**22** Do you not fear me?  
This is the LORD’s declaration.

Do you not tremble before me,  
the one who set the sand as the boundary of the sea,  
an enduring barrier that it cannot cross?  
The waves surge, but they cannot prevail.  
They roar but cannot pass over it.

**23** But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts.  
They have turned aside and have gone away.

**24** They have not said to themselves,  
‘Let’s fear the LORD our God,  
who gives the seasonal rains, both autumn and spring,  
who guarantees to us the fixed weeks of the harvest.’

In Jeremiah 2:6-7 Israel failed to confess God as their Redeemer, but here in 5:22 they fail to acknowledge him as their Creator.

They ignored the seven weeks of harvest between Passover and Pentecost. Spring rains in March and April provide good harvest and autumn rains that fall Mid-October – December made the ground ready for sowing and planting.

**25 Your guilty acts have diverted these things from you.  
Your sins have withheld my bounty from you,**

Infidelity is the reason that blessings, which were assumed natural and normal, will not happen at this time.

**26 for wicked men live among my people.  
They watch like hunters lying in wait.  
They set a trap;  
they catch men.**

**27 Like a cage full of birds,  
so, their houses are full of deceit.  
Therefore they have grown powerful and rich.**

**28 They have become fat and sleek.  
They have also excelled in evil matters.  
They have not taken up cases,  
such as the case of the fatherless, so they might prosper,  
and they have not defended the rights of the needy.**

**29 Should I not punish them for these things?  
This is the LORD's declaration.  
Should I not avenge myself  
on such a nation as this?**

The list of indictments continues to grow.

Instead of pleading the case of the poor or fatherless, they only care for themselves.

**Jer 5:30 "An appalling, horrible thing  
has taken place in the land.**

**31 The prophets prophesy falsely,  
and the priests rule by their own authority.  
My people love it like this.  
But what will you do at the end of it?**

Even more astounding and appalling is that the prophets are handing out a pack of lies and the priests are taking control of things based on their own inclinations.

**Jer 6:1 “Run for cover  
out of Jerusalem, Benjaminites.  
Sound the ram’s horn in Tekoa;  
raise a smoke signal over Beth-haccherem,  
for disaster threatens from the north,  
even a crushing blow.**

The alarm is sounded once again, but this time it is not a call to take shelter.

**2 Though she is beautiful and delicate,  
I will destroy Daughter Zion.  
3 Shepherds and their flocks will come against her;  
they will pitch their tents all around her.  
Each will pasture his own portion.**

Personifying the city as a female only increases her weakened and vulnerable image.

**4 Set them apart for war against her;  
rise up, let’s attack at noon.  
Woe to us, for the day is passing;  
the evening shadows grow long.  
5 Rise up, let’s attack by night.  
Let’s destroy her fortresses.”**

The command is given to commence the battle at noon, a signal in itself ominous, for ordinarily battles begin at daybreak and continue until the evening light fails.

**Jer 6:6 For this is what the LORD of Armies says:**

**Cut down the trees;  
raise a siege ramp against Jerusalem.  
This city must be punished.  
There is nothing but oppression within her.**

**7 As a well gushes out its water,  
so she pours out her evil.  
Violence and destruction resound in her.  
Sickness and wounds keep coming to my attention.**

So generous as supply of wickedness was on hand in Judah that it was like a deep well that retained its water cool and available to drink.

**8 Be warned, Jerusalem,  
or I will turn away from you;  
I will make you a desolation,  
a land without inhabitants.**

In spite of all such evidence of moral and spiritual sickness, God is still warning Jerusalem to repent.

In like manner our Lord would rather we are wounded by his words and driven to reverse our flirting with sin.

**Jer 6:9 This is what the LORD of Armies says:**

**Glean the remnant of Israel  
as thoroughly as a vine.  
Pass your hand once more like a grape gatherer  
over the branches.**

**Jer 6:10 Who can I speak to and give such a warning  
that they will listen?**

**Look, their ear is uncircumcised,  
so they cannot pay attention.  
See, the word of the LORD has become contemptible to them—  
they find no pleasure in it.**

Yah again speaks to Jeremiah, this time using the figure of a vine.

Grape harvesting usually came last in the summer's work, and gleaning what was left on the vine was left to the poor of the land.

Instead of holding Yah's word in high esteem, they treat it as contemptible and worthless.

**11 But I am full of the LORD's wrath;  
I am tired of holding it back.  
Pour it out on the children in the street,  
on the gathering of young men as well.  
For both husband and wife will be captured,  
the old with the very old.**

**12 Their houses will be turned over to others,  
their fields and wives as well,  
for I will stretch out my hand  
against the inhabitants of the land.  
This is the LORD's declaration.**

**Jer 6:13 For from the least to the greatest of them,  
everyone is making profit dishonestly.  
From prophet to priest,  
everyone deals falsely.**

**14 They have treated my people's brokenness superficially,  
claiming, "Peace, peace,"  
when there is no peace.**

**15 Were they ashamed when they acted so detestably?  
They weren't at all ashamed.  
They can no longer feel humiliation.  
Therefore, they will fall among the fallen.  
When I punish them, they will collapse,  
says the LORD.**

Jeremiah in the meantime has all he can take. Yet God enlarges Jeremiah's audience from young to old.

For all of the society's ills, religious leaders come up with the wrong remedies.

The pity of the whole thing is that so oblivious have the people and their false teachers become that they no longer even blush or show any shame over their actions.

**Jer 6:16 This is what the LORD says:  
Stand by the roadways and look.  
Ask about the ancient paths,  
"Which is the way to what is good?"  
Then take it  
and find rest for yourselves.  
But they protested, "We won't!"**

The only way one can find rest for his soul is by actually living in obedience to what god commands, not mere lip service and outward verbalization of the truth of God.

See Psalms 1

**17 I appointed watchmen over you  
and said, "Listen for the sound of the ram's horn."  
But they protested, "We won't listen!"**

These watchmen were no doubt the prophets he has set as sentinels to give advance warning. See Ezekiel 3:17.

**Jer 6:18 Therefore listen, you nations  
and you witnesses,  
learn what the charge is against them.**

**19 Listen, earth!  
I am about to bring disaster on these people,  
the fruit of their own plotting,  
for they have paid no attention to my words.  
They have rejected my instruction.**

Yah now calls for witnesses from the nations/Gentiles.

What God is about to do has universal significance even though it is aimed at his covenantal Jewish people.

**20    What use to me is frankincense from Sheba  
or sweet cane from a distant land?  
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable;  
your sacrifices do not please me.**

Frankincense, a white substance made from the gum resin of various trees and used for sacred incense in the tabernacle and temple (Exod. 30:34).

**21    Therefore, this is what the LORD says:  
I am going to place stumbling blocks before these people;  
fathers and sons together will stumble over them;  
friends and neighbors will also perish.**

All will miss the point: fatherless and sons as well as neighbors and friends; they are all one and alike; they will miss what those with spiritual eyes will pick up immediately.

**Jer 6:22    This is what the LORD says:  
Look, an army is coming from a northern land;  
a great nation will be stirred up  
from the remote regions of the earth.**

**23    They grasp bow and javelin.  
They are cruel and show no mercy.  
Their voice roars like the sea,  
and they ride on horses,  
lined up like men in battle formation  
against you, Daughter Zion.**

Verse 22 beings another new section with the into formula “this is what Yahweh says.”

**Jer 6:24        We have heard about it,  
and our hands have become weak.  
Distress has seized us—**

**25**     **pain, like a woman in labor.**  
**Don't go out to the fields;**  
**don't walk on the road.**  
**For the enemy has a sword;**  
**terror is on every side.**

Jeremiah allows time for the people to record their reaction. To put it bluntly, they feel overwhelmed.

**Jer 6:26**     **My dear people, dress yourselves in sackcloth**  
**and roll in the dust.**  
**Mourn as you would for an only son,**  
**a bitter lament,**  
**for suddenly the destroyer will come on us.**

It is time to get out the traditional clothes for mourning.

The obstacles are nothing less than the Babylonian armies.

**Jer 6:27**     **I have appointed you to be an assayer among my people—**  
**a refiner—**  
**so you may know and assay their way of life.**

It is Yahweh himself who will do the testing, but the prophet is asked to join in the task of scrutinizing and assaying.

**28**     **All are stubborn rebels**  
**spreading slander.**  
**They are bronze and iron;**  
**all of them are corrupt.**  
**29**     **The bellows blow,**  
**blasting the lead with fire.**  
**The refining is completely in vain;**  
**the evil ones are not separated out.**  
**30**     **They are called rejected silver,**  
**for the LORD has rejected them.**

If v. 27 ends Yahweh's speech, then 28-30 are the prophet's report as God's assayer.

In the ancient process of refining silver, the ore is super-heated along with lead. As the air is directed to the molten mass, the air oxidizes the lead, which acts as a flux to carry away the impurities.

If the silver is finished in its time of being refined, the silversmith will know the precise moment the silver is ready: when he sees his reflection in the molten mass.

Yahweh is still in the business of inspecting how each of us hear and change by his ancient Word.

**Jer 7:1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "Stand in the gate of the house of the LORD and there call out this word: 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who enter through these gates to worship the LORD.**

It was unusual to be stopped by a sermon as one was going into the courts of the house of God to worship, but that was what Jeremiah is instructed to do.

It is as if the people are being greeted with the message that internal preparation is needed as a prior condition for meeting with God before they thought of entering the house of the Lord.

**Jer 7:3**        **“This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Correct your ways and your actions, and I will allow you to live in this place.**

Personal holiness becomes a priority and a prerequisite to mere attendance at the house of God.

A person’s ways and deeds are open to inspection by God.

**<sup>4</sup> Do not trust deceitful words, chanting, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.”**

What does change look like?

First, they are to stop referring to the temple as if this were some sort of a slogan, mantra, or good luck charm.

Rather than expressing a repentance of heart, they are trusting in externals.

**<sup>5</sup> Instead, if you really correct your ways and your actions, if you act justly toward one another,**

The first area of reform is in the way they deal with each other, as the proper response set forth by Mosaic code.

All verbs are plural, referring to both king and people.

**<sup>6</sup> if you no longer oppress the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow and no longer shed innocent blood in this place or follow other gods, bringing harm on yourselves, <sup>7</sup> I will allow you to live in this place, the land I gave to your ancestors long ago and forever. <sup>8</sup> But look, you keep trusting in deceitful words that cannot help.**

See Exodus 22:21-24 and Lev. 19:33-34. Yahweh cares deeply about these three groups of community.

Innocent blood, i.e. Manasseh in 2 Kings 21:16

**Jer 7:9**        **“Do you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and follow other gods that you have not known?**

The first six verbs are all infinitive absolute, which lays special stress on the action of the verb.

**<sup>10</sup> Then do you come and stand before me in this house that bears my name and say, “We are rescued, so we can continue doing all these detestable acts”? <sup>11</sup> Has this house, which bears my name, become a den of robbers in your view? Yes, I too have seen it. This is the LORD’s declaration.**

The tragedy of the whole matter was that Judeans thought it possible to live any way they pleased and then frivolously enter the house of the Lord.

Jesus issues a similar denunciation (Matthew 21:13; Luke 19:46)

Word for watching (seen) is different than Jeremiah’s call but offers clear echoes.

**Jer 7:12 “But return to my place that was at Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first. See what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel.**

If one believes mere attendance at the sanctuary grant immunity from punishment, Shiloh in 1050 BC and the northern exile in 722 BC remind otherwise.

Shiloh located 19 miles north of Jerusalem was the sanctuary of God in the days of Eli and Hannah (1 Sam. 1:9).

**<sup>13</sup> Now, because you have done all these things—this is the LORD’s declaration—and because I have spoken to you time and time again but you wouldn’t listen, and I have called to you, but you wouldn’t answer, <sup>14</sup> what I did to Shiloh I will do to the house that bears my name, the house in which you trust, the place that I gave you and your ancestors. <sup>15</sup> I will banish you from my presence, just as I banished all of your brothers, all the descendants of Ephraim.’**

The conclusion was not far off, for what happened at Shiloh is going to happen to the temple again, only this time it would be the temple in Jerusalem,

Those who flout God’s law and his word will surely face devastating results. Don’t try to put God off by presenting him with a lot of artificial substitutes.

**Jer 7:16 “As for you, do not pray for these people. Do not offer a cry or a prayer on their behalf, and do not beg me, for I will not listen to you.**

Jeremiah is told a total of seven times not to pray or intercede for this people throughout his ministry (7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 29:7; 37:3; 42:2, 20).

**<sup>17</sup> Don’t you see how they behave in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? <sup>18</sup> The sons gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven, and they pour out drink offerings to other gods so that they provoke me to anger.**

At the moment they were supposedly worshiping Yahweh, the entire family is engaged in perverted devotion to the Queen of Heaven, most likely the goddess Anat or Babylonian Ishtar.

It is a total family effort.

**19 But are they really provoking me?" This is the LORD's declaration. "Isn't it they themselves being provoked to disgrace?" Jer 7:20 Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: "Look, my anger—my burning wrath—is about to be poured out on this place, on people and animals, on the tree of the field, and on the produce of the land. My wrath will burn and not be quenched."**

Yahweh is indeed provoked by all these distorted family values involved in worshiping pagan goddess.

Discipline is judgement within covenant. Judgment without covenant is wrath unmitigated by grace.

**Jer 7:21 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: "Add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices, and eat the meat yourselves,**

In a deep sarcastic and ironic tone.

**22 for when I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offering and sacrifice.**

God always inspects the heart of the offeror before he inspects the offering (Isa 1:11-17).

**23 However, I did give them this command: 'Obey me, and then I will be your God, and you will be my people. Follow every way I command you so that it may go well with you.' 24 Yet they didn't listen or pay attention but followed their own advice and their own stubborn, evil heart. They went backward and not forward. 25 Since the day your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until today, I have sent all my servants the prophets to you time and time again. 26 However, my people wouldn't listen to me or pay attention but became obstinate; they did more evil than their ancestors.**

Unfortunately, the people are unreceptive to the teaching of Yah.

The triple formula of promise: obey, your God, My people.

Stiff necked: a farming metaphor for an unwilling and unproductive animal.

**Jer 7:27 "When you speak all these things to them, they will not listen to you. When you call to them, they will not answer you. 28 Therefore, declare to them, 'This is the nation that would not listen to the LORD their God and would not accept discipline. Truth has perished—it has disappeared from their mouths. 29 Cut off the**

**hair of your sacred vow and throw it away. Raise up a dirge on the barren heights, for the LORD has rejected and abandoned the generation under his wrath.'**

To obey is better than sacrifice (1 Sam 15:22).

God cannot be bought and when truth and authenticity are absent from the inner being of the believer, then such worship is worthless.

**Jer 7:30** "For the Judeans have done what is evil in my sight." This is the LORD's declaration. "They have set up their abhorrent things in the house that bears my name in order to defile it. <sup>31</sup> They have built the high places of Topheth in Ben Hinnom Valley in order to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, a thing I did not command; I never entertained the thought.

See King Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:5-6; 23:10).

Josiah reversed the evil deeds of his predecessors. Jehoiakim was not attracted to his father's righteous practices.

**Jer 7:32** "Therefore, look, the days are coming"—the LORD's declaration— "when this place will no longer be called Topheth and Ben Hinnom Valley, but Slaughter Valley. Topheth will become a cemetery, because there will be no other burial place. <sup>33</sup> The corpses of these people will become food for the birds of the sky and for the wild animals of the land, with no one to scare them away. <sup>34</sup> I will remove from the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and gladness and the voices of the groom and the bride, for the land will become a desolate waste.

So great will be the slaughter that scavenging birds and animals will be able to eat all they want (1 Sam 17:43-46).

All sounds of joy and gladness will cease.

## Illustrations

“Repentance is to leave the sins we loved before and show that we in earnest grieve by doing so no more.” — John Bunyan

“Repentance grows as faith grows. Do not make any mistake about it.” — Sinclair Ferguson

“Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life.” — Warren Wiersbe

“I have learned that repentance is not what saves me. It is Christ who saves me, and repentance is the sign that I have been saved.” — Charles Spurgeon

“I have learned that repentance is not what saves me. It is Christ who saves me, and repentance is the sign that I have been saved.” — Charles Spurgeon

“God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.” — Augustine of Hippo