

17:1 The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, [and] with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the tablet of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;

It is deeply and indelibly written in their heart, and shall be as indelibly written in their punishment. Writing with the point of a diamond must refer to glass, or some vitrified substance, as it is distinguished here from engraving with a steel burine, or graver. Their altars show what the deities are which they worship.

2 whilst their children remember their altars and their Asherim by the green trees upon the high hills.

3 O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures for a spoil, [and] thy high places, because of sin, throughout all thy borders.

4 And thou, even of thyself, shalt discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger which shall burn for ever.

5 Thus saith Yahweh: Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from Yahweh.

An arm of flesh is put here for a weak and ineffectual support.

6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited.

כערער kearar; or, like a blasted tree, without moisture, parched and withered.

7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in Yahweh, and whose trust Yahweh is.

8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Cf. Ps 1.

9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?

עקב הלב akob halleb, “the heart is supplanting - tortuous - full of windings - insidious;” lying ever at the catch; striving to avail itself of every favorable circumstance to gratify its propensities to pride, ambition, evil desire, and corruption of all kinds. **ואנש הוא** veanush hu, and is wretched, or feeble; distressed beyond all things, in consequence of the wickedness that is in it. It even hides itself from itself; so that its owner does not know it. A corrupt heart is the worst enemy the fallen creature can have; it is full of evil devices, - of deceit, of folly, and abomination, and its owner knows not what is in him till it boils over, and is often past remedy before the evil is perceived.

10 I, Yahweh, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

The Lord is called by his apostles, Act 1:24, Καρδιογνωστης, the Knower of the heart.

11 As the partridge that sitteth on [eggs] which she hath not laid, so is he that getteth riches, and not by right; in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool.

Partridge (*Rephuhn*, properly *Röphuhn* from *röpen* = *rufen*, to call or cry); a bird yet found in plenty in the tribe of Judah.

12 A glorious throne, [set] on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.

13 O Yahweh, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be put to shame. They that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken Yahweh, the fountain of living waters.

14 Heal me, O Yahweh, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

15 Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of Yahweh? let it come now.

This is really quite the silliest thing they could have ever said. Jeremiah had been proclaiming the word of God for some period of time already. They are simply mocking him.

16 As for me, I have not hastened from being a shepherd after thee; neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was before thy face.

17 Be not a terror unto me: thou art my refuge in the day of evil.

18 Let them be put to shame that persecute me, but let not me be put to shame; let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed; bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

19 Thus said Yahweh unto me: Go, and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;

20 and say unto them, Hear ye the word of Yahweh, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates:

21 Thus saith Yahweh, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;

This breach of the Sabbath was that which let in upon them all the waters of God's wrath.

22 neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work: but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.

23 But they hearkened not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, and might not receive instruction.

24 And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith Yahweh, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but to hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;

25 then shall there enter in by the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain for ever.

26 And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places round about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the lowland, and from the hill-country, and from the South, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and meal-offerings, and frankincense, and bringing [sacrifices of] thanksgiving, unto the house of Yahweh.

27 But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden and enter in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

How fully were they warned; and how basely did they reject the counsel of God against themselves!

18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying,

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

God can shape their destinies as he pleases.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels.

4 And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

5 Then the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Yahweh. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel.

Have I not a right to do with a people whom I have created as reason and justice may require?

7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it;

8 if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

10 if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

Cf. Ezekiel 3 and 33.

11 Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Yahweh: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

12 But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart.

13 Therefore thus saith Yahweh: Ask ye now among the nations, who hath heard such things; the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.

14 Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? [or] shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up?

Excursus- Lebanon

Derived from the root לבן, *lābhēn*, “to be white,” probably from the snow which covers its summits the greater part of the year. “White mountains” are found in almost every country. The light color of the upper limestone may, however, form a sufficient reason for the name. In prose the article is usually connected with the name. In poetry it is more often without the article. In the Septuagint, however, the article is generally present both in prose and poetry.

The Lebanon range proper borders the east coast of the Mediterranean, for a distance of 100 miles, running North-Northeast and South-Southwest from the mouth of the *Litāny* river, the classic Leontes (which enters the sea a little North of Tyre), to the mouth of the Eleuthurus (*Nahr el-Kebir*), a few miles North of Tripolis. This river comes through a depression between Lebanon and the *Nuseiriyeh* mountains, known as “the entrance to Hamath,” and connects with a caravan route to the Euphrates through Palmyra. For a considerable distance North of the *Litāny*, the mountain summits average from 4,000 to 6,000 ft. in height, and the range is more or less dissected by short streams which enter the Mediterranean. Most prominent of these is the *Nahr ez-Zaherāny*, which, after running 25 or 30 miles in a southerly direction through the center of the range, like the *Litāny*, turns abruptly West opposite Mt. Hermon, reaching the sea between Tyre and Sidon. In roughly parallel courses *Nahr el-‘Awleh* and Nahr Damur descend to the sea between Sidon and Beyrout, and *Nahr Beyrout* just North of the city. Throughout this district the mountain recesses are more or less wooded. Opposite Beyrout the range rises in *Jebel Sannin* to an elevation of 8,560 ft. Thirty miles farther Northeast the summit is reached in *Jebel Mukhmal*, at an elevation of 10,225 ft., with several others of nearly the same height. An amphitheater here opens to the West, in which is sheltered the most frequented cedar grove, and from which emerges the *Nahr Qadīsha* (“sacred stream”) which enters the Mediterranean at Tripolis. Snow is found upon these summits throughout the year (Jer 18:14), while formerly the level area between them furnished the snow fields from which a glacier descended several miles into the headwaters of the *Qadīsha*, reaching a level of about 5,000 ft. The glacier deposited in this amphitheater a terminal moraine covering several square miles, which at its front, near *Bsherreh*, is 1,000 ft. in thickness. It is on this that the grove of cedars referred to is growing. The view from this summit reveals the geographical features of the region in a most satisfactory manner. Toward the East lies Coele-Syria (the modern *Buka*), 7,000 ft. below the summit, bordered on the eastern side by the mountain wall of Anti-Lebanon, corresponding to the cliffs of Moab East of the Jordan valley, opposite Judea. This depression in fact is but a continuation of the great geological fault so conspicuous in the Jordan valley (see ARABAH). As one looks down into this valley, *Ba'albek* appears at the base of Anti-Lebanon, only 20 miles away. The valley is here about 10 miles wide, and forms the watershed between the Orontes and the *Litāny*. To the Northeast the valley

of the Orontes is soon obscured by intervening peaks, but to the Southwest the valley of the *Litâny* closes up only where the glistening peak of Mt. Hermon pierces the sky, as the river turns abruptly toward the sea 40 miles distant. Toward the West, the blue waters of the Mediterranean, only 25 miles distant as the crow flies, show themselves at intervals through the gorges cut by the rapid streams which have furrowed the western flanks of the mountain (Son 4:15); 3,500 ft. beneath is the amphitheater many square miles in area, filled with the terminal moraine from which the *Ḳadîsha* river emerges, and on which the grove of cedars (compare 1Ki 4:33; Psa 92:12; Hos 14:5) appears as a green spot in the center. Onward to the West the river gorge winds its way amid numerous picturesque village sites and terraced fields, every foot of which is cultivated by a frugal and industrious people. To the traveler who has made the diagonal journey from Beirut to the cedars, memory fills in innumerable details which are concealed from vision at any one time. He has crossed *Nahr el-Kelb* ("Dog River"), near its mouth, where he has seen Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions dating from the time of Sennacherib's invasion. Ascending this river, after passing numerous villages surrounded by mulberry and olive groves, vineyards, and fields of wheat, and pausing to study the ruins of a temple dating from Roman times, and having crossed a natural bridge at *Jisr el-Hagar* with a span of 120 ft., rising 75 ft. above the stream, he arrives, at the end of the second day, at the ruins of the famous temple of Venus destroyed by the order of Constantine on account of the impurity of the rites celebrated in it. Here, too, is a famous spring, typical of many others which gush forth on either side of the Lebanon range from beneath the thick deposits of limestone which everywhere crown its summit. The flow of water is enormous, and at certain seasons of the year is colored red with a mineral matter which the ancients regarded with mysterious reverence (see *LB*, III, 244). The lower part of the amphitheater is covered with verdure and a scanty growth of pine and walnut trees, but the upper part merges in the barren cliffs which lie above the snow line. Onward, alternately through upturned limestone strata, left by erosion in fantastic forms, and through barren areas of red sandstone, where the cedars of Lebanon would flourish if protected from the depredations of man and his domestic animals, he crosses by turns at higher and higher levels the headwaters of the *Ibrahim*, *Fedar*, *Jozeh*, *Byblus* and the *Botrys* rivers, and at length reaches, on the fourth day, the *Ḳadîsha*, 5 miles below the cedars of Lebanon. Viewed from the Mediterranean the Lebanon range presents a continuous undulating outline of light-colored limestone peaks, the whole rising so abruptly from the sea that through most of the distance there is barely room for a road along the shore, while in places even that is prevented by rocky promontories projecting boldly into the sea. The only harbors of importance are at Beyrout and Tripolis, and these are only partially protected, being open to the Northwest. The eastern face of the range falling down into Coele-Syria is very abrupt, with no foothills and but one or two important valleys (*ISBE*).

**15 For my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to false [gods]; and they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, in a way not cast up;
16 to make their land an astonishment, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and shake his head.**

שריקות *sherikoth*. a shrieking, hissing; an expression of contempt.

17 I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

18 Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the

prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Let us smite him with the tongue - On the tongue; so it should be rendered. Lying and false testimony are punished in the eastern countries, to the present day, by smiting the person on the mouth with a strong piece of leather like the sole of a shoe.

19 Give heed to me, O Yahweh, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.

20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember how I stood before thee to speak good for them, to turn away thy wrath from them.

21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and give them over to the power of the sword; and let their wives become childless, and widows; and let their men be slain of death, [and] their young men smitten of the sword in battle.

22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them; for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

23 Yet, Yahweh, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me; forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thou with them in the time of thine anger.

Vv. 18-23 are another of Jeremiah's laments or "confessions". His grief is so profound that he wishes his enemies destroyed.

19:1 Thus said Yahweh, Go, and buy a potter's earthen bottle, and [take] of the elders of the people, and of the elders of the priests;

Jeremiah is directed to predict the utter desolation of Judah and Jerusalem.

2 and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the gate Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee;

3 and say, Hear ye the word of Yahweh, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

4 Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, that they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents,

They have devoted God's temple to a widely different purpose from that for which it was erected.

5 and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal; which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:

6 therefore, behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of Slaughter.

7 And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies will I give to be food for the birds of the heavens, and for the beasts of the earth.

8 And I will make this city an astonishment, and a hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.

9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters; and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and in the distress, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their life, shall distress them.

This was literally fulfilled when the Babylonians arrived.

10 Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,

11 and shalt say unto them, Thus saith Yahweh of hosts: Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury in Topheth, till there be no place to bury.

12 Thus will I do unto this place, saith Yahweh, and to the inhabitants thereof, even making this city as Topheth:

Excursus: Tophet

התפת, *ha-tōpheth*, etymology uncertain; the most probable is its connection with a root meaning “burning” - the “place of burning”; the King James Version, **Tophet**, except in 2Ki 23:10): The references are to such a place: “They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire” (Jer 7:31). On account of this abomination Topheth and the Valley of Hinnom should be called “The valley of Slaughter: for they shall bury in Topheth, till there be no place to bury,” the Revised Version margin “because there shall be no place else” (Jer 7:32); see also Jer 19:6, Jer 19:12, Jer 19:13, Jer 19:14. Josiah is said to have “defiled Topheth” as part of his great religious reforms (2Ki 23:10). The site of this shameful place would seem to have been either at the lower end of the VALLEY OF HINNOM, near where Akeldama is now pointed out, or in the open ground where this valley joins the Kidron.

13 and the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, which are defiled, shall be as the place of Topheth, even all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods.

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

15 Thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all its towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have made their neck stiff, that they may not hear my words.

A metaphor taken from unruly and unbroken oxen, who resist the yoke, which break and run away. So this people had broken and destroyed the yoke of the law.

20:1 Now Pashhur, the son of Immer the priest, who was chief officer in the house of Yahweh, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.

פּשְׁחֹרַי, *pashhūr*, “splitter,” “cleaver”: the name of several persons including this priest, son of Immer, and “chief governor in the house of the Lord” (Jer 20:1), who persecuted Jeremiah, putting him in “the stocks” hard by the “house of Yahweh” in the “gate of Benjamin” (Jer 20:2). When released, Jeremiah pronounced Divine judgment on him and the people. Future captivity and an exile's death are promised to Pashur whose name he changed from its masterful significance to a cowering one. “Terror on every side” (*māghōr miṣṣābhīb*) is to take the place of “stable strength” (Jer 20:3 ff).

2 Then Pashhur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper gate of Benjamin, which was in the house of Yahweh.

3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashhur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, Yahweh hath not called thy name Pashhur, but Magor-missabib.

4 For thus saith Yahweh, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it; and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

5 Moreover I will give all the riches of this city, and all the gains thereof, and all the precious things thereof, yea, all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies; and they shall make them a prey, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

6 And thou, Pashhur, and all that dwell in thy house shall go into captivity; and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and there shalt thou be buried, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied falsely.

Judgement descends on those who oppose the Word and Will of God.

7 O Yahweh, thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me.

Another of Jeremiah's confessions, and this one the most amazing of all. The root פתה *pathah* signifies to persuade and allure as well as to deceive, and is used to imply being induced by words to do a thing. It can also be translated “seduced”.

8 For as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry, Violence and destruction! because the word of Yahweh is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day.

9 And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot [contain].

10 For I have heard the defaming of many, terror on every side. Denounce, and we will denounce him, [say] all my familiar friends, they that watch for my fall; peradventure he will be persuaded, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

11 But Yahweh is with me as a mighty one [and] a terrible: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail; they shall be utterly put to shame, because they have not dealt wisely, even with an everlasting dishonor which shall never be forgotten.

12 But, O Yahweh of hosts, that triest the righteous, that seest the heart and the mind, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

13 Sing unto Yahweh, praise ye Yahweh; for he hath delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evil-doers.

Even in the midst of torments Jeremiah praises God. But his praise of God is mixed with a real profound sorrow- such that, like Job, he can say what he says in the following verses:

14 Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

15 Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

16 And let that man be as the cities which Yahweh overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear a cry in the morning, and shouting at noontime;

17 because he slew me not from the womb; and so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb always great.

18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

It would have been well had I never been born, as I have neither comfort in my life, nor comfort in my work.