

The Heart of Judah and Man

Commentary for February 16, 2026 — God Critiques the Human Heart of Judah — and All People

Jeremiah was a Levite, of priestly descent. He could have served in the Temple as a priest, perhaps even as a chief priest like his father. Instead, God chose Jeremiah to be a prophet to his people Judah, and to the most powerful rulers of the world.¹ He was highly educated just like the prophet Isaiah. God gave Jeremiah prophecies of despair, death, the end of the dynastic rule by descendants of King David, future destruction of the Kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple. The horrors end with the survivors of Judah being sent into exile to Babylon. He prophesied these events decades before they occurred in the mid-6th century BC.

Below is Jeremiah 17:5–10 from the *Concordant Literal Version*. It tells of YHWH's reason for warning Judah against sin and soon-to-come future punishment of the people of the Kingdom of Judah.

The destruction and exile of Judah prophesied by Jeremiah occurred about 125 years after Assyria destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel. The Assyrians exiled Israel's people from their homes, marched them across the River Euphrates, and into the Assyrian heartland as captives. In a symbolic sense the 10 northern tribes were sent back into the wilderness.

When Jeremiah wrote the passage below, the Assyrian empire was in decline, but it still had a powerful military. Two other major powers were Egypt and the growing Babylonian Empire. Jeremiah rebuked the leaders and people of Judah. He begins by urging Judah not to rely on men, and specifically not to trust the Egyptian military against either Assyria or Babylon. This warning was not just to the king, but also to the people of Judah:

⁵ **“Thus says Yahweh:**

Cursed is THE MASTER

**who trusts in humanity, And
who makes flesh his arm, And
whose heart withdraws from Yahweh;**

⁶ **HE WILL become like a dwarf juniper in the Arabah [desert] And**

[HE] SHALL not see it when goodness comes; So

**HE WILL tabernacle in the hot places of the wilderness,
a land of salty waste that is not indwelt [few crops grow or flourish].**

⁷ **Blessed is THE MASTER who trusts in Yahweh,**

So that Yahweh comes to be his trust.

¹ Read Dr. Martin's 1975 revealing article "[The Prophetic Birth of Our Civilization](#)," updated in 2010.

- 8 He [**"THE MASTER"**] will become like
a tree transplanted by the water,
 [a tree] **That sends forth its roots by a canal;**
It shall not fear when the bright warmth comes;
Its leaf remains flourishing;
And it shall not be anxious in a year of dearth
 [shortage or drought],
Nor suspend from yielding fruit.

[Now comes a warning]

- 9 The heart is **CROOKED** above all things,
 And it is **MORTALLY ILL**; Who can know it?

- 10 I am Yahweh

Who investigates the heart,
Who tests the innermost being,

[Why does YHWH do that?]

So as to give to each one [judgment]

according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his actions."

"So he comes to be like
a tree transplanted by
rillets [a small flow] of
water,

That yields its fruit in its
season, And its leaf does
not decay; Hence all that
he does shall prosper."

• Psalm 1:3 CLV,
written by King David,
quoted in Jeremiah 17:8

• Jeremiah 17:5–10 CLV

The heart of the people of Judah will not accept the good news that God wants to save Judah. Their "**crooked**" heart (CLV) is translated as "**deceitful above all things**" in verse 9 of the *King James Version*. YHWH then points out how they are "**mortally ill**" (or "**desperately wicked**" in the KJV) in their sins, and they refuse to recognize God's truths and threats.

The historical context of Jeremiah 17:5–10 specifically refers to the people of Judah lacking trust in God in the 6th century BC. They want YHWH to solve their problems and rescue them without repenting of their sins against YHWH, and without changing their ways to follow God's commandments and laws. (See the article "[The Laws of the Bible.](#)")

In chapter 18, Jeremiah gives Judah the parable of the potter and the clay pots, how they will be smashed if they do not meet His standards and the potter begins with fresh clay to make new pots. This symbolism has little meaning to us today, but pottery was made in those days in every village around the world. YHWH says He is the potter creating and destroying kingdoms and people groups. He does as He wills with His "pots" — as He will do His will with the disobedient people of Judah.

We often see the phrase "**The heart is CROOKED above all things,**" most often applied to every human being (Ecclesiastes 9:3; Matthew 15:19). This is not wrong. The people of Israel are like every human being, intensified and made even more "**stiff-necked**" than most people around the world, over time. Yes, my heart and your heart are "**crooked**" — just as YHWH made us to be. Only Christ our Savior can change our hearts and minds to accept and conform to God's laws of love (Romans 13:10 and Galatians 5:14).

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