**Jeremiah 13-16**

A Linen Belt

**13**This is what the Lord said to me: “Go and buy a linen belt and put it around your waist, but do not let it touch water.” **2**So I bought a belt, as the Lord directed, and put it around my waist.

**3**Then the word of the Lord came to me a second time: **4**“Take the belt you bought and are wearing around your waist, and go now to Perath and hide it there in a crevice in the rocks.” **5**So I went and hid it at Perath, as the Lord told me.

**6**Many days later the Lord said to me, “Go now to Perath and get the belt I told you to hide there.” **7**So I went to Perath and dug up the belt and took it from the place where I had hidden it, but now it was ruined and completely useless.

**8**Then the word of the Lord came to me: **9**“This is what the Lord says: ‘In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. **10**These wicked people, who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them, will be like this belt—completely useless! **11**For as a belt is bound around the waist, so I bound all the people of Israel and all the people of Judah to me,’ declares the Lord, ‘to be my people for my renown and praise and honor. But they have not listened.’

Wineskins

**12**“Say to them: ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Every wineskin should be filled with wine.’ And if they say to you, ‘Don’t we know that every wineskin should be filled with wine?’ **13**then tell them, ‘This is what the Lord says: I am going to fill with drunkenness all who live in this land, including the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets and all those living in Jerusalem. **14**I will smash them one against the other, parents and children alike, declares the Lord. I will allow no pity or mercy or compassion to keep me from destroying them.’”

Threat of Captivity

**15**Hear and pay attention, do not be arrogant,  
    for the Lord has spoken.  
**16**Give glory to the Lord your God before he brings the darkness,  
before your feet stumble on the darkening hills.  
You hope for light, but he will turn it to utter darkness  
    and change it to deep gloom.  
**17**If you do not listen, I will weep in secret  
    because of your pride;  
my eyes will weep bitterly,  
    overflowing with tears,  
    because the Lord’s flock will be taken captive.

**18**Say to the king and to the queen mother,  
    “Come down from your thrones,  
for your glorious crowns  
    will fall from your heads.”  
**19**The cities in the Negev will be shut up,  
    and there will be no one to open them.  
All Judah will be carried into exile,  
    carried completely away.

**20**Look up and see  
    those who are coming from the north.  
Where is the flock that was entrusted to you,  
    the sheep of which you boasted?  
**21**What will you say when the Lord sets over you  
    those you cultivated as your special allies?  
Will not pain grip you  
    like that of a woman in labor?  
**22**And if you ask yourself,  
    “Why has this happened to me?” -   
it is because of your many sins  
    that your skirts have been torn off  
    and your body mistreated.  
**23**Can an Ethiopian[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+13-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-19290b)] change his skin  
    or a leopard its spots?  
Neither can you do good  
    who are accustomed to doing evil.

**24**“I will scatter you like chaff  
    driven by the desert wind.  
**25**This is your lot,  
    the portion I have decreed for you,”  
declares the Lord,  
“because you have forgotten me  
    and trusted in false gods.  
**26**I will pull up your skirts over your face  
    that your shame may be seen -   
**27**your adulteries and lustful neighings,  
    your shameless prostitution!  
I have seen your detestable acts  
    on the hills and in the fields.  
Woe to you, Jerusalem!  
    How long will you be unclean?”

Drought, Famine, Sword

**14**This is the word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:

**2**“Judah mourns,  
    her cities languish;  
they wail for the land,  
    and a cry goes up from Jerusalem.  
**3**The nobles send their servants for water;  
    they go to the cisterns  
    but find no water.  
They return with their jars unfilled;  
    dismayed and despairing,  
    they cover their heads.  
**4**The ground is cracked  
    because there is no rain in the land;  
the farmers are dismayed and cover their heads.  
**5**Even the doe in the field  
    deserts her newborn fawn because there is no grass.  
**6**Wild donkeys stand on the barren heights  
    and pant like jackals;  
their eyes fail for lack of food.”

**7**Although our sins testify against us,  
    do something, Lord, for the sake of your name.  
For we have often rebelled;  
    we have sinned against you.  
**8**You who are the hope of Israel,  
    its Savior in times of distress,  
why are you like a stranger in the land,  
    like a traveler who stays only a night?  
**9**Why are you like a man taken by surprise,  
    like a warrior powerless to save?  
You are among us, Lord, and we bear your name;  
    do not forsake us!

**10**This is what the Lord says about this people:

“They greatly love to wander; they do not restrain their feet.  
So the Lord does not accept them;  
    he will now remember their wickedness  
    and punish them for their sins.”

**11**Then the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for the well-being of this people. **12**Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague.”

**13**But I said, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! The prophets keep telling them, ‘You will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place.’”

**14**Then the Lord said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+13-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-19308c)] and the delusions of their own minds. **15**Therefore this is what the Lord says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. **16**And the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them, their wives, their sons and their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.

**17**“Speak this word to them:

“‘Let my eyes overflow with tears  
    night and day without ceasing;  
for the Virgin Daughter, my people,  
    has suffered a grievous wound, a crushing blow.  
**18**If I go into the country,  I see those slain by the sword;  
if I go into the city, I see the ravages of famine.  
Both prophet and priest have gone to a land they know not.’”

**19**Have you rejected Judah completely?  
    Do you despise Zion? Why have you afflicted us  
    so that we cannot be healed?  
We hoped for peace but no good has come,  
for a time of healing but there is only terror.  
**20**We acknowledge our wickedness, Lord,  
    and the guilt of our ancestors;  
    we have indeed sinned against you.  
**21**For the sake of your name do not despise us;  
    do not dishonor your glorious throne.  
Remember your covenant with us and do not break it.  
**22**Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain?  
    Do the skies themselves send down showers?  
No, it is you, Lord our God.  Therefore our hope is in you,  
    for you are the one who does all this.

**15**Then the Lord said to me: “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! **2**And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ tell them, ‘This is what the Lord says:

“‘Those destined for death, to death;  
those for the sword, to the sword;  
those for starvation, to starvation;  
those for captivity, to captivity.’

**3**“I will send four kinds of destroyers against them,” declares the Lord, “the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds and the wild animals to devour and destroy. **4**I will make them abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem.

**5**“Who will have pity on you, Jerusalem?  
    Who will mourn for you?  
    Who will stop to ask how you are?  
**6**You have rejected me,” declares the Lord.  
    “You keep on backsliding.  
So I will reach out and destroy you;  
    I am tired of holding back.  
**7**I will winnow them with a winnowing fork  
    at the city gates of the land.  
I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people,  
    for they have not changed their ways.  
**8**I will make their widows more numerous  
    than the sand of the sea.  
At midday I will bring a destroyer  
    against the mothers of their young men;  
suddenly I will bring down on them  
    anguish and terror.  
**9**The mother of seven will grow faint  
    and breathe her last.  
Her sun will set while it is still day;  
    she will be disgraced and humiliated.  
I will put the survivors to the sword  
    before their enemies,” declares the Lord.

**10**Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth,  
    a man with whom the whole land strives and contends!  
I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me.

**11**The Lord said,

“Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose;  
    surely I will make your enemies plead with you  
    in times of disaster and times of distress.

**12**“Can a man break iron -   
    iron from the north - or bronze?

**13**“Your wealth and your treasures  
    I will give as plunder, without charge,  
because of all your sins throughout your country.  
**14**I will enslave you to your enemies  
    in a land you do not know, for my anger will kindle a fire that will burn against you.”

**15**Lord, you understand; remember me and care for me.  
    Avenge me on my persecutors.  
You are long-suffering - do not take me away;  
    think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.  
**16**When your words came, I ate them;  
    they were my joy and my heart’s delight,  
for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.  
**17**I never sat in the company of revelers,  
    never made merry with them;  
I sat alone because your hand was on me  
    and you had filled me with indignation.  
**18**Why is my pain unending  
    and my wound grievous and incurable?  
You are to me like a deceptive brook,  
    like a spring that fails.

**19**Therefore this is what the Lord says:

“If you repent, I will restore you  
    that you may serve me;  
if you utter worthy, not worthless, words,  
    you will be my spokesman.  
Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.  
**20**I will make you a wall to this people,  
    a fortified wall of bronze;  
they will fight against you but will not overcome you,  
for I am with you to rescue and save you,”  
declares the Lord.  
**21**“I will save you from the hands of the wicked  
    and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.”

Day of Disaster

**16**Then the word of the Lord came to me: **2**“You must not marry and have sons or daughters in this place.” **3**For this is what the Lord says about the sons and daughters born in this land and about the women who are their mothers and the men who are their fathers: **4**“They will die of deadly diseases. They will not be mourned or buried but will be like dung lying on the ground. They will perish by sword and famine, and their dead bodies will become food for the birds and the wild animals.”

**5**For this is what the Lord says: “Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy, because I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people,” declares the Lord. **6**“Both high and low will die in this land. They will not be buried or mourned, and no one will cut themselves or shave their head for the dead. **7**No one will offer food to comfort those who mourn for the dead - not even for a father or a mother - nor will anyone give them a drink to console them.

**8**“And do not enter a house where there is feasting and sit down to eat and drink. **9**For this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Before your eyes and in your days I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in this place.

**10**“When you tell these people all this and they ask you, ‘Why has the Lord decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?’ **11**then say to them, ‘It is because your ancestors forsook me,’ declares the Lord, ‘and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. **12**But you have behaved more wickedly than your ancestors. See how all of you are following the stubbornness of your evil hearts instead of obeying me. **13**So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.’

**14**“However, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ **15**but it will be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors.

**16**“But now I will send for many fishermen,” declares the Lord, “and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks. **17**My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. **18**I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols.”

**19**Lord, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress,  
to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say,  
“Our ancestors possessed nothing but false gods,  
    worthless idols that did them no good.  
**20**Do people make their own gods? Yes, but they are not gods!”

**21**“Therefore I will teach them - this time I will teach them  
    my power and might.  
Then they will know that my name is the Lord.