

Jeremiah

Chapter 13

The Ruined Loincloth

Thus says the LORD to me, “Go and buy a linen loincloth and put it around your waist, and do not dip it in water.” 2 So I bought a loincloth according to the word of the LORD, and put it around my waist. 3 And the word of the LORD came to me a second time, 4 “Take the loincloth that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a cleft of the rock.” 5 So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. 6 And after many days the LORD said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the loincloth that I commanded you to hide there.” 7 Then I went to the Euphrates, and dug, and I took the loincloth from the place where I had hidden it. And behold, the loincloth was spoiled; it was good for nothing. 8 Then the word of the LORD came to me: 9 “Thus says the LORD: Even so will I spoil the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10 This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing. 11 For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the LORD, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen.

13:1–27 A series of five warnings, the first two (vv. 1–11, 12–14) written in prose and the last three (vv. 15–17, 18–19, 20–27) in poetry. (CSB)

13:1–11 The story of the ruined, useless belt is the first major example of the Lord’s commanding Jeremiah to perform symbolic acts to illustrate his message (see Introduction: Literary Features). (CSB)

13:1–2, 4–7 *Go and buy ... So I bought ... Take the belt ... and hide it ... So I went and hid it ... Go now to Perath and get the belt ... So I went to Perath and dug up the belt.* Like his spiritual ancestor Abraham, Jeremiah was characterized by prompt obedience. (CSB)

13:1 linen. The material of which the priests’ garments were made (see Eze 44:17–18), symbolic of Israel’s holiness as a “kingdom of priests.” The linen belt is a symbol of the formerly intimate relationship between God and Judah (see v. 11). (CSB)

An undergarment worn directly on the loins, symbolizing the closeness of God to His chosen people. (TLSB)

A very important article of apparel in those days, since it held the garments together and enabled a person to stride forward without hindrance. (Kretzmann)

do not dip in water. Do not wash it—symbolic of Judah’s sinful pride (see v. 9). (CSB)

He was not to wash it, which would delay the corrosive action needed for the illustration. (TLSB)

13:3 and. Some time later. (CSB)

13:4 *Perath*. Perhaps the same as Parah (Jos 18:23), near the modern Wadi Farah, three miles northeast of Anathoth. Since in other contexts the Hebrew for Perath refers to the river Euphrates, it serves as an appropriate symbol of the corrupting Assyrian and Babylonian influence on Judah that began during the reign of Ahaz (see 2Ki 16). (CSB)

Euphrates. River on which Babylon was located. In order to reach it, Jeremiah had to travel c 400 mi. Thus, some propose that the Hbr word for Euphrates (*perath*) here refers to Parah, a town only a few miles north of Jerusalem (cf Jsh 18:23). For another symbolic act carried out in full view of the people, cf 27:2. (TLSB)

13:6 *after many days*. Perhaps a reference to the lengthy Babylonian exile. (CSB)

13:7 *went to the Euphrates* – Making the long journey a second time, to bring out its significance with greater emphasis. (Kretzmann)

dug. The belt had either been buried by the prophet or silted over by the water of the wadi. (CSB)

was spoiled. † As a useless garment is thrown on the refuse heap, so this evil people had reached the point of spiritual decay where they were not worth saving from their enemies. (CSB)

13:9 *pride ... great pride*. Contrast 9:23–24. Judah’s vaunted pride would be a cause of her downfall and exile (see vv. 15, 17), as foreshadowed in Lev 26:19. (CSB)

This is in agreement with Lev. 26, 36, 39, where the fate of the unbelievers is pictured as a destruction in the land of the enemies, as a pining away in their iniquity; for although a remnant of Judah returned to the Land of Promise, the nation as such had disintegrated during the period of the Exile and never recovered its ancient standing. (Kretzmann)

13:10 *good for nothing*. Like the loincloth that was spoiled by exposure to the disintegrating elements, the people had reached such a state of spiritual decay that they were not worth saving. As a useless garment is thrown on the refuse heap so Judah would be thrown to their enemies. (TLSB)

13:11 *loincloth clings*. Tightly wrapped. (TLSB)

But they would not listen. And therefore the promise of Dt 26:19 can no longer be fulfilled in them. (CSB)

Wherefore the punishment of the Lord came upon them in the manner here set forth; for His threats will certainly be fulfilled, just as His promises are. (Kretzmann)

13:1–11 Jeremiah uses a loincloth to illustrate God’s judgment against His people. The new loincloth, ruined by the elements, now resembles the spiritual condition of God’s people. As a result, God will treat them like a person treats rags. Today, we often fail to see the effect of sin in our lives until the Law, like an illustration, shows us our sins. In spite of our ruined state, God loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us (Rm 5:8) and cleanse us from all sin. • Keep us from sin, O Lord, and daily renew us in our Baptism. Amen. (TLSB)

The Jars Filled with Wine

12 “You shall speak to them this word: ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Every jar shall be filled with wine.”’ And they will say to you, ‘Do we not indeed know that every jar will be filled with wine?’ **13** Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: Behold, I will fill with

drunkenness all the inhabitants of this land: the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 14 And I will dash them one against another, fathers and sons together, declares the LORD. I will not pity or spare or have compassion, that I should not destroy them.”

13:12–14 The Lord uses the imagery of filled wineskins to point toward the eventual destruction of Judah's leaders and people. (CSB)

13:12–14 Jeremiah's parable states that an empty jar must be filled. So the Lord will fill the people with drunkenness, rendering them unable to distinguish friend from foe and dooming them to die without pity or compassion. (TLSB)

The point of comparison in this instance being the fact that the purpose of the pitchers was fulfilled when they were filled with wine, but that they at the same time were very fragile. (Kretzmann)

13:13 *drunkenness*. In a literal sense (see, e.g., Isa 28:7), but also symbolizing the effects of the wine of God's wrath (see 25:15–29; Ps 60:3; Isa 51:17–20; Eze 23:32–34). (CSB)

The execution of divine judgment is described as the stupefying result of having drunk from the cup of God's wrath (cf 25:15; 48:26; 49:12; 51:7; Ps 60:3; Is 51:17, 21; 63:6). (TLSB)

As wine brings on a state of intoxication, so the effect of God's wrath and judgments upon the entire nation would be to reduce all its members to a state of helpless distraction, which would cause them to rush to their own ruin. (Kretzmann)

13:14 *dash them one against the other*. The various factions in Judah produced only confusion and chaos in the face of determined outside enemies. (CSB)

no pity or mercy or compassion. See 21:7; see also Eze 5:11. (CSB)

The synonyms again being heaped in this case to place the greater stress upon the warning of the Lord, since He will not draw back His hand once He has begun to punish, but destroy them. It is a historical fact that the internal disruption of the Jewish nation was an important factor in hastening the destruction of their kingdom. (Kretzmann)

13:12–14 The Lord uses the image of a full jar of wine to illustrate the fullness of His judgment against His people. No one, rich or poor, will be spared from the coming wrath. The time for repentance eventually runs out, and unrepentant sinners must then face the fullness of God's justice. Do not test the Lord's kindness, but call on Him today with a repentant heart. The cup He longs to pour out for you is that of the new testament in His blood for the forgiveness of sins. • Lord Jesus, teach us to hunger and thirst for Your righteousness. Amen. (TLSB)

Exile Threatened

15 Hear and give ear; be not proud, for the LORD has spoken. 16 Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness. 17 But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock has been taken captive. 18 Say to the king and the queen mother: “Take a lowly seat, for your beautiful crown has come down from your head.” 19 The cities of the Negeb are shut up, with none to open them; all Judah is taken into exile, wholly taken into exile. 20 “Lift up your eyes and see those who come from the north. Where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful

flock? 21 What will you say when they set as head over you those whom you yourself have taught to be friends to you? Will not pangs take hold of you like those of a woman in labor? 22 And if you say in your heart, ‘Why have these things come upon me?’ it is for the greatness of your iniquity that your skirts are lifted up and you suffer violence. 23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. 24 I will scatter you like chaff driven by the wind from the desert. 25 This is your lot, the portion I have measured out to you, declares the LORD, because you have forgotten me and trusted in lies. 26 I myself will lift up your skirts over your face, and your shame will be seen. 27 I have seen your abominations, your adulteries and neighings, your lewd whorings, on the hills in the field. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will it be before you are made clean?”

13:15–17 Sinful pride carries the seeds of its own destruction, says the prophet. (CSB)

13:15 *Hear.* Paying close attention to the Lord's warning. (Kretzmann)

do not be proud. Chiefly in disregarding the rebuke of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

13:16 *Give glory to ... God.* Confess your sins. (CSB)

Confess faith in Him by declaring His praises. (TLSB)

To Him who has given abundant evidence of His godhead and of His loving-kindness to Judah. (Kretzmann)

brings darkness – Bringing misfortune upon His people. (Kretzmann)

your feet stumble – Literally, "mountains of gloom," where the traveler is in danger of losing his way and coming to grief. (Kretzmann)

look for light. Cf. the description of the day of the Lord in Am 5:18–20; 8:9. (CSB)

13:17 *pride.* Such being the effect which their obstinacy would have upon him who was so sincerely concerned for their welfare. (Kretzmann)

flock. The members of the Church whom Jehovah loved. (Kretzmann)

taken captive. Into exile. (CSB)

For even the disobedient people are still considered the Lord's people, since He has hopes of gaining them for the truth once more. (Kretzmann)

13:18–19 The prophet speaks: Exile is imminent. (CSB)

13:18 *king and ... queen mother.* Probably Jehoiachin and Nehushta (2Ki 24:8). If so, the date is 597 B.C., about 12 years after Josiah's death. (CSB)

Jehoiachin (Coniah) and his mother. They will be stripped of their royal insignia. For the influence wielded by the queen. (TLSB)

come down from your head – Taking a very low and humble seat instead of occupying a proud throne. (Kretzmann)

Literally, "for fallen is the ornament of your head, the diadem of your glory," as a sign of the fact that the king has lost his power and his kingdom. (Kretzmann)

13:19 *Negev*. The dry southland. (CSB)

shut up. Blocked by debris (see Isa 24:10). (CSB)

In the sixth century BC, Arabs began to drive the Edomites out of their ancestral territory so that they invaded Judah (cf 49:7-22; Ezk 35). Cities surrounding Jerusalem would be shut up by besieging invaders even as far south as the Negeb. (TLSB)

carried completely away. See Am 1:6, 9. (CSB)

So that not one inhabitant would be left behind. (Kretzmann)

13:20–27 First the prophet speaks (vv. 20–23), then the Lord (vv. 24–27). Judah's willful rebellion has made exile inevitable. (CSB)

13:20–27 God will make the people realize that the disgrace and violence they suffer are not accidents of history but the execution of divine justice on the magnitude of their sin. God could not do otherwise, for they were permanently depraved. They could no more change their behavior than a leopard can get rid of its spots. Therefore, they will know that the dreadful lot in store for them, though apparently due to the superior might of the enemy, will be dealt them by the Lord because He will no longer tolerate their abominations and adulteries. (TLSB)

13:20 *your ... you ... you*. Jerusalem, personified as a woman (see vv. 21–22, 26–27), is being addressed. (CSB)

the north. Babylonia. (CSB)

flock. Israel's kings are called shepherds of the people (cf 10:21; 23:1–4). (TLSB)

The daughter of Zion being held responsible for the flock of Jehovah, which, by virtue of His election, was a flock of glory. (Kretzmann)

13:22 *skirts ... lifted up*. Disgraced publicly, like a common prostitute (see vv. 26–27; Isa 47:3; Hos 2:3, 10). (CSB)

Since she would be driven into exile in scanty clothing and with bare feet, a form of the deepest degradation. Furthermore, the Lord tells Judah that it will not escape this lot because wickedness had become a second nature with it, and it seemed practically impossible to effect a change of heart. (Kretzmann)

13:23 A rhetorical question, expecting a negative answer (see 17:9). (CSB)

The one was practically as impossible as the other; they were entirely given over to wickedness. (Kretzmann)

13:24 *like chaf*. The fate of the wicked (see, e.g., Ps 1:4). (CSB)

wind from the wind. The violent east wind which carried away the stubble like chaff. (Kretzmann)

13:25 *trusted in lies* – In deceitful promises as well as in the help of vain idols. (Kretzmann)

13:27 *lewd whorings*. See Eze 16:27. (CSB)

Namely, in the enormity of her unchastity in yielding to idolatry. (Kretzmann)

hills...field – Where so many heathen altars were erected. (Kretzmann)

how long – The Lord is still stretching out arms of mercy to an apostate nation, a proof of the greatness of His love for sinners. (Kretzmann)

13:15–27 The Lord has determined to send His people into exile because of their arrogance and idolatry. Their rebellion against Him is so ingrained that it has become part of their nature, like spots on a leopard. Indeed, sin is more than skin-deep—it corrupts the depths of our hearts. However, the Lord has provided for our cleansing through Holy Baptism. He restores us by His faithful Word and makes us a new creation in Christ. • Teach us humility, Father, and create us anew in the image of Your beloved Son. Amen. (TLSB)