

**Jer. 19:1-13, The Message of the Broken Pot**  
**March 5, 1990**  
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**Overview**

1. Structure of 18-20  
An alternation of three levels.
  - a) Object lessons of pottery: 18:1-10; 19:1-13
  - b) The people reject the Lord and his Messenger: 18:11-18; 19:14-20:6.
  - c) Jeremiah's laments: 18:19-23; 20:7-18.
2. 19:1-13 is a double interpretation paragraph, consisting of two interpreted actions. (Actually, we have here only God's command to Jeremiah to do this; the actual execution is not described, as it is in ch.18.)
  - a) First Jer. takes the elders to the Valley of Hinnom, and interprets to them the meaning of the valley.
  - b) Then he shatters a pot there, and interprets to them the meaning of this shattering.
3. Note especially the contrast with 18:1-10, the visit to the potter's shop. There comes a time when a pot has hardened, and then there is no more room for molding it. If it proves unsatisfactory, one can only destroy it. **Break pot here.** The lesson for us is: will we be formable like moist clay, or fragile like baked clay?

**A. 1-2a, First Action: Take a pottery bottle to the Valley**

1. What? A pottery bottle--a flask with a wide body and thin neck. One of the kinds of vessels that a potter would make.
2. Who? The elders of the people. They are the ones for whom this message is intended.
3. Where? The "Potsherd Gate." Probably the same as Neh's "Dung Gate," on the south side of the city, where trash was hauled out and dumped in the valley. (BUT at this time, was the valley a garbage dump? Or did that only occur after the return from captivity, after the valley had been defiled?)

**B. 2b-9, First Interpretation: The meaning of the place**

Jer. speaks to the assembled elders. His message is chiastic: first a summary of the judgment, then the reason for the judgment, then a more detailed description of the judgment.

1. 3, Judgment (Summary)
  - a) "This place" refers to the valley, to which Jer. has taken the elders.

b) God is going to bring extreme evil upon it, to be defined later. So severe is this judgment that the news of it will strike people's ears as though by a physical blow. It will shock their senses. NB: Modern entertainment media seek to do this in order to titillate people. But God does it to show the hatefulness of sin.

2. 4-5, Reason for the judgment

He makes two points about their sin in the valley, which are summarized in v.5. This section is an amplification of 7:31-33.

a) 4a, Idolatry. Three steps in sequence:

1) They forsook the Lord.

2) Then they "estranged" "this place" (the valley). Deities in the ANE are closely linked with their nation. In contemplating worship of pagan gods in the Valley, they are treating it like a foreign country. Perhaps they felt that by going outside the gates of the sacred city they were out of YHWH's domain and free to serve other gods. Sort of like a duty-free or free-trade zone around a port.

3) Then they burned incense to pagan gods there, thus turning it into a pagan sanctuary.

b) 4b, Murder, shedding innocent blood. Sounds as though it was a hiding place for bandits as well as a pagan sanctuary. But no...

c) 5, summary: This murder was not incidental to the idolatry, but a central part of it. They burned their own children as holocausts (whole burnt offerings) to Baal, something utterly foreign and abhorrent to God.

3. 6-9, Judgment (Detail)

God will bring the judgments of Lev. 26 on both the Valley and the City with which it is associated; their attempt to " estrange " it, to establish the valley as a "duty-free zone" for the worship of pagan gods, will not succeed, and the judgment that falls on it will overflow to Jerusalem.

a) *Reference:* time: 19:6 LF/K"N HIN."H-YFMIYM B.F)IYM  
N:)UM-Y:HWFH

1) Good sense: 16:14; 23:5,7; 31:27,31,38; 33:14

2) Bad sense: (Judah) 7:32; 9:25; 19:6; (Others) 48:12; 49:2; 51:47,52

b) Judgments on the Valley

1) The name will be changed. "Tophet" is "fire-pit," referring to the pagan high place there, where infants were

sacrificed; "Valley of Ben Hinnom" goes back to Joshua, and perhaps recalls some ancient owner of the land. But now it will be known as the Vale of Slaughter. In fact, even the name "Ge-hinnom" has become a metaphor for hell.

2) "Make void the counsel"--verb is related to "bottle." "I will take the bottle of their carefully wrought plans and pour it out on the ground."

3) Then God will slay them there, and leave their bodies for food for the wild birds and animals.

c) Judgments on the City

In v.8, the judgments move from the valley to the city itself. They have offered their children in sacrifice. Very well; if they have so little regard for them, let them eat them as common food.

C. **10, Second Action: Break the bottle before the watching elders.** Note the emphasis on their seeing what happens. This is an acted parable for them.

D. **11-13, Second Interpretation: The meaning of the shattering**  
We have the explicit unfolding of the symbol, then its amplification, and finally a repetition of the reason for the judgment.

1. Explanation: "cannot be made whole again": lit. "be healed." AV takes it to mean that the pot, once smashed, cannot be put together again, but that is counter to promises of restoration that we have already seen and that will become even more frequent as the book goes on. Better, "like a (marred) potter's vessel that can no longer be fixed (because the clay has now hardened). As long as the clay is moist and pliable, a pot that does not please its maker can be adjusted and changed. Once it is hard, it becomes garbage and can only be smashed.

2. Amplification: The unburied bodies of the people will defile the city, so that it becomes like Tophet, the fire pit of child sacrifice, which is already defiled by the infant sacrifices that were present there.

3. Reason: In particular, the houses will be defiled, because on their roofs the people worshipped all the host of heaven.

E. **Application**

How does God find us when he tries to deal with us? Are we like pliable clay? Then he can deal with our sins constructively. He can smooth out our rough spots and form us into vessels fit for his service. But if we are hardened in our sin, his only course of action is to smash us in judgment. Don't put off reform. If God is dealing with you about change in your life, hear him now, before the clay

gets hard.

Ps. 32

A. **Analysis**

19:1-13 Breaking a pot: YHWH: quote p

There comes a time when a pot has hardened, and then there is no more room for molding it. If it proves unsatisfactory, one can only destroy it.

1. quote f: 19:1 K.OH )FMAR Y:HWFH

2. quote: double interpretation p

a) action: sequence p

1) HFLOWK:

2) W:/QFNIYTF BAQ:B.UQ YOWC"R XFRE& W./MI/Z.IQ:N"Y HF/(FM W./MI/Z.IQ:N"Y HA/K.OH:ANIYM

3) 19:2 W:/YFCF)TF )EL-G."Y) BEN-HIN.OM ):A\$ER P.ETAX \$A(AR {HA/X:ARFSW.T} [HA/XAR:SIYT]

b) interp: amplification p: The meaning of the place

1) text: W:/QFRF)TF \$.FM )ET-HA/D.:BFRIYM ):A\$ER-):ADAB."R )"LEY/KF

2) ampl: quote p

a> quote f: 19:3 W:/)FMAR:T.F

b> quote:

1> \$IM:(W. D:BAR-Y:HWFH MAL:K"Y Y:HW.DFH W:/YO\$:B"Y Y:RW.\$FLFIM

2> quote p

a: quote f: K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT ):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L

b: quote: chiastic reason p

1: comment p : Terrible judgment is coming.

A. text: HIN/:NIY M"BIY) RF(FH (AL-HA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH

B. comment: ):A\$ER K.FL-\$OM:(/FH. T.IC.AL:NFH )FZ:NFY/W

2: 19:4 YA(AN ):A\$ER Reason for the judgment.

coord. p

A. seq p

1. (:AZFBU/NIY

2. WA/Y:NAK.:RW. )ET-HA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH

3. comment p:

a) text: WA/Y:QA+.:RW.-B/OW L"/)LOHIYM ):AX"RIYM

b) comment: ):A\$ER LO)-Y:DF(W./M H"M.FH WA/):ABOWT"Y/HEM W./MAL:K"Y Y:HW.DFH

B. W./MFL:)W. )ET-HA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH D.AM N:QIY.IM

C. comment p

1. text: purpose p

a) text: 19:5 W./BFNW. )ET-B.FMOWT HA/B.A(AL

b) purpose: LI/&:ROP )ET-B.:N"Y/HEM  
 B.F/)"\$ (OLOWT LA/B.F(AL

2. comment: ):A\$ER  
 a) LO)-CIW.IYTIY  
 b) W:/LO) DIB.AR:T.IY  
 c) W:/LO) (FL:TFH (AL-LIB./IY P

3: temporal p: I will bring judgment  
 A. time: 19:6 LF/K"N HIN."H-YFMIYM B.F)IYM  
 N:)UM-Y:HWFH  
 B. text: sequence p  
 1. contrast p  
 a) W:/LO)-YIQ.FR") LA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH  
 (OWD HA/T.OPET W:/G"Y) BEN-HIN.OM  
 b) K.IY )IM-G."Y) HA/H:AR"GFH  
 2. 19:7 W./BAQ.OTIY )ET-( :ACAT Y:HW.DFH  
 WI/YRW.\$FLAIM B.A/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH  
 3. W:/HIP.AL:T.IY/M B.A/XEREB LI/P:N"Y  
 )OY:B"Y/HEM W./B:/YAD M:BAQ:\$"Y NAP:\$/FM  
 4. W:/NFTAT.IY )ET-NIB:LFT/FM L:/MA):AKFL  
 L:/(OWP HA/\$.FMAYIM W./L:/BEH:EMAT  
 HF/)FREC  
 5. paraphrase p  
 a) 19:8 W:/&AM:T.IY )ET-HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T  
 L:/\$AM.FH W:/LI/\$:R"QFH  
 b) K.OL (OB"R (FLEY/HF YI\$.OM W:/YI\$:ROQ  
 (AL-K.FL-MAK.OT/EHF  
 6. 19:9 W:/HA):AKAL:T.IY/M )ET-B.:&AR  
 B.:N"Y/HEM W:/)"T B.:&AR B.:NOT"Y/HEM  
 7. comment p:  
 a) text: W:/)IY\$ B.:&AR-R"(/"HW. YO)K"RW.  
 B.:/MFCOWR W./B:/MFCOWQ  
 b) comment: ):A\$ER YFCIYQW. L/FHEM  
 )OY:B"Y/HEM W./M:BAQ:\$"Y NAP:\$/FM

c) action: 19:10 W:/\$FBAR:T.F HA/B.AQ:B.UQ L:/("YN"Y  
 HF/):ANF\$IYM HA/HOL:KIYM )OWT/FK:

d) interp: quote p: The meaning of the shattering  
 1) quote f: 19:11 W:/)FMAR:T.F ):AL"Y/HEM  
 2) quote: quote p  
 a> quote f: K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT  
 b> quote:  
 1> illustration p  
 a: text: K.FKFH )E\$:B.OR )ET-HF/(FM HA/Z.EH  
 W:/)ET-HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T  
 b: illus: comment p  
 1: text: K.A/):A\$ER YI\$:B.OR )ET-K.:LIY HA/Y.OWC"R  
 2: comment: ):A\$ER LO)-YW.KAL L:/H"RFP"H (OWD  
 2> W./B:/TOPET YIQ:B.:RW. M"/)"YN MFQOWM LI/Q:B.OWR  
 3> 19:12 K."N-)E(:E&EH LA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH N:)UM-Y:HWFH  
 W./L:/YOW\$:BFY/W W:/LF/T"TT )ET-HF/(IYR HA/Z.O)T  
 K.:/TOPET  
 4> reason p

a: text: 19:13 W:/HFYW. B.FT."Y Y:RW.\$FLAIM  
W./BFT."Y MAL:K"Y Y:HW.DFH K.I/M:QOWM HA/T.OPET  
HA/+.:"M")IYM  
b: reason: comment p  
1: text: L:/KOL HA/B.FT.IYM  
2: comment: ):A\$ER  
A. QI+.:RW. (AL-G.AG.OT"Y/HEM L:/KOL C:BF)  
HA/\$.FMAYIM  
B. W:/HAS."K: N:SFKIYM L"/)LOHIYM ):AX"RIYM P