

# Jeremiah 10:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.

## Analysis

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This verse mocks idols' helplessness: 'They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not.' The Hebrew tomer miqshah (תָּמֵר מִקְשָׁה) may mean 'scarecrow in a cucumber field' (NIV) or 'palm tree' (KJV)—rigid, immobile, decorative but lifeless. 'They must needs be borne, because they cannot go.' Idols require carrying (nasa, אֲשַׁעַ); they cannot walk (tsaad, תָּעַזֵּב). 'Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.' The conclusion is reassuring: these objects have no power—neither to harm nor help. They are impotent, irrelevant, non-beings. Fear of them is irrational; hope in them is futile.

## Historical Context

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Babylonian religious processions carried divine statues through city streets on festival days. The Akitu festival involved elaborate processional carrying of Marduk's statue. Israel witnessed these impressive displays during exile. Yet Jeremiah reduces these ceremonies to absurdity: gods who must be carried, who cannot walk, who have no power whatsoever. Isaiah 46:1-7 similarly mocks Babylonian gods that must be carried on beasts.

## Related Passages

## **Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment**

## **Romans 2:1 – Judging others**

## Study Questions

1. How does the image of a god that must be carried contrast with the true God who carries His people (Isaiah 46:3-4)?
2. What contemporary objects of devotion similarly promise power but deliver nothing?

## Interlinear Text

כֶּתֶת מֶרֶךְ	מִקְשָׁה	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	וְלֹא הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	וְלֹא יִדְבְּךָ רֹא	וְאַתָּה יִגְשֶׁשֶׁ
as the palm tree	They are upright	H1992	H3808	but speak	be borne
H8560	H4749			H1696	H5375
אַתָּה יִגְשֶׁשֶׁ	וְלֹא יִכְתַּבֵּעַ	וְלֹא יִצְעַד	אַל תִּירְאֵי	מִקְרָם	כִּי
be borne	because they cannot go	H3588	H3808	H408	Be not afraid
H5375		H6805		H3372	H1992
לֹא יִגְשֶׁשֶׁ	וְלֹא יִכְתַּבֵּעַ	וְלֹא יִצְעַד	תִּירְאֵי	מִקְרָם	כִּי
לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	מִקְרָם	מִקְרָם
H3808	of them for they cannot do evil	H7489	H1571	neither also is it in them to do good	H3190
אַתָּם:	אַתָּה				
H369	H854				

## Additional Cross-References

**Isaiah 46:7** (Parallel theme): They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

**1 Corinthians 12:2** (Parallel theme): Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

**Isaiah 46:1** (Parallel theme): Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.

**1 Corinthians 8:4** (Parallel theme): As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

**Habakkuk 2:19** (Parallel theme): Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

**Isaiah 45:20** (Parallel theme): Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.