

# Jeremiah 5:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

## Analysis

The indictment continues: 'They are waxen fat, they shine' (šāmēnū 'āšētū, וְנִתְּנַשְּׁאַל) — physical prosperity from exploitation. 'Yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked' (gam-'ābērū dibrē-rā', גַּם־עֲבָרּוּ דִּבְרֵ-רָא) means they surpass even pagans in evil. The specific charge: 'they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge' (dīn lō'-dānū dīn-yātōm wěyašlīhū ūmišpaṭ 'ebyōnīm lō' šāpātū). This pinpoints covenant violation: failing to provide justice for orphans and the poor (Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17). The orphan (yātōm) and poor ('ebyōn) represent society's most vulnerable, whom covenant law specially protected. Their prosperity ('yet they prosper,' wěyašlīhū) despite injustice demonstrates that short-term success doesn't indicate divine approval—judgment comes.

## Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hammurabi, Lipit-Ishtar) included provisions for protecting widows and orphans, showing universal moral awareness of this responsibility. Israel's covenant law exceeded these, making care for the vulnerable a religious obligation reflecting God's character (Psalm 68:5, 146:9). Kings were especially responsible to ensure judicial justice (Psalm 72:1-4). Judah's failure to protect the vulnerable while maintaining temple worship epitomized

hypocrisy that prophets consistently condemned. Isaiah 1:17, 23 demands, 'Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow'—but leaders failed. Jesus later demonstrated this priority, warning that judgment evaluates how we treat 'the least of these' (Matthew 25:31-46). James defines pure religion as caring for orphans and widows (James 1:27).

## Related Passages

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How does your church community actively protect and provide justice for society's most vulnerable members?
2. What does it mean practically to 'judge the cause of the fatherless' in your cultural context?

## Interlinear Text

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שָׁמַן וְ	עָשָׂת וְ	גַּם	עָבַר וְ	דְּבָרִי	בְּעָ
<b>They are waxen fat</b>	<b>they shine</b>	H1571	<b>yea they overpass</b>	<b>the deeds</b>	<b>of the wicked</b>
H8080	H6245		H5674	H1697	H7451
לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא	לֹא
<b>not the cause</b>	H3808	<b>they judge</b>	<b>not the cause</b>	<b>the cause of the fatherless</b>	
H1779		H1777	H1779	H3490	
וְמִשְׁפָּט יְמִינֵן יְחִיל	לְאַבְיוֹן יְמִינֵן יְחִיל	שְׁפָטָה			
<b>yet they prosper</b>	<b>and the right</b>	<b>of the needy</b>	H3808	<b>do they not judge</b>	
H6743	H4941	H34		H8199	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 1:23** (Judgment): Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

**Zechariah 7:10** (Evil): And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

**Deuteronomy 32:15** (Parallel theme): But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

**Psalms 73:12** (Parallel theme): Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

**Jeremiah 7:6** (Parallel theme): If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

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