

# Jeremiah

<sup>1</sup> These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests living in Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord's message came to Jeremiah beginning in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah, <sup>3</sup> and on through the time of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, up to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah, which was when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

<sup>4</sup> The Lord came and told me, <sup>5</sup> "I knew exactly who you would be before I created you in your mother's womb; I chose you before you were born to be a prophet to the nations."

<sup>6</sup> "Oh no, Lord God!" I replied. "I really don't know how to speak in public because I'm still too young!"

<sup>7</sup> "Don't say you're too young," the Lord told me. "Go to everyone I send you to. Tell them everything I order you to say. <sup>8</sup> Don't be afraid of them because I'll go with you and I'll look after you. This is the Lord's promise."

<sup>9</sup> The Lord stretched out his hand, touched my mouth, and told me: "Look, I've put my words in your mouth. <sup>10</sup> Today I've placed you over nations and kingdoms to pull up and tear down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant."

<sup>11</sup> The Lord's message came to me, asking, "Jeremiah, what can you see?"

"I see a twig from an almond tree," I answered.

<sup>12</sup> "That's right, because I am watching\* to make sure what I say happens," the Lord said.

<sup>13</sup> The Lord's message came to me again, asking, "What can you see?"

"I see a pot that's boiling," I answered, "and it's tipping in this direction from the north."

<sup>14</sup> Then the Lord told me, "Trouble brewing from the north will sweep out over everyone living in the country. <sup>15</sup> Watch out! I'm going to summon all the nations and kings of the north," declares the Lord. "Each of these kings will come and set up their thrones right at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and attack all its fortifications and all the towns in Judah. <sup>16</sup> I will carry out my sentence against the inhabitants for all their wickedness, because they abandoned me to burn incense to pagan gods, to worship idols they themselves made.

<sup>17</sup> You need to get yourself ready. You are going to stand before the people and tell them everything that I order you to say. Don't be scared by them, or I will scare you in front of them. <sup>18</sup> Look! Today I have made you like a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of bronze to stand against the whole country—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the country. <sup>19</sup> They will fight against

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\* **1:12** In Hebrew, the almond tree is called "wakeful" because it is the first tree to bloom in spring.

you but they won't defeat you, because I'll be there to rescue you," declares the Lord.

## 2

<sup>1</sup> The Lord's message came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup> Go and announce to the people of Jerusalem that this is what the Lord says:\*

I remember when you were young how devoted to me you were. I remember how you loved me when you were my bride. I remember how you followed me in the desert, in a land where nothing is grown.

<sup>3</sup> Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest. Anyone who ate this harvest was guilty of sin, and they experienced the disastrous results, declares the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> Listen to the Lord's message, descendants of Jacob, all you Israelites. <sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord says: What did your forefathers think was wrong with me that they went so far away from me? They went off to worship useless idols, and as a

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\* **2:2** As is usual in this translation, when a prophet is speaking for God no quote marks are used. This avoids too many quote within quote marks, and also it is sometimes problematic to differentiate between God's words and those of the prophet himself. In addition there are many times when the phrase "This what the Lord says" is repeated frequently which should normally start a set of quote marks, ending up with a large number of "nested" quotations. A similar situation exists with the phrase "declares the Lord," which also should be outside quote marks, but would add considerably to their number. For this reason quote marks are kept to a minimum and generally used only when speakers other than Jeremiah or the Lord need to be represented.

result became useless themselves! <sup>6</sup> They didn't ask themselves, "Where is the Lord who led us from Egypt, who led us through the wasteland, through a land of deserts and ravines, a land of drought and darkness, a land that no one travels through and where no one lives?"

<sup>7</sup> I led you into a productive land to eat all the good things that grow there. But you came and made my land unclean, making it offensive to me. <sup>8</sup> Your priests did not ask, "Where is the Lord?" Your teachers of the law no longer believed in me, and your leaders rebelled against me. Your prophets prophesied by calling on Baal and followed worthless idols.

<sup>9</sup> So I'm going to confront you again, declares the Lord, and I will bring charges against your children's children.

<sup>10</sup> Travel over to the islands of Cyprus<sup>†</sup> and take a look; go to the land of Kedar<sup>‡</sup> and examine carefully to see if anything like this has ever happened before. <sup>11</sup> Has a nation ever changed its gods? —even though they're not gods at all! Yet my people have traded their glorious God for worthless idols.

<sup>12</sup> You heavens, you should be appalled, shocked and horrified! declares the Lord. <sup>13</sup> For my people have done two evil things. They have abandoned me, the source of living water, and they have dug their own cisterns—broken cisterns that can't hold water.

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<sup>†</sup> **2:10** Hebrew: "Kittim." The meaning is to go to the farthest west. <sup>‡</sup> **2:10** Kedar was far to the east.

<sup>14</sup> Are Israelites slaves? Were they born into slavery? So why have they become victims?

<sup>15</sup> The young lions roared at you; they growled loudly. They have devastated your country; your towns lie in ruins. No one lives there. <sup>16</sup> The men of Memphis<sup>§</sup> and Tahpanhes have shaved your heads.

<sup>17</sup> Didn't you bring this on yourself by abandoning the Lord your God when he was leading you in the right way? <sup>18</sup> Now what will you benefit as you travel back to Egypt to drink the waters of Shihor River? \* What will you gain on your way to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates River?

<sup>19</sup> Your own wickedness will discipline you; your own disobedience will teach you a lesson. Think about it and you'll recognize what a bitter evil it is for you to abandon the Lord your God and not to respect me, declares the Lord God Almighty.

<sup>20</sup> You broke off your yoke and ripped off your chains long ago. "I won't worship you!" you declared. On the contrary, you lay down like a prostitute on every high hill and under every green tree.

<sup>21</sup> I was the one who planted you like the finest vine, grown from the very best seed. How could you degenerate into a useless wild vine?

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**§ 2:16** "Memphis": Septuagint reading. Hebrew, "Toph." Memphis and Tahpanhes were towns in Egypt. The shaving of heads was a humiliation inflicted on a captured people. \* **2:18** The Shihor River was a branch of the Nile River.

<sup>22</sup> Even bleach and plenty of soap can't get rid of your guilty stains. I still see them, declares the Lord God. <sup>23</sup> How dare you say, "I'm not unclean! I haven't gone to worship the Baals!" Look at what you've been doing down in the valley. Admit what you've done! You're a young female camel, racing around everywhere. <sup>24</sup> You're a female donkey living in the desert, sniffing the wind for a mate because she's in heat. No one can control her at mating time. All those who're looking for her won't have trouble finding her when she's in heat.

<sup>25</sup> You don't have to run around barefoot or have your throat go dry. But you reply, "No, it's impossible! I'm in love with foreign gods—I must go to them."

<sup>26</sup> In the same way that a thief feels guilty when they're caught, so the people of Israel have been shamed. All of them—their kings, their officials, their priests, and their prophets. <sup>27</sup> They say to an idol made of wood, "You are my father," and one made of stone, "You gave birth to me." They turn their backs on me, and hide their faces from me. But when they're in trouble they come begging to me, saying, "Please come and save us!" <sup>28</sup> So where are these "gods" of yours that you made for yourselves? Let them come and help you when you're in trouble! Let them save you if they can, because you Israelites have as many gods as you have towns.

<sup>29</sup> Why are you complaining to me? It's all of you who have all rebelled against me! declares the Lord. <sup>30</sup> It was pointless of me to punish

your children because they refused to accept any discipline. You used your own swords to kill your prophets, destroying them like a ferocious lion.

<sup>31</sup> You people of today, think about what the Lord is saying: Israel, have I treated you like an empty desert, or a land of thick darkness? Why are my people saying, “We can go where we like! We don't have to come and worship you any more”?

<sup>32</sup> Does a girl forget her jewelry or a bride her wedding dress?<sup>†</sup> Yet my people have forgotten me for too many years to count. <sup>33</sup> How cleverly you look for your lovers! Even prostitutes could learn something from you!

<sup>34</sup> On top of that, your clothes are stained with the blood of the poor and the innocent. It's not like you killed them breaking into your homes.

Despite all this, <sup>35</sup> you go on saying, “I'm innocent! Surely he can't still be upset with me!”

Watch out! I'm going to punish you because you go on saying, “I haven't sinned.” <sup>36</sup> You're just so fickle—you keep on changing your mind! You will end up just as disappointed by your alliance with Egypt as you were with Assyria. <sup>37</sup> In fact you will go into exile with your hands on your head as prisoners, because the Lord will have nothing to do with those you trust; they will be no help to you.

### 3

<sup>1</sup> If a man divorces his wife and she goes and

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<sup>†</sup> **2:32** “Dress”: probably a “sash.”

marries someone else, could he ever go back to her? Wouldn't the country be made totally unclean by this? But you have done worse by prostituting yourselves with many lovers, and now you want to come back to me? declares the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> Look up at the bare hilltops. Is there anywhere that you haven't had sex? You sat at the roadside like someone from the desert waiting for your lovers to pass by. You have made the land unclean with your prostitution and evil. <sup>3</sup> That's why no showers have been sent, and no spring rains have fallen. But you just stare back shamelessly like a prostitute; you refuse to accept you've done anything wrong.

<sup>4</sup> Didn't you just tell me, "My father, you've been such a close friend to me since I was little. <sup>5</sup> You won't be angry with me for a long time, will you? You won't go on being like that forever?" This is what you've said, but you keep on sinning as much as you can.

<sup>6</sup> During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord told me, Have you seen what unfaithful Israel has done? She has prostituted herself on every high hill and under every green tree. <sup>7</sup> I hoped that after she'd done all this she'd come back to me. But she didn't come back, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw what happened. <sup>8</sup> She\* saw that because of everything unfaithful Israel had done on committing adultery, I sent her away, giving her a certificate of divorce. But her unfaithful sister Judah wasn't afraid and prostituted herself

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\* **3:8** Dead Sea Scroll reading. Masoretic text has "I."



too. <sup>9</sup> Israel didn't care about the immorality, as she made herself and the land unclean, committing adultery by worshiping stones and trees. <sup>10</sup> Despite all this, her unfaithful sister Judah didn't come back to me in sincerity. She only pretended to do so, declares the Lord.

<sup>11</sup> The Lord told me, Unfaithful Israel showed that she wasn't as guilty as unfaithful Judah. <sup>12</sup> Now go and announce this message to the north:† Come back, unfaithful Israel, declares the Lord. I won't be angry with you anymore, because I am merciful, declares the Lord. I won't be angry forever. <sup>13</sup> Just admit you did wrong, that you rebelled against the Lord your God. You spread yourself around, committing adultery by worshiping foreign gods under every green tree, refusing to do what I told you, declares the Lord.

<sup>14</sup> Come back, unfaithful children, declares the Lord, because I am married to you. I will take you, one from a town and two from a family, and bring you to Zion. <sup>15</sup> I will give you shepherds who are like me who will feed you wisely and with understanding.

<sup>16</sup> At that time as you increase in number in the country, declares the Lord, no one will be talking about the Ark of the Lord's Agreement anymore. People won't need to think about it or remember it or wonder what happened to it; and certainly won't need to make a new one.

<sup>17</sup> When that time comes Jerusalem will be called the Throne of the Lord, and all the

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† **3:12** The ten northern tribes had been taken north to exile in Assyria.

nations will come together in Jerusalem to honor the Lord. They won't be stubborn or wicked anymore.

<sup>18</sup> At that time the people of Judah will join with the people of Israel, and they will return from the land of the north to the country I gave to your forefathers to own. <sup>19</sup> I said to myself, I really want you to be my children, and to give you the best country, the most beautiful place of any nation. I hoped you would call me "Father," and never give up following me. <sup>20</sup> But just like a wife might betray her husband, you have betrayed me, people of Israel, declares the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Voices are crying on bare hilltops—the Israelites weeping and pleading for mercy, because they have gone astray and forgotten the Lord their God.

<sup>22</sup> Come back, unfaithful children, and I will heal your unfaithfulness.

"We're here! Yes, we're coming back to you, because you are the Lord our God."

<sup>23</sup> There's no doubt that pagan worship from the hills is pure lies; the idolatry that comes from the mountains is just noise.‡ Israel's salvation is in the Lord our God alone.

<sup>24</sup> All our lives pagan idolatry has destroyed what our fathers worked so hard for: their flocks and herds, their sons and daughters.

<sup>25</sup> We should lie down in shame, and have our disgrace bury us. We have sinned against the Lord our God, us and our fathers. From when we

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‡ **3:23** The Hebrew of this verse is obscure.

were young right up to now we have not obeyed what the Lord our God told us to do.

## 4

<sup>1</sup> Israel, if you want to come back, then come back to me, declares the Lord. If you get rid of these disgusting idols I see, and don't wander away, <sup>2</sup> and if when you make your vows, you do so only to me, sincerely, truly, and honestly, then the nations will be blessed by me, and they will praise me.

<sup>3</sup> This is what the Lord is saying to the people of Judah and Jerusalem:

Plow your unplowed ground, and don't sow among the thorns.\* <sup>4</sup> Dedicate yourselves to the Lord; be totally committed to him,† people of Judah and Jerusalem. Otherwise, my anger will blaze like fire, burning so hard that no one can put it out because of the evil you've done.

<sup>5</sup> Announce this warning throughout Judah and Jerusalem! Tell them: Blow the trumpet everywhere in the country! Shout out, "Hurry! Let's run to the fortified towns for protection!"

<sup>6</sup> Raise the danger flag; go to Zion! Find somewhere safe! Don't hesitate! I'm bringing enemies from the north who will cause terrible destruction.

<sup>7</sup> A lion has left his hiding place; a destroyer of nations has started out. He has left his den

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\* **4:3** This is not agricultural advice but an invitation to stop being hard and stubborn and to be open to the Lord in order to be spiritually productive. † **4:4** The image used here is one of "spiritual circumcision."

to come and turn your country into a wasteland. Your towns will be demolished, and no one will live there. <sup>8</sup> Wear clothes made of sackcloth, weep and wail, crying out, "The Lord's furious anger against us hasn't stopped." <sup>9</sup> When that happens declares the Lord, the king and officials will lose heart, the priests will be devastated, and the prophets will be shocked.

<sup>10</sup> Then I said, "Oh, Lord God, you have completely fooled the people of Jerusalem by telling them, 'You will have peace,' while holding a sword to our throats."

<sup>11</sup> At that time the people of Jerusalem will be told, "A burning wind from the bare hills of the desert is blowing toward the Jerusalem, but not to blow away the chaff or the dust. <sup>12</sup> No, this wind is too strong for that, and it comes from me. Now I'm also going to tell them how I will punish them."

<sup>13</sup> Look, he's rushing in like stormclouds; his chariots are like a whirlwind. His horses fly faster than eagles.

"What a disaster! We're ruined!"

<sup>14</sup> Clean the evil from your heart, Jerusalem, so that you can be saved. How long will you hold onto your evil thoughts?

<sup>15</sup> News is shouted out from Dan, announcing disaster from the hills of Ephraim.

<sup>16</sup> "Let the nations know! Look what's happening! Announce this to Jerusalem: An army is coming to besiege you from a distant country; shouting war-cries against the towns of Judah.

<sup>17</sup> They encircle her like men guarding a field,

because she has rebelled against me, declares the Lord. <sup>18</sup> You've brought this on yourself by your own attitudes and actions. This is your punishment, and it's so painful, it's like being stabbed in the heart!"

<sup>19</sup> "I'm‡ in agony, absolute agony! My heart is breaking! It's beating wildly in my chest! My heart pounds within me; I can't keep quiet because I've heard the trumpet, the signal for battle.

<sup>20</sup> News of one disaster after another comes flooding in, for the whole country is in ruins. My own home is destroyed in a moment, and everything inside. <sup>21</sup> How long do I have to see the flags of war and hear the trumpets of battle?"

<sup>22</sup> "My§ people are stupid; they don't know me. They are foolish children who just don't understand. They're experts at doing evil, but they don't know how to do good."

<sup>23</sup> I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty;\* I looked to the heavens, and its light was gone. <sup>24</sup> I looked at the mountains, and saw that they were shaking; all the hills were swaying to and fro. <sup>25</sup> I looked, and nobody was left; all the birds had flown away. <sup>26</sup> I looked, and the productive fields were a desert. All the towns were demolished because of the Lord's furious anger.

<sup>27</sup> This is what the Lord says: "The whole country will be devastated, but I won't do so completely. <sup>28</sup> The earth will mourn and the

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‡ 4:19 Jeremiah is the speaker. § 4:22 The Lord is speaking.

\* 4:23 A direct quote from Genesis 1:2.

heavens above will go dark. I have spoken; this is what I have ordered. I'm not going to stop or change my mind.”

<sup>29</sup> People from every town: run away when they hear the enemy horsemen and archers coming. They hide in the forest and among the rocks. All the towns are abandoned; no one lives in them.

<sup>30</sup> You, Jerusalem, now desolate, what are you going to do? Even though you dress in scarlet clothes, and put on gold jewelry, and paint your eyes with make-up, all your dressing-up is pointless! Your lovers hate you; they want to kill you!

<sup>31</sup> I hear the cries like a woman in labor, the agonizing moans of a woman giving birth to her first child. These are the cries of the Daughter of Zion gasping for air, holding out her hands, saying, “Please help me, I'm being murdered!”

## 5

<sup>1</sup> Go everywhere through the streets of Jerusalem. Look and pay attention! Search all through her city squares to see if you can find even just one person who does what's right, anyone who is faithful, and I'll forgive the city.

<sup>2</sup> They may make promises in my name, but they're not sincere.

<sup>3</sup> Lord, aren't you always looking for faithfulness? You beat them, but they didn't care. You just about destroyed them, but they refused to accept your discipline. They were stubborn, hard as rock, and they wouldn't repent.

<sup>4</sup> Then I said to myself, “These people are only the poor—they’re just fools who don’t know any better. They certainly don’t know what the Lord wants, God’s right way of living. <sup>5</sup> Let me go to and talk to the ones in charge. They would surely know what the Lord wants, God’s right way of living.” But they had all broken off the yoke as well, and ripped off the chains.

<sup>6</sup> As a result a lion from the forest will attack them; a wolf from the desert will rip them apart. A leopard will lie in wait for them near their towns, ready to tear to pieces anyone who goes outside. For they keep on rebelling, and turn away from me so often.

<sup>7</sup> Why should I forgive you? Your children have abandoned me and believe in gods that are not gods. I gave them everything they need, yet they went and committed adultery, gathering together at prostitutes’ houses. <sup>8</sup> They’re like virile stallions wanting sex, each of them neighing with lust after his neighbor’s wife.

<sup>9</sup> Shouldn’t I punish them for all this? declares the Lord. Shouldn’t I retaliate for what this nation has done?

<sup>10</sup> Go through her vineyards and damage them, but don’t destroy them completely. Rip off her branches, because they don’t belong to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> The people of Israel and Judah have completely betrayed me, declares the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> They have lied about the Lord, saying, “He won’t do anything. Nothing bad will happen to us. We won’t have war or famine. <sup>13</sup> The prophets are just like the wind. The Lord doesn’t

speak through them. What they predict can happen to them!”

<sup>14</sup> So this is the reply from the Lord God Almighty: Because of what you've said, I will make my words like a fire in your mouth and you people like the wood it burns up. <sup>15</sup> Look! I am bringing a nation from far away to attack you, people of Israel, declares the Lord. It's a powerful nation that has existed for a long time; it's a nation whose language you don't know, and when they speak you can't understand them.

<sup>16</sup> Their arrows bring death;\* they are all strong warriors. <sup>17</sup> They will consume your harvest and your food; they will destroy your sons and your daughters; they will eat your flocks and your herds; they will feed on your vines and your fig trees. They will attack and will destroy the fortified towns that you have so much confidence in.

<sup>18</sup> But even at that time I won't completely destroy you, declares the Lord. <sup>19</sup> When people ask you Jeremiah, “Why did the Lord our God do all these things to us?” you are to tell them, “In the same way you have abandoned me and served foreign gods here in your country, so you will serve foreigners in a country that isn't your own.”

<sup>20</sup> Announce this to the people of Jacob and Judah: <sup>21</sup> Listen to this, you foolish, stupid people, who have eyes but don't see, who have ears but don't hear.

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\* **5:16** “Their arrows bring death”: literally, “their quivers are like an open grave.”



<sup>22</sup> Aren't you afraid of what I can do? declares the Lord. Don't you think you should tremble in my presence? I am the one who set up the shore as the sea's boundary, an everlasting limit that it can't cross. The waves crash against it, but they can't defeat it. They roar, but they can't cross the barrier.

<sup>23</sup> But you people have a stubborn and rebellious attitude. You have left me and gone your own way. <sup>24</sup> You didn't think to say, "We should appreciate the Lord our God, who sends the autumn and spring rains at the right time, who makes sure we can have a harvest every year." <sup>25</sup> Your wrong actions have taken these benefits from you; your sins have deprived you of my blessings.

<sup>26</sup> For there are wicked men among my people. They're like bird-trappers, secretly watching and waiting to catch people in their snare. <sup>27</sup> Their homes are full of their ill-gotten gains, like cages full of birds. That's why they've become powerful and rich. <sup>28</sup> They've grown fat and smooth, and have become experts in evil. They deny justice to orphans, and they don't defend the rights of those in need.

<sup>29</sup> Shouldn't I punish them for all this? declares the Lord. Shouldn't I retaliate for what this nation has done?

<sup>30</sup> Something horrible, something terrible has happened here in this country. <sup>31</sup> The prophets give false prophecies; the priests rule as they please. My people love it like this, but what will you do when it all falls apart?

## 6

<sup>1</sup> Run and hide, descendants of Benjamin,\* get out of Jerusalem! Blow the trumpet in Tekoa; light a signal fire in Beth-haccherem, for disaster and terrible destruction is arriving from the north. <sup>2</sup> Even though she is pretty and delightful, I will destroy† the Daughter of Zion.

<sup>3</sup> “Shepherds” and their “flocks”‡ will come to attack her; they will set up their tents all around her, each one looking after his own. <sup>4</sup> They get ready for battle against her, saying, “Come on, we’ll attack at noon! Oh no, the day is almost over, the evening shadows are growing long. <sup>5</sup> Come on, we’ll attack at night instead and destroy her fortresses!”

<sup>6</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: Cut down the trees and make a siege ramp to use against Jerusalem. This city needs to be punished because it’s full of people mistreating one another. <sup>7</sup> Like a spring gushing out§ water, so she pours out her evil. The sounds of violence and abuse echo inside her. I see people sick and wounded everywhere. <sup>8</sup> I’m warning you, people of Jerusalem, I’m going to give up on you in disgust. I will destroy you and leave your country uninhabited.

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\* **6:1** Jerusalem was part of the original territory of Benjamin.  
 † **6:2** The word used here usually means to “resemble,” but is used in the sense of “destroy” in Hosea 4:5. ‡ **6:3** Clearly an allusion to the invading armies with their generals. § **6:7** “Gushing out”: or “keeping cool.”

<sup>9</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: Even those left in Israel will be taken, just as grapes left on a vine are taken by the one harvesting the grapes who checks the branches again.

<sup>10</sup> Who can I give this warning to? Who's going to listen to me? Can't you see that they refuse to listen?\* They can't hear what I'm saying. See how offensive the Lord's message is to them. They don't like it at all.

<sup>11</sup> But as for me, I'm full of the Lord's anger; I have a hard time keeping it in.

The Lord replies,† Pour it out on children in the street, and on groups of young people, because both husband and wife are going to be captured—it's everyone, and it doesn't matter how old they are. <sup>12</sup> Their houses will be given to others, their fields and wives too, because I'm going to punish everyone living in this country, declares the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Everyone cheats because they're greedy, poor and rich alike. Even prophets and priests—they are all dishonest liars! <sup>14</sup> They give my wounded people first aid, but they don't really care about them. They tell them, “Don't worry! We have peace!” even as war approaches.

<sup>15</sup> Were they ashamed of the disgusting things they did? No, they weren't ashamed at all, they couldn't even blush. So they will fall just like the others, when I punish them; they will drop down dead, says the Lord.

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\* **6:10** “They refuse to listen”: literally, “They have uncircumcised ears.” † **6:11** “The Lord replies”: supplied for clarity.

<sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord says: Go and stand where the roads divide, and look. Find out which are the old paths. Ask, "What's the right way?" Then follow it and you'll be content.‡ But you refused, saying, "We won't go that way!" <sup>17</sup> I put watchmen in charge of you and told you, make sure you listen for the trumpet call warning you of danger. But you answered, "We won't listen!"

<sup>18</sup> So now you other nations can listen and find out what's going to happen to them.

<sup>19</sup> Earth, you listen too! I am bringing disaster down on this people, the end result of what they themselves planned. It's because they paid no attention to what I said, and rejected my instructions.

<sup>20</sup> What's the point of offering me frankincense from Sheba or sweet calamus from a far-away land? I don't accept your burnt offerings; I'm not pleased with your sacrifices.

<sup>21</sup> So this is what the Lord says: I'm going to put blocks in front of these people to trip them up. Fathers and sons will fall down dead, friends and neighbors too.

<sup>22</sup> This is what the Lord says: Look! An army is invading from the north; a powerful nation is getting ready to attack all the way from the ends of the earth. <sup>23</sup> They pick up their bows and spears. They are cruel and show no mercy. Their war-cries are like the sea roaring, and they ride horses lined up ready to attack you, Daughter of Zion.

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‡ **6:16** "You'll be content:" literally, "you'll find rest for your souls."

<sup>24</sup> The people reply, § “We've heard the news, and our hands are limp with shock! We're overcome with agony, suffering pain like a woman in labor. <sup>25</sup> Don't go to the field! Don't walk down the road! The enemy is armed with swords! Terror is everywhere!”

<sup>26</sup> Oh my people, put on sackcloth and roll around in ashes. Mourn and cry bitterly like you would for an only son, because the destroyer will come down on you suddenly.

<sup>27</sup> Jeremiah, I have made you a tester of metals so you can test my people as if they were metal, so you can know what they're made of and how they act. <sup>28</sup> They're all stubborn rebels going around talking slander. They are hard as bronze and iron; they are all corrupt. <sup>29</sup> The bellows in the refiner's furnace blow powerfully, burning away the lead. But this refining is pointless, because the wicked are not purified. <sup>30</sup> They are identified as impure silver to be rejected, because the Lord has rejected them.

## 7

<sup>1</sup> This is the Lord's message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: <sup>2</sup> Go and stand in the entrance to the Lord's Temple, and deliver this message: Listen to what Lord has to say, all of you from Judah who are coming in through these gates to worship the Lord. <sup>3</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says:

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§ 6:24 “The people reply”: supplied for clarity.

Change your ways and do what's right, and I'll let you go on living here. <sup>4</sup> Don't believe in those who try and deceive you by repeating, "The Temple of the Lord is here, the Temple of the Lord is here, the Temple of the Lord is here."\*

<sup>5</sup> If you sincerely change your ways and do what's right, if you treat each other fairly, <sup>6</sup> if you stop mistreating foreigners and orphans and widows, and if you stop murdering innocent people and stop hurting yourselves by worshiping, <sup>7</sup> then I'll let you go on living here in the country that I gave to your forefathers forever and ever.

<sup>8</sup> But look at you! You go on believing in these deceptions, these worthless words. <sup>9</sup> Are you really going to continue stealing, murdering, committing adultery, and lying, burning incense to Baal, and worshiping other gods that you know nothing about, <sup>10</sup> and then come and stand before me in my own Temple and say, "We're safe, so we can continue doing all these offensive things"? <sup>11</sup> Do you see this house, my own Temple, as a den of thieves? Well, that's what it looks like to me too, declares the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> So why don't you go to Shiloh<sup>†</sup> where I first made myself a place for me to live with you, and see what I did to it because of the evil my people Israel did? <sup>13</sup> I've warned you time and again about all these things you've done but you've

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\* **7:4** In other words, because the Lord's Temple was located in Jerusalem, the Lord would never allow the city to be conquered.

<sup>†</sup> **7:12** See Psalms 78:60.

refused to listen, declares the Lord. I've called out to you but you didn't want to answer me.

<sup>14</sup> So now I'm going to do to my Temple, what I did to Shiloh. This is the Temple your put your faith in, the place I gave to you and your forefathers. <sup>15</sup> I will throw you out of my presence, just as I expelled all your Israelite relatives, all the descendants of Ephraim.‡

<sup>16</sup> You, Jeremiah, are not to pray for these people. Don't cry out to me in prayer for them, don't plead with me on their behalf, because I won't listen to you. <sup>17</sup> Can't you see how they're behaving in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? <sup>18</sup> The children collect the firewood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven, and they pour out drink offerings to other gods to make me angry and hurt. <sup>19</sup> But is it really me they're hurting? declares the Lord. Aren't they really hurting themselves and bringing shame on themselves?

<sup>20</sup> So this is what the Lord God says: Watch! My furious anger and will be poured out on this country, on people and animals, on the orchards and the crops in the field. It will burn and nobody will be able to put it out.

<sup>21</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You can add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat all the meat

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‡ **7:15** Referring to the capture and exile of the ten northern tribes.

yourselves!§ 22 When I led your forefathers out of Egypt I didn't just give them instructions about burnt offerings and sacrifices, 23 This is the commandment I gave them: Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Follow everything I have commanded you to do, so that all will go well for you.

24 But they refused to listen or pay attention. Instead they followed the desires of their own stubborn and evil thinking, so they ended up going backward and not forward. 25 From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, I have sent you time after time my servants the prophets. 26 But you refused to listen or pay them attention. Instead, you became more stubborn and rebellious than your forefathers!

27 When you tell them all this, they won't listen to you. When you call out to them, they won't answer. 28 So you have to tell them, "This is the nation that refused to listen to what the Lord their God said, and would not accept the Lord's discipline. Truth has died out; people don't even talk about it. 29 Cut off your hair and throw it away.\* Sing a song of mourning on the bare hills, for the Lord has rejected and abandoned the generation who made him angry."

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§ 7:21 This was of course not permitted in Levitical law. However, what the Lord is saying is that since he won't accept their sacrifices they might as well eat all of the meat themselves.

\* 7:29 Either as a sign of mourning (which was forbidden in Deuteronomy 14:1, presumably as a pagan practice), or as a sign they had broken their vow to God as if they were a Nazarite (Numbers 6:5).



<sup>30</sup> For the people of Judah have done what is evil in my sight, declares the Lord. They have placed their offensive idols in my own Temple, making it unclean. <sup>31</sup> They have built pagan shrines at Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom so they could sacrifice their sons and daughters by burning them in the fire. This is something I never commanded. I never even thought of such a thing!

<sup>32</sup> So watch out! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when instead of Topheth and the Valley of Hinnom this place will be called the Valley of Killing. People will bury their dead in Topheth until it's full. <sup>33</sup> The dead bodies of these people will be food for birds of prey and wild animals, and there won't be anyone to scare them away.

<sup>34</sup> I will put a stop to the cheerful sounds of celebration and the happy voices of the bride and bridegroom from the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the country will be turned into a wasteland.

## 8

<sup>1</sup> When that happens, declares the Lord, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of the officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be taken out of their graves. <sup>2</sup> They will lie exposed to the sun and moon, and to all the stars which they loved, which they served, which they followed, which they

consulted, and which they worshiped.\* Their bones will not be collected or reburied, but will be left like manure lying on the ground. <sup>3</sup> Those who are left of this evil family will prefer to die rather than live in every place I've scattered them, declares the Lord Almighty.

<sup>4</sup> Tell them this is what the Lord says: When people fall down, don't they get up again? When people go the wrong way, don't they turn around? <sup>5</sup> So why have these people of Jerusalem gone the wrong way? Why do they refuse to turn around from their repeated betrayals, holding on to all their lies? <sup>6</sup> I've heard exactly what they said, but they don't tell the truth. No one is sorry for doing wrong, asking, "What have I done?" Everyone chooses their own way, like a horse charging into battle.

<sup>7</sup> Even storks high in the sky know when it's time to migrate. Turtledoves, swifts, and songbirds know when to fly away at the right time of the year. But my people don't know the laws of the Lord. <sup>8</sup> How on earth can you say, "We're wise, and we have the Law of the Lord?" Can't you see that the writings of your teachers of the Law have turned it into lies? <sup>9</sup> The wise will be shown to be foolish; they will be shocked at being caught out. Can't you see that they've rejected what the Lord says—so do they have any wisdom at all?

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\* **8:2** The repetition emphasizes the inability of these "gods" to do anything to protect even the bones of their worshipers.

<sup>10</sup> I'm going to give their wives to others, and their fields to different owners, since everyone cheats because they're greedy, poor and rich alike. Even prophets and priests—they are all dishonest liars! <sup>11</sup> They give my wounded people first aid, but they don't really care about them. They tell them, "Don't worry! We have peace!" even as war approaches. <sup>12</sup> Are they ashamed of the disgusting things they did? No, they're not ashamed at all, they can't even blush. So they will fall just like the others, when I punish them; they will drop down dead, says the Lord. <sup>13</sup> I'm going to destroy them, declares the Lord. There will be no grapes left on the vines, no figs on the trees—even the leaves will wither. They will lose whatever I gave them.

<sup>14</sup> The people say, "Why are we sitting around here? Let's get together and run to the fortified towns. We can die there, for the Lord our God is killing us by giving us poisoned water to drink, because we sinned against him. <sup>15</sup> We hoped for peace, but instead nothing good has come; we hoped for a time of healing, but instead there was only sudden terror."

<sup>16</sup> The snorting of enemy horses can be heard from Dan.† The whole country shakes in fear at the sound of the neighing of these strong stallions, They have come to destroy the country and everything in it; Jerusalem and everyone who lives there. <sup>17</sup> Watch out! I'm sending

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† **8:16** Dan was in the north of the country and would be the first to experience invasion.

snakes among you, vipers that can't be charmed. They will come and bite you, declares the Lord.

<sup>18</sup> Nothing comforts me<sup>‡</sup> in my suffering; <sup>§</sup> I feel terrible inside. <sup>19</sup> Listen to my people crying out for help from a distant land, asking "Isn't the Lord present in Zion anymore? Has her King left?"

Why have they made me\* angry, worshiping their carved images and their useless foreign idols?

<sup>20</sup> "The harvest is over, the summer is finished, but we're not saved," say the people.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>21</sup> I'm crushed by the injuries suffered by my people; I mourn for them. I'm horrified at what's happened! <sup>22</sup> Isn't there any ointment from Gilead to help heal them? Aren't there any doctors there? So why haven't my people been healed from their wounds?

## 9

<sup>1</sup> How I wish my head was a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears! Then I would weep day and night over all my people who have been killed. <sup>2</sup> I wish I had a temporary shelter in the desert—I would give up on my people and leave them, because they're all adulterers, a bunch of traitors! <sup>3</sup> Their words are like arrows shot from a bow. Lies win out over the truth throughout the country. They go from one

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<sup>‡</sup> **8:18** Jeremiah is the speaker. <sup>§</sup> **8:18** The Hebrew of this line is obscure. <sup>\*</sup> **8:19** The Lord is the speaker. <sup>†</sup> **8:20** "Say the people": supplied for clarity

evil thing to the next, forgetting all about me, declares the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> Everyone, watch out for your friends! Don't even trust your brother! Every brother is deceitful, and every friend slanders other people.

<sup>5</sup> Everyone betrays their friends; no one tells the truth. They've made themselves into expert liars; they tire themselves out doing wrong.

<sup>6</sup> Everyone exploits each other, and in all their lies they don't want to know me, declares the Lord.

<sup>7</sup> So this is what the Lord Almighty says: Look, I'm going to test them and purify them like metal in a furnace. What else can I do because of what my people have done? <sup>8</sup> Their words are arrows that kill; they always tell lies. They're nice to their friends on the outside while plotting against them inside. <sup>9</sup> Shouldn't I punish them for all this? declares the Lord. Shouldn't I retaliate for what this nation has done?

<sup>10</sup> I will weep and wail for the mountains, I will sing a funeral song over the pastures in the countryside, because they have been so badly burned that no one can pass through, and there are no cattle to make any noise. The birds have flown and the wild animals have run away.

<sup>11</sup> I'm going to make Jerusalem into a heap of rubble, a place where jackals live. I will destroy the towns of Judah, leaving them empty.

<sup>12</sup> Who is wise enough to understand this? Has the Lord told anyone so they can explain what's happened? Why has the land been destroyed

and burned so it's like a desert, so no one can pass through it?

<sup>13</sup> The Lord replied, It's because they have given up keeping my laws that I placed before them. They haven't followed them; they haven't done what I told them. <sup>14</sup> On the contrary, they have followed their own stubborn way of thinking, and went to worship the Baals, just as their forefathers taught them.

<sup>15</sup> So this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Watch out! I will give these people wormwood to eat and poisoned water to drink. <sup>16</sup> I'm about to scatter them among nations unfamiliar to them and their forefathers, and I will send enemies with swords to chase after them until I have wiped them out.

<sup>17</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: Be aware of what's happening! Call for the professional women mourners, ask for the best of them. <sup>18</sup> Have them come as quickly as possible, and sing a funeral song about us, so we can cry our eyes out, so our tears will flow like streams.

<sup>19</sup> The sound of weeping comes from Zion, "We're completely devastated! We're totally ashamed, because we've had to abandon our country, because our houses have been demolished."

<sup>20</sup> Women, listen to the Lord's message, hear what he has to say. Teach your daughters to mourn and sing songs of sadness. <sup>21</sup> Death has slipped in through our windows; it has come into our fortresses. It has killed the children playing

in the streets and the young people gathering in the town squares.

<sup>22</sup> Tell everyone this is what the Lord says: Dead bodies will be left where they fall like manure in the fields, lying there like stalks of freshly-cut grain behind the reaper, with no one to collect them.

<sup>23</sup> This is what the Lord says: The wise shouldn't boast about their wisdom. The strong shouldn't boast about their strength. The rich shouldn't boast about their riches. <sup>24</sup> Anyone who wants to boast should boast that they really know and understand me, recognizing that I am the Lord who acts with trustworthy love, who shows fairness, and who does what is right everywhere on earth, because these mean the most to me, declares the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> Watch out, for the time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will punish all who are only physically circumcised. <sup>26</sup> Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and all the desert people who trim their hair on the sides of their heads—all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the Israelites are spiritually uncircumcised.

## 10

<sup>1</sup> Listen to the message the Lord is sending to you, people of Israel. <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord says: Don't adopt the practices of other nations. Don't be terrified as they are by signs in the heavens that they interpret as predicting disaster.

<sup>3</sup> The religious beliefs of the peoples are pointless. They chop down a tree in the forest and a

craftsman carves the wood with a tool to make an idol. <sup>4</sup> They decorate it with silver and gold, and nail it down with a hammer so it won't fall over. <sup>5</sup> Just like a scarecrow in a field of cucumbers, their idols can't speak. They have to be carried around because they can't walk. You don't have to be afraid of them because they can't hurt you—and they can't do you any good either.

<sup>6</sup> There's no one like you, Lord! You are so great! You are incredibly powerful! <sup>7</sup> Everyone should respect you, King of the nations. This is how you should be treated. There's no one like you among all the wise men of every nation and kingdom. <sup>8</sup> Yet these “wise men” are completely foolish and stupid, because they think they can be taught by useless idols made of wood!

<sup>9</sup> Sheets of hammered silver are shipped in from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, to be used by craftsmen and metalworkers. These idols are dressed in clothes of blue and purple made by experts.

<sup>10</sup> But the Lord is the only true God. He is the living God and eternal King. The earth shakes when he is angry; the nations can't withstand his fury.

<sup>11</sup> This is what you are to tell the nations: “These gods, who didn't make either the heavens or the earth, will be wiped out from this earth and from under these heavens.”\*

<sup>12</sup> It was God who made the earth by his power. He created the world by his wisdom and by

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\* **10:11** This verse which is addressed to foreign nations is written in Aramaic, the common language of the time.



his understanding he put the heavens in place.  
<sup>13</sup> The waters of the heavens rain down with a roar at his command. He makes the clouds to rise all over the earth. He makes lightning to accompany rain, and sends the wind from his storehouses.

<sup>14</sup> Everyone is stupid; they don't know anything. Every metalworker is embarrassed by the idols they make. For their images made of molten metal are fraudulent—they're not alive!

<sup>15</sup> They are useless, an object to be laughed at. They will be destroyed at the time of their punishment.

<sup>16</sup> The God of Jacob is not like these idols, for he is the Creator of everything, and Israel is the tribe that belongs to him. The Lord Almighty is his name.

<sup>17</sup> You people living in Jerusalem<sup>†</sup> under siege, get all your things together ready to leave,  
<sup>18</sup> because this is what the Lord says: Look! Right now I'm about to throw out the people living in this country, bringing them trouble they will really feel.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The people of Jerusalem responded,<sup>§</sup> “We're suffering terribly because we've been badly hurt—our injuries are really serious. We thought it wouldn't be that bad and that we could bear it.  
<sup>20</sup> Our tents\* have been destroyed; all our ropes have been broken. Our children have been taken

<sup>†</sup> **10:17** “People living in Jerusalem”: supplied for clarity.

<sup>‡</sup> **10:18** The meaning of the Hebrew of this last clause is uncertain. **§ 10:19** “The people of Jerusalem responded”:

supplied for clarity. \* **10:20** “Tents” are symbolic of the houses in Jerusalem.

from us and are no more. We don't have anyone left to put up our tents or hang our curtains.”

<sup>21</sup> The “shepherds”<sup>†</sup> have become stupid—they don't ask the Lord for advice. That's why they have failed, and all their flock has been scattered.

<sup>22</sup> Listen to the news that an noisy army is invading from a country to the north. The towns of Judah will be knocked down, they will be places where only jackals live.

<sup>23</sup> I<sup>‡</sup> realize, Lord, that people don't control their own lives—no one really knows how to choose their way. <sup>24</sup> Please discipline me fairly, Lord—not while you're angry, otherwise you'll kill me! <sup>25</sup> Pour out your fury on the nations that don't recognize you as God, and on their families that don't worship you. For they have completely destroyed the Israelites, wiping us out. They have devastated our country.

## 11

<sup>1</sup> This is the Lord's message that came to Jeremiah: <sup>2</sup> Listen to the terms of this agreement, and then repeat them to the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> Tell them this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: You are cursed if you don't obey the terms of this agreement. <sup>4</sup> I made this agreement with your forefathers when I led them out of Egypt, out of the iron-making furnace, saying, “Obey me, and do everything I order you to do, and you will be my people, and I will be your

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<sup>†</sup> **10:21** “Shepherds”: referring to the nation's leaders. <sup>‡</sup> **10:23** Jeremiah is speaking.

God.” <sup>5</sup> I did this to fulfill what I promised to your forefathers—to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it still is today.

Amen, Lord, I answered.

<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord told me, Go and publicly announce this whole message in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: Pay attention the terms of this agreement and do what they say. <sup>7</sup> From the time I led your forefathers out of Egypt until now, I seriously warned them time and again, saying, “Do what I tell you!” <sup>8</sup> But they refused to obey, they wouldn't listen. Instead each of them followed their own stubborn and evil thinking. I had ordered them to follow the agreement, but they didn't do so. So I brought down on them all the curses contained in the agreement.

<sup>9</sup> The Lord told me, There is a rebellion happening among the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup> They have gone back to the sins of their forefathers who refused to obey what I said. They have gone to worship other gods. The people of Israel and Judah have broken the agreement I made with their forefathers.

<sup>11</sup> So this is what the Lord says: I'm going to bring upon them a disaster they won't be able to escape. They will cry out to me for help, but I won't listen to them. <sup>12</sup> Then the people in the towns of Judah and Jerusalem will go and call out for help to the gods they've been burning incense to, but these gods won't be able to do anything to save them in their time of trouble.

**13** You certainly have as many gods as you have towns, Judah! You have built shameful altars, altars to burn incense to Baal. You have as many altars as the streets of Jerusalem.

**14** Jeremiah, don't pray for these people. Don't cry for help or offer a prayer on their behalf, because I won't be listening when they cry out to me in the time of their trouble.

**15** What right do the people I love have to be in my Temple when they've done so many evil things? Do you think the meat of sacrifices will save you? When disaster strikes will you be happy?\*

**16** At one time the Lord said you were a healthy olive tree, full of leaves and bearing beautiful fruit. But with a great noise he will set fire to it, destroying its branches. **17** I, the Lord Almighty, was the one who planted you, but I have announced you will be destroyed because of the evil that the people of Israel and Judah have committed, making me angry by burning incense to Baal.

**18** The Lord told me about it,† so I knew. Then he showed me what they were actually doing. **19** I was like a trusting little lamb being led away to be slaughtered. I didn't know that they had been plotting against me. They said, "Let's destroy the tree along with everything it produces. Let's kill him so no one will even remember his name."

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\* **11:15** The meaning of this verse is subject to various interpretations. † **11:18** Presumably referring back to the rebellion mentioned in verse 9.

<sup>20</sup> I appeal to you, Lord Almighty, you who judge rightly and examine peoples thoughts and feelings, let me see how you punish them, because I've left my case in your hands.

<sup>21</sup> So this is what the Lord says about the people of Anathoth who are trying to kill you, telling you, "Don't prophesy in the name of the Lord, or we'll kill you."

<sup>22</sup> This is the reply of the Lord Almighty: I will punish them. Their young men will be killed by the sword, their sons and daughters will be killed by famine. <sup>23</sup> There won't be anyone left because I will bring disaster on the people of Anathoth at the time when they're punished.

## 12

<sup>1</sup> Lord, when I complain to you, you always show yourself to be in the right. Even so I still want to present my case to you. Why is it that wicked people do so well? Why do those who are unfaithful to you live so comfortably? <sup>2</sup> You planted them, and they've taken root, grown, and produced fruit. They're always talking about you but they don't think of you, even for a moment.

<sup>3</sup> But you know me, Lord, you see me, and examine what I think about you. Drag off these people like sheep to be slaughtered; keep them apart for the time when they're killed. <sup>4</sup> How long will the land have to mourn and the grass in every field be dried up because of the evil of the people who live there? The animals and birds

have died out because the people have said, “He\* doesn't know what's going to happen to us.”

<sup>5</sup> The Lord says,† Once you've become worn out in a foot race against men, how would you win racing against horses? If you trip up in open ground, how would you do in the tangled undergrowth beside the Jordan?

<sup>6</sup> Even your own brothers and your father's family have betrayed you; they have publicly criticized you. Don't trust them when they talk nicely to you!

<sup>7</sup> I have given up on my people; I have abandoned the nation I chose. I have handed over the ones I truly love to their enemies.

<sup>8</sup> They've turned into a wild lion, roaring at me—that's why I hate them. <sup>9</sup> My people are like a spotted bird of prey‡ to me with other birds of prey circling to attack it. Go and bring all the wild animals to eat up the carcass.

<sup>10</sup> Many shepherds§ have come and destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down the crops in my field. They have turned my pleasant land into an empty wasteland. <sup>11</sup> They have made it into a desert; it mourns before me, lying desolate. The whole country is a wasteland, but no one cares. <sup>12</sup> The destructive armies have crossed all the bare desert hills for the Lord's

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\* **12:4** “He” could apply to the Lord or to Jeremiah, either refuting God's foreknowledge or Jeremiah's prophetic claims.

† **12:5** “The Lord says”: supplied for clarity. ‡ **12:9** “Spotted bird of prey”: or “hyena.” § **12:10** “Shepherds”: referring to the leaders of invading armies.

sword destroys from one end of the country to the other. No one has any peace.

<sup>13</sup> My people sowed wheat but harvested thorns. They wore themselves out but gained no benefit. You should be ashamed of such a poor harvest, caused by the Lord's furious anger.

<sup>14</sup> This is what the Lord says: When it comes these evil nearby nations who attack the country that I gave to my people Israel, I'm going to uproot them from their land. I'm also going to uproot the people of Judah from among them.

<sup>15</sup> However, once I have uprooted them, I will have mercy on them again, and bring each one back to their property and their land.

<sup>16</sup> If they will honestly learn the ways of my people and respect me, making their vows to me, just as they once taught my people to swear by Baal, then they will do well among my people.

<sup>17</sup> But if they refuse to obey, then I will not only uproot that nation but I will completely destroy it, declares the Lord.

## 13

<sup>1</sup> This is what the Lord told me to do: Go and buy yourself a linen loincloth and put it on, but don't wash it. <sup>2</sup> So I went and bought a loincloth as the Lord had instructed me, and I put it on.

<sup>3</sup> Then the Lord gave me another message:  
<sup>4</sup> Take the loincloth that you bought and put on,

and go immediately to the River Perath\* and hide it there in a hole among the rocks. <sup>5</sup> So I went and hid it at the River Perath, as the Lord had told me.

<sup>6</sup> A long time later the Lord told me, Go to Perath, and get the loincloth that I ordered you to hide there. <sup>7</sup> I went to Perath and dug up the loincloth, and removed it from where I'd hidden it. Obviously it was ruined—completely useless.

<sup>8</sup> Then a message from the Lord came to me: <sup>9</sup> This is what the Lord says: I will ruin the arrogance of Judah and the great arrogance of Jerusalem in exactly the same way. <sup>10</sup> These evil people refuse to listen to what I tell them. They follow their own stubborn and evil thinking and run off to worship other gods—they will be like this loincloth, completely useless.

<sup>11</sup> In the same way that a loincloth holds tightly to the body, so I made all the people of Israel and Judah hold tightly to me, declares the Lord. Then they could have been my people, representing me, giving me honor and praise. But they refused to listen.

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\* **13:4** The River Parath in Hebrew is usually translated as the Euphrates. However, this would mean Jeremiah going on two round trips of some 700 miles each. Some have suggested that the river in question was one with a similar name located near to Anathoth. Insofar as this is an acted parable it seems likely that others were supposed to see what happened and understand what it meant, the actual Euphrates seems an unlikely location. However, the symbolic aspect must be included since the invaders would be coming from Babylon on the Euphrates.



<sup>12</sup> So tell them this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Every wine jar shall be filled with wine.

When they reply, “Don't we know that already? Of course every wine jar should be filled with wine!” <sup>13</sup> then tell them that this is what the Lord says: I'm going to make everyone who lives in this land drunk—the kings sitting on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the people of Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> I'm going to smash them against each other like wine jars,<sup>†</sup> both parents and children, declares the Lord. I won't let any mercy or pity or compassion stop me from destroying them.

<sup>15</sup> Listen and pay attention. Don't be arrogant, for the Lord has spoken. <sup>16</sup> Honor the Lord your God before he brings the darkness, before you trip and fall in the twilight on the mountains. You long for light to come, but he send only gloom and complete darkness.

<sup>17</sup> But if you refuse to listen, I will weep secretly inside because of your pride. My tears pouring down because the Lord's flock has been captured.

<sup>18</sup> Tell the king and the queen mother: Get down from your thrones, because your splendid crowns have fallen from your heads. <sup>19</sup> The towns in the Negev are surrounded; no one can get through to them. The whole of Judah has been taken away into exile, everyone has been exiled. <sup>20</sup> Look up and you'll see the invaders

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<sup>†</sup> **13:14** “Like wine jars”: supplied for clarity.

coming from the north. Where is the flock that was given to you to look after? Where are the sheep you were so proud of? <sup>21</sup> What are you going to say when he puts your enemies in charge of you, people you once counted as your friends? Won't you suffer pains like a woman in labor?

<sup>22</sup> If you say to yourself, Why has this happened to me? it's because you have been so wicked. That's why your skirts were stripped off and you were raped. <sup>23</sup> Can Ethiopians change the color of their skin? Can a leopard change its spots? In the same way you can't change and do good because you're so used to doing evil.

<sup>24</sup> I'm going to scatter you like chaff blown away by the desert wind. <sup>25</sup> This is what's going to happen to you; this is what I have decided to do to you, declares the Lord, because you have forgotten me and believed in lies. <sup>26</sup> I will pull your skirts up over your face, so you will be seen naked and ashamed. <sup>27</sup> I watched your acts of adultery and lust, how you prostituted yourselves shamelessly, worshiping idols on the hills and in the fields. Yes, I saw the disgusting things you did.

Disaster is coming to you, Jerusalem! How long are you going to remain unclean?

## 14

<sup>1</sup> This is a message from the Lord that came to Jeremiah regarding the drought: <sup>2</sup> Judah is in mourning; her towns are wasting away. Her people are weeping for the land, and a cry for

help comes from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Rich people send their servants to get water. They go to the cisterns, but don't find any water. They return with empty jars, disappointed and ashamed, covering their heads.

<sup>4</sup> The ground has dried up because there hasn't been any rain in the land. The farmers are ashamed; they cover their heads. <sup>5</sup> Even the deer abandons her newborn fawn because there's no grass. <sup>6</sup> Wild donkeys stand on the bare hills, panting like jackals. Their eyesight fails because they have nothing to eat. <sup>7</sup> Even though our sins give evidence against us, Lord, please do something for us because of your good nature. Yes, we have rebelled against you so often; we have sinned against you.

<sup>8</sup> You are the hope of Israel, our Savior in times of trouble. Why do you act like a foreigner in our country, like a traveler who only stays a night? <sup>9</sup> Why do you act like someone caught unawares, like a powerful warrior who can't help? You are here among us, Lord, and we are known as your people. Please don't give up on us!

<sup>10</sup> This is what the Lord says about his people: They really love to wander away from me—they don't even try to stop themselves. So the Lord refuses to accept them. Now he'll remember their guilty actions and punish them for their sins.

<sup>11</sup> The Lord told me, Don't pray for the welfare of this people. <sup>12</sup> Even if they fast, I won't listen to their cry. Even though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I won't accept them. On

the contrary I will wipe them out by sword and famine and plague.

<sup>13</sup> “Oh Lord God!” I answered, “Look what prophets are telling them, claiming to be speaking for you:” \* ‘You won't see war or suffer from famine, but I will give you peace that lasts here in this place.’ ”

<sup>14</sup> The prophets are prophesying lies in my name, replied the Lord. I didn't send them or choose them or speak to them. It's a lying vision, an empty prediction, a deluded, deceitful product of their own minds that they are prophesying to you.

<sup>15</sup> So this is what the Lord says about such prophets who prophesy in my name: I didn't send them, but even so they say, “This country won't suffer war or famine.” These same prophets will die from war or famine! <sup>16</sup> The bodies of the people they prophesied to will be thrown into the streets of Jerusalem because of famine and war. There won't be anyone to bury them or their wives, their sons or their daughters. I will pour out their own evil on them.

<sup>17</sup> This is what you are to tell them: Tears flow from my eyes without stopping day or night, because my people have been crushed by a heavy blow, a really serious wound.

<sup>18</sup> If I go out to the countryside, I see those killed by the sword; if I go into the city, I see those dying by famine. Both prophets and priests

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\* **14:13** “Claiming to be speaking for you”: supplied for clarity.

wander around the country—they don't know what they're doing.

<sup>19</sup> Have you really rejected Judah? Do you hate Zion so much? Why have you wounded us so badly that we can't be healed? We hoped for peace, but instead nothing good has come; we hoped for a time of healing, but instead there was only sudden terror. <sup>20</sup> Lord, we admit our wickedness, the guilt of our forefathers as well as our own sins against you. <sup>21</sup> Because of your own reputation please don't hate us; don't bring dishonor on your glorious throne. Please remember your agreement with us; don't break it. <sup>22</sup> Can the false gods of the other nations bring rain? Can the skies themselves send showers? No, it's you, Lord our God. So we put our hope in you, because only you can do all this.

## 15

<sup>1</sup> The Lord told me: Even if Moses and Samuel were standing before me pleading with me on behalf of these people, I wouldn't feel sorry for them. Send them away from me. Have them leave. <sup>2</sup> If they ask you, "Where shall we go?" tell them that this is what the Lord says: Those to be killed by the plague, to the plague; those to be killed by the sword, to the sword; those to be killed by famine, to famine; and those to be killed in captivity, to captivity.

<sup>3</sup> I will put four kinds of destroyers in charge of them, declares the Lord: swords to kill, dogs to drag their bodies away, and the birds of prey and wild animals to eat them and destroy them. <sup>4</sup> I

will make all the kingdoms of the world horrified by them, because of the evil things Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, king of Judah did in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> Who will be sorry for you, Jerusalem? Who will mourn for you? Who will stop to ask you how you are? <sup>6</sup> You have deserted me, declares the Lord. You have turned your back on me. So I will take action against you and destroy you; I am tired of showing you mercy. <sup>7</sup> I will scatter you with a winnowing fork\* from every town in the country. I will destroy my people and take away their children because they refuse to give up their evil ways. <sup>8</sup> There will be more widows than the sand of the sea. I will bring a destroyer at noon and mothers will lose their young sons. They will suddenly experience agony and shock. <sup>9</sup> A mother of seven children will collapse; she will gasp for breath. Her sun will set while it's still daytime; she will be ashamed and humiliated. I will let the enemies kill the rest of them, declares the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> How sad I am, my mother, that you gave birth to me! I'm a victim of argument and conflict wherever I go in the country. I have never lent anyone anything, or borrowed anything, but still everyone curses me.

<sup>11</sup> But the Lord told me: Don't worry, I'm going to take away your problems so you can do good. I will make your enemies plead with you

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\* **15:7** "Winnowing fork": a tool used to separate the chaff from the grain.

whenever they're in trouble or suffering.†

<sup>12</sup> Can anyone break iron, iron from the north, or bronze? <sup>13</sup> I will give away your wealth and valuable possessions for free. They will become plunder for your enemies because of all the sins you committed throughout your country. <sup>14</sup> Then I will have your enemies make you their slaves‡ in an unfamiliar country, because I will so angry it will be like lighting a fire that will burn you up.

<sup>15</sup> You know what's happening to me, Lord. Please remember me and look after me. Punish my persecutors! Please be patient—don't let me die! You know I put up with criticism because I want to honor you.

<sup>16</sup> When I received your messages, I ate them up! What you said made me really happy—I was delighted. I belong to you, Lord God Almighty! <sup>17</sup> I didn't join in with a bunch of jokers as they had fun. I stayed by myself because you have called me, and you have filled me with outrage.§

<sup>18</sup> Why doesn't my pain ever stop? Why is my wound incurable? Why can't it be healed? You've really become like a seasonal stream to me, an unreliable source of water.

<sup>19</sup> So this is what the Lord says: If you come back to me, I will take you back and you will serve me again. If what you talk about are

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† **15:11** Or "I will talk to your enemies for you whenever you're in trouble, whenever you're suffering." The Hebrew is ambiguous. ‡ **15:14** "Make you their slaves": or "take you to."

§ **15:17** "Filled me with outrage": at the actions of mocking partygoers and the nation generally.

worthwhile subjects and not nonsense, you will be my spokesman, Jeremiah.\* They must be the ones who follow you; you must not follow them.

<sup>20</sup> Then I will make you a wall to these people, a strong wall of bronze. They will fight against you but they won't defeat you.† I am with you to save you and rescue you, declares the Lord. <sup>21</sup> I will liberate you from the power of the wicked, and free you from clutches of the cruel.

## 16

<sup>1</sup> A message from the Lord that came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup> Don't marry or have children here.

<sup>3</sup> This is what the Lord says about children born here, and about their mothers and fathers—their parents here in this country: <sup>4</sup> They will die from fatal diseases. No one will mourn for them. Their bodies won't be buried, but will lie on the ground like manure. They will be destroyed by war and famine, and their bodies will be food for birds of prey and wild animals.

<sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord says: Don't enter a home where people are having a funeral meal. Don't visit them to mourn or to offer condolences, for I have taken away my peace, my trustworthy love, and my mercy from these people, declares the Lord.

<sup>6</sup> Everyone, from the most important to the least, will die in this country. They will not be buried or mourned; there will be no rites for the dead such as cutting oneself or shaving of heads.

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\* **15:19** "Jeremiah": supplied for clarity. † **15:20** See also 1:18-19.



<sup>7</sup> No funeral receptions will be held to comfort those who mourn—not even a comforting drink is to be offered at the loss of a father or mother.

<sup>8</sup> Don't go into a house where people are celebrating and sit down with them to eat and drink. <sup>9</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am going to put a stop right here, while you watch, to any sounds of celebration and joy, the happy voices of the groom and bride.

<sup>10</sup> When you explain all this to them they'll ask you, "Why has the Lord ordered that such a terrible disaster should happen to us? What did we do wrong? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?"

<sup>11</sup> Answer them: It's because your forefathers deserted me, declares the Lord. They went and followed other gods, serving them and worshipping them. They abandoned me and didn't keep my laws. <sup>12</sup> You however have done even more evil than your forefathers. Look at how all of you followed your own stubborn evil thinking instead of obeying me. <sup>13</sup> So I'm going to throw you out of this country and exile you in a country unfamiliar to you and your forefathers. There you'll serve other gods day and night, because I won't help you at all.

<sup>14</sup> But listen! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when people won't any longer make vows, saying, "On the Lord's life, who led the Israelites out of Egypt." <sup>15</sup> Instead they'll say, "On the Lord's life, who led the Israelites back from the northern country and all the other countries

where he had exiled them.” I'm going to bring them back to the country I gave their forefathers.

<sup>16</sup> But for the moment I'm going to send for many fishermen and they'll catch them, declares the Lord. Then I'm going to send for many hunters, and they'll hunt them down on every mountain and hill, even from their hiding places in the rocks.

<sup>17</sup> I see everything they're doing. They can't hide from me, and their sins aren't hidden from me either. <sup>18</sup> First I'm going to pay them back double for their wickedness and sin, because they have made my land unclean with the lifeless bodies of their disgusting idols, filling my special country with their offensive pagan images.

<sup>19</sup> Lord, you are my strength and my fortress, my safe place in the time of trouble. Nations will come to you from all over the earth, and they will say, “The religion of our forefathers was a total lie! The idols they worshiped were useless—no good at all. <sup>20</sup> How can people make gods for themselves? These aren't gods!”

<sup>21</sup> Now they'll see! I'll show them, and then they'll recognize my power and strength. Then they'll know that I am the Lord!

## 17

<sup>1</sup> The sin of Judah is inscribed with an iron stylus, engraved with an adamant\* point, on their minds and on corners of their altars where

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\* **17:1** “Adamant”: an extremely hard stone used in the same way as diamond is today. Diamonds were unknown in Israel at that time.

they worship. <sup>2</sup> Even their children remember to worship at their pagan altars and Asherah poles, set up by the green trees and on the high hills, <sup>3</sup> on my mountain in the fields. I will hand over your wealth and all your valuable possessions as plunder, because of the sin committed on your pagan high places inside your country. <sup>4</sup> You will have to give up the land I gave you. I will have your enemies make you their slaves in an unfamiliar country for you made my anger blaze, and it will burn forever.

<sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord says: Cursed are those who put their confidence in human beings, who trust in human strength and give up relying on the Lord. <sup>6</sup> They will be like a shrub alone in the desert that isn't even aware when good things happen. It just goes on living in the dry desert, in a salt flat that's uninhabited.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, who put their confidence in him. <sup>8</sup> They are like trees planted by water, sending out roots toward the stream. They don't panic when it gets hot; their leaves are always green. They don't worry during a time of drought—they go on producing fruit.

<sup>9</sup> The mind is more deceptive than anything else—it's incurably sick! Who can possibly understand it? <sup>10</sup> But I, the Lord, see what people are thinking. I examine their minds, so I can reward them depending on their attitudes and the way they behave.

<sup>11</sup> Like a partridge hatching eggs it didn't lay is someone who makes a fortune by cheating

others. Their riches will fly away at midday, and in the end they'll look like a fool.

<sup>12</sup> Our Temple is a throne of glory, raised up high from the beginning. <sup>13</sup> Lord, you are Israel's hope, anyone who deserts you will be disgraced. Anyone who turns their back on you will vanish like names written in the dust, for they have abandoned the Lord, the source of living water.

<sup>14</sup> Please heal me, Lord, and I'll be healed; save me, and I'll be saved, for you are the one I praise.

<sup>15</sup> See how they keep on saying to me, "Where is the disaster that the Lord's predicted? Is it ever going to happen?"<sup>†</sup>

<sup>16</sup> But I haven't been in a hurry to give up being your shepherd. I haven't wanted the time of trouble to come. You know that whatever I said was said in front of you.

<sup>17</sup> Please don't be the one who terrifies me! You are my protection in the time of trouble. <sup>18</sup> Bring shame on my persecutors, but not on me. Terrify them, but not me, Let them experience the time of trouble, and smash them to pieces.

<sup>19</sup> This is what the Lord told me: Go and stand at the main gate of the city, the one used by kings of Judah, and do the same at all the other gates of Jerusalem. <sup>20</sup> Tell them, Listen to the Lord's message, kings of Judah, and all you people of Judah and Jerusalem who come in through these gates.

<sup>21</sup> This is what the Lord says: Pay attention, if you value your lives! Don't carry a load on

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<sup>†</sup> **17:15** A colloquial expression would be, "Bring it on!"

the Sabbath day, and don't bring it through the gates of Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> Don't carry a load out of your houses, and don't do any work on the Sabbath day. Keep the Sabbath day holy, just as I ordered your forefathers. <sup>23</sup> However, they refused to listen or pay attention. Instead they were stubborn and refused to obey or accept instruction.

<sup>24</sup> Listen carefully to me, says the Lord, and don't bring any load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, and keep the Sabbath day holy, and don't do any work on it. <sup>25</sup> Then kings and princes will enter through the gates of this city. They will sit on the throne of David. They will ride in chariots and on horses with their officials, accompanied by the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. <sup>26</sup> People will come from the towns of Judah and everywhere around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, and from the lowlands the hill country, and the Negev. They will bring burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and thank offerings to the Lord's Temple.

<sup>27</sup> But if you refuse to listen to me and keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying a load while entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will set its gates alight with a fire that can't be put out, and it will burn down Jerusalem's fortresses.

## 18

<sup>1</sup> This message came to Jeremiah from the

Lord: <sup>2</sup> Go down right away to the potter's house. I will give you my message there.

<sup>3</sup> I went down to the potter's house and saw him working at his potter's wheel. <sup>4</sup> But the pot that he was making from the clay went wrong. So he made it into something different as he thought best.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord's message came to me, saying, <sup>6</sup> People of Israel, declares the Lord, can't I deal with you just like this potter does with his clay? I hold you in my hand just like clay in the potter's hand, people of Israel.

<sup>7</sup> At one time it could happen that I announce that a nation or a kingdom is going to be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed. <sup>8</sup> However, if that nation I warned gives up its evil ways, then I will change my mind regarding the disaster I was about to bring.

<sup>9</sup> At another time I could announce that I'm going to build up and give power to a nation or a kingdom. <sup>10</sup> But if it does evil in my sight and refuses to listen to my voice, then I will change my mind regarding the good I had planned for it.

<sup>11</sup> So tell the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem that this is what the Lord says: Watch out! I am preparing disaster for you, and working out a plan against you. All of you, give up your evil ways. Live right and act right!

<sup>12</sup> But they'll say, "We just can't! We'll do whatever we want. Each of us will stubbornly follow our own evil thinking."

<sup>13</sup> Consequently this is what the Lord says: Ask around the nations—has anybody ever heard anything like this? Virgin Israel has acted really badly.

<sup>14</sup> Does the snow of Lebanon ever disappear from its rocky mountain-tops? Do its cool waters that flow from such distant sources ever dry up?

<sup>15</sup> But my people have rejected me! They burn incense to useless idols which trip them up, making them leave the old roads in order to walk down unmade paths instead of the highway. <sup>16</sup> They have turned their country into a horrific wasteland, a place that will always be treated with contempt.\* People passing by will be shocked, shaking their heads in disbelief.

<sup>17</sup> Like a strong wind from the east I will scatter them before the enemy. I will turn my back on them and not look at them when their time of trouble comes.

<sup>18</sup> Some people decided, “We need a plan to deal with Jeremiah. There’ll still be priests to explain the law, there’ll still be wise people to give advice, and there’ll still be prophets to give prophecies. Let’s organize a smear campaign† against him so we don’t have to listen to a word he says.”

<sup>19</sup> Lord, please pay attention to what’s happening to me! Listen to what my accusers are saying!

<sup>20</sup> Should good be paid back with evil? Yet they have dug a pit to trap me! Remember how I stood

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\* **18:16** “Treated with contempt”: literally, “hissed at.” † **18:18** “Organize a smear campaign”: literally, “strike him with the tongue.”

before you to plead on their behalf, to stop you being angry with them?

<sup>21</sup> But now may their children starve; may they be killed by the sword. May their wives lose their children and their husbands; may their husbands die from disease; may their young men be killed in battle. <sup>22</sup> May cries of agony be heard from their houses when you suddenly bring invaders to attack them, because they dug a pit to capture me and hid traps to catch me as I walk along.

<sup>23</sup> But Lord, you know about all their plots to try and kill me. Don't forgive their wickedness; don't wipe away their sin. Bring them down! Deal with them when you're angry!

## 19

<sup>1</sup> This is what the Lord says: Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take some of the elders of the people and leaders of the priests with you, <sup>2</sup> and go through the Broken Pottery Gate to the valley of Ben-hinnom. Announce this message I'm giving you.

<sup>3</sup> Tell them, Listen to what the Lord says, kings of Judah and people living in Jerusalem. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring down on this place such a disaster that it will make the ears of anyone who hears about it ring. <sup>4</sup> My people have deserted me and have made this a place where foreign gods are worshiped. They have burned incense in it to other gods that they and their forefathers and the kings of Judah never knew anything



about. They have filled this place with the blood of innocent people. <sup>5</sup> They have built pagan shrines to Baal where they burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal. This is something I never commanded or even mentioned. I never even thought of such a thing!

<sup>6</sup> So watch out! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when instead of Topheth and the Valley of Hinnom this place will be called the Valley of Killing. <sup>7</sup> Right here in this place I'm going to spoil the plans of Judah and Jerusalem. I will let their enemies who want to kill them come and do exactly that. Their dead bodies will be food for birds of prey and wild animals.

<sup>8</sup> I'm going to make this city desolate, a place that is mocked. Everyone who passes by will be horrified, shocked by all its damage. <sup>9</sup> The siege brought by their enemies who want to kill them will be so terrible that I will make them eat each other, even their own sons and daughters.

<sup>10</sup> Then smash the jar in front of the people with you. <sup>11</sup> Tell them: this is what the Lord Almighty says: I'm going to smash this nation and this city, just like a clay jar is smashed so it can't ever be repaired. People will bury their dead in Topheth until it's full. <sup>12</sup> This is what I'm going to do to this place and to the people who live here, declares the Lord. I will turn this city into Topheth. <sup>13</sup> All the houses of Jerusalem and the palaces of the kings of Judah will become unclean just like Topheth, because they are all the houses whose rooftops they used to burn

incense to the sun, moon, and stars, and poured out drink offerings to other gods.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah returned from Topheth, where the Lord had sent him to deliver this message. He went and stood in the court of the Lord's Temple and announced to everyone, <sup>15</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Watch out! I am about to bring down on this city and on all its surrounding villages every disaster I warned them about, because they have stubbornly refused to listen to what I say.

## 20

<sup>1</sup> Pashhur, son of Immer, was a priest and the official\* in charge of the Lord's Temple. When he heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, <sup>2</sup> he beat Jeremiah the prophet and had him put in the stocks at the Upper Benjamin Gate, near to the Lord's Temple.

<sup>3</sup> The following day, when Pashhur had Jeremiah released from the stocks, Jeremiah told him, "The Lord doesn't call you Pashhur (tear in pieces), but Magor-missabib (terror is everywhere). <sup>4</sup> For this is what the Lord says: I'm going to make you terrified—you and all those you love. Enemies will kill them as you watch. I will hand Judah over to the king of Babylon. He will kill some, and the rest he will take away into exile in Babylon.

<sup>5</sup> I'm going to give it all away. All the wealth of this city, all the results of hard work, all the

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\* **20:1** Probably in charge of the Temple guards, and clearly not the high priest.

valuables, all the crown jewels of Judah's kings—I'm going to hand it over to their enemies, who will take it as plunder and carry it off to Babylon.

<sup>6</sup> You, Pashhur, and everyone who lives with you, will go into captivity. You will go to Babylon. You will die there and be buried—you and all those you love, those to whom you prophesied lies.”

<sup>7</sup> You fooled me, Lord, and I let myself be fooled!† You're stronger than me—you've won! I've become a joke people laugh at all day long. Everyone is mocking me. <sup>8</sup> This is because every time I open my mouth I have to shout out warnings of violence and destruction. The Lord's message has become the reason people criticize and ridicule me the whole time. <sup>9</sup> If I tell myself, “I won't talk about him anymore, I won't even mention his name,” then his message is like a fire trapped within me, burning me from the inside out. I'm getting tired of holding it in. I just can't win.

<sup>10</sup> I've heard many people gossiping: “He's the one who says, ‘terror is everywhere!’ He has to be reported! Report what he's doing!”‡ All my good friends are waiting for me to slip up. “Maybe he'll make a mistake so we can defeat him and get our revenge on him,” they say.

<sup>11</sup> But the Lord stands beside me like a powerful warrior. So those who are attacking me will fall. They won't win! Because they're not successful

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† **20:7** Jeremiah is expressing his    ‡ **20:10** The idea is that Jeremiah is creating panic and should be reported to the country's leaders.

they will be totally disgraced. Their shame won't ever be forgotten.

<sup>12</sup> Lord Almighty, you know without question who is living right. You examine people's thoughts and feelings. So let me see your punishment fall on them, because I've trusted you to judge my case.

<sup>13</sup> Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For he saves the poor from the power of the wicked.

<sup>14</sup> May the day I was born be cursed! May the day my mother gave birth to me never be blessed! <sup>15</sup> May the man be cursed who brought my father the news that made him really happy, saying, "You have a son." <sup>16</sup> May that man be like the towns that the Lord destroyed without mercy. May he hear shouts of alarm in the morning and war-cries at noon, <sup>17</sup> because he should have killed me in the womb so that my mother would have been my grave, remaining pregnant forever. <sup>18</sup> Why was I born only to see trouble and sadness, and to end my life in shame?

## 21

<sup>1</sup> This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent Pashhur, son of Malchijah, and the priest Zephaniah, son of Maaseiah to talk with him. They said, <sup>2</sup> "Please speak with Lord on our behalf because Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is attacking us. Perhaps the Lord will do some miracle for us like all those miracles he used to do, so that Nebuchadnezzar will retreat from us."

<sup>3</sup> But Jeremiah replied, “Tell Zedekiah this:  
<sup>4</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I'm going to turn the weapons you're holding against you, the weapons you're using to fight the king of Babylon and the Babylonian army outside the wall besieging you. I'm going to bring them right into the center of this city. <sup>5</sup> I myself will fight against you with all my power and might, with the full force of my furious anger. <sup>6</sup> I will kill those living in this city, human beings and animals. They will die from a terrible plague.

<sup>7</sup> After that, declares the Lord, I'm going to hand you over, Zedekiah king of Judah, as well as your officers and the people who are left in this city after the plague and war and famine, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to your enemies who want you dead. He will attack you; he won't spare you or show you any pity or mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Tell the people this as well: This is what the Lord says: Look, I'm placing before you the path of life and the path of death. <sup>9</sup> If you stay in this city you'll die either by sword and famine and plague, but if you leave and surrender to the Babylonians who are besieging you, you will live. In fact it will be like gaining your life as plunder from a war. <sup>10</sup> For I am determined to bring disaster on this city, and not blessings, declares the Lord. It will be handed over to the king of Babylon, who will destroy it with fire.

<sup>11</sup> In addition tell the royal family of the king of Judah to listen to the Lord's message:  
<sup>12</sup> Descendants of David, this is what the Lord

says: Make sure you judge fairly every day. Protect those who are being unjustly treated from those corrupt people, otherwise because of their evil actions my anger will blaze out like fire that can't be put out. <sup>13</sup> Watch out, because I'm going to fight against you people who live above the valley on top of a flat rock,\* declares the Lord. You say, 'Who can attack us? Who can break down our defenses?' <sup>14</sup> I'm going to punish you as you deserve for what you've done, declares the Lord. I will set your forest† on fire and it will burn up everything around you."

## 22

<sup>1</sup> This is what the Lord says: Go to the palace of the king of Judah and give this message. <sup>2</sup> Tell them: Listen to what the Lord has to say to you, king of Judah, sitting on the throne of David, you and your officials and the people here with you. <sup>3</sup> This is what the Lord says: Do what is fair and right. Protect those who are being unjustly treated by corrupt people. Don't do anything wrong to foreigners, orphans, or the widows. Don't use violence against them. Don't kill innocent people.

<sup>4</sup> If you will honestly do what I tell you, then kings who sit on David's throne will ride on chariots and horses with their officials through

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\* **21:13** Since this message was addressed to the royal family of Judah this reference is taken to refer to the royal fortresses of the City of David above Jerusalem. † **21:14** Solomon's palace was referred to as the "Palace of the Forest of Lebanon." 1 Kings 7:2; 1 Kings 10:21.

the gates of this palace. They'll be accompanied by the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> But if you refuse to obey what I say, then I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this palace will be turned into rubble.

<sup>6</sup> This is what the Lord says about the royal family of the king of Judah: You are as dear to me as the forests on Gilead and on the mountains of Lebanon. But I will turn you into a desert, into towns where no one lives. <sup>7</sup> I will choose men to come and destroy you, each with their own ax. They will chop down your fine cedars\* and throw them in the fire.

<sup>8</sup> Foreigners from many nations will pass by this city and ask each another, "Why has the Lord done such terrible things to this great city?"

<sup>9</sup> People will answer, "Because they broke the agreement of the Lord their God. They went and worshiped other gods."

<sup>10</sup> Don't weep over the king that died. Don't mourn for him. Instead weep for the king who is exiled, who will never return, who will never see his homeland again.

<sup>11</sup> This is what the Lord says about Jehoahaz† of Josiah, king of Judah. He succeeded his father Josiah but was taken away. He will never return.

<sup>12</sup> He will die in exile; he will never see this country again.

<sup>13</sup> Trouble is coming to Jehoiakim‡ because he mistreats others in building his palace, by

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\* **22:7** The palace was made of many large cedars. See 21:14.

† **22:11** Here called "Shallum." ‡ **22:13** Jehoiakim is not actually mentioned by name until verse 18.

dealing unfairly with those constructing the upper floors. He makes his own people work for nothing—he doesn't pay them any wages.

<sup>14</sup> He says to himself, "I'm going to build myself a great palace, with large upper rooms." He has windows inserted, puts in cedar panels, and paints it bright red with vermilion.

<sup>15</sup> Does it make you a king just because you have more cedar than anyone else? Your father had food and drink, didn't he? He ruled fairly and honestly, and he had a good life because of this. <sup>16</sup> He defended the poor and those in need, and so things went well. Isn't this what knowing me really means? declares the Lord.

<sup>17</sup> But all you're looking for, all you think about, is getting whatever you want, however dishonestly. You kill the innocent, you violently mistreat and exploit your people.

<sup>18</sup> So this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah:

They won't mourn for him, saying: "How sad, my brother! How sad my sister!"

They won't mourn for him, saying: "How sad, my lord! How sad, his majesty!"

<sup>19</sup> His burial will be that of a donkey. He'll be dragged off and thrown away outside the gates of Jerusalem.

<sup>20</sup> Go to Lebanon and cry for help! Shout in Bashan! Scream from Abarim! For all your



lovers have been destroyed. § 21 I warned you when you thought you were safe and sound. But you replied, “I’m not going to listen!” That’s been your attitude since you were young—you never did what I told you.

22 The wind will blow away all your “shepherds,”\* and your lovers will go into exile. Then you will be shamed and disgraced because of all the evil things you’ve done.

23 You who live in “Lebanon” in your cedar nest, † how much you’re going to groan when agonizing pains hit you like a woman in labor.

24 The Lord said to Jehoiachin, ‡ son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah: As I live, declares the Lord, even if you were a signet ring on a finger of my right hand, I would pull you off. 25 I’m going to hand you over to those who terrify you and who want to kill you, to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and the Babylonians. 26 I’m going to throw you out—you and the mother who gave birth to you—sending you to another country. Neither of you were born there, but both of you will die there. 27 You won’t ever return to the country you love so much.

28 Who is this man Jehoiachin? A broken pot that’s been thrown away, something nobody

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§ 22:20 All the places mentioned are mountains, so the image is of a call being shouted out from there. The lovers would most likely refer to those nations with which an alliance had been made. \* 22:22 “Shepherds”: a reference to the leaders of the nation. † 22:23 Another reference to Solomon’s cedar palace. ‡ 22:24 Here called “Coniah.” Also verse 28.

wants? Why has he and his children been thrown out, exiled in an unfamiliar country?

<sup>29</sup> My country, my country, my country! Listen to what the Lord has to say!

<sup>30</sup> This is what the Lord says: Put this man down as having no children. He's a man who won't ever be successful in his whole life. None of his children will ever be successful either. None of them will sit on David's throne or be king in Judah.

## 23

<sup>1</sup> What trouble is coming to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! declares the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about the shepherds who were meant to look after my people: You have scattered my flock. You have chased them away You didn't take care of them, so now I will take care of you for all the evil you've done, declares the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> I myself will gather what's left of my flock from all the countries where I exiled them, and I will bring them back to their pasture, where they will increase in number. <sup>4</sup> I will put shepherds in charge of them who will take care of them, and they won't be afraid or discouraged anymore, and none of them will be missing, declares the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Look, the time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will choose a descendant of David who does what is right. As king he will rule with wisdom and do what is just and right throughout the country. <sup>6</sup> When he is king, Judah will be

saved, and Israel will live in safety. This is the name he will be called: The Lord Who Makes Us Right.

<sup>7</sup> Look, the time is coming, declares the Lord, when people won't say anymore, "On the Lord's life, who led the Israelites out of Egypt." <sup>8</sup> Instead they'll say, "On the Lord's life, who led the Israelites back from the northern country and all the other countries where he had exiled them." Then they'll live in their own country.

<sup>9</sup> When it comes to the prophets: I'm really disturbed—I'm shaking inside! I stagger like a drunk, like someone who's had too much wine, because of what the Lord is like, because of his holy words.\* <sup>10</sup> For the country is full of people committing adultery so it's under a curse. The land mourns and the desert pastures have dried up. The people live evil lives, using their energy to do wrong. <sup>11</sup> Both prophets and priests show no respect for me. I see wickedness even in my Temple, declares the Lord. <sup>12</sup> That's why their path will become slippery; they will be chased away in the dark and fall down. I'm going to bring disaster on them at the time when they're punished, declares the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> I saw the prophets of Samaria doing something really offensive: They prophesied in the name of Baal and led my people Israel to sin.

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\* **23:9** Jeremiah is alarmed at the contrast between what he knows of the Lord's nature and the degraded state of the nation—and what this means in terms of the coming disaster.

<sup>14</sup> But now I see the prophets of Jerusalem doing something even more disgusting: They commit adultery and their lives are a lie. They support the wicked, so no one stops sinning. To me they're all like Sodom; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.

<sup>15</sup> So this is what the Lord Almighty says about the prophets: I will give them wormwood to eat and poisoned water to drink, because evil has spread across the country from the prophets of Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: Don't pay attention to what these prophets say when they prophesy to you. They're fooling you with visions they make up in their own minds. They're not from me. <sup>17</sup> They keep on telling people who don't respect me, "The Lord says that you'll live in peace," and to everyone following their own stubborn attitude, "Nothing bad is going to happen to you."

<sup>18</sup> But who of them has attended the Lord's council to hear and understand what he's saying? Who has paid attention to his instructions and followed them? <sup>19</sup> Watch out! The Lord has sent out a furious storm, a tornado swirling around the heads of the wicked. <sup>20</sup> The Lord's anger won't fade until he's finished doing everything he wants. Only then will you really understand.

<sup>21</sup> I didn't send these prophets, but they run to deliver their messages. I didn't tell them to say anything, but they still go on prophesying. <sup>22</sup> Now if they had attended my council, they would have delivered my instructions to my

people and brought them back from their evil way of life, from their evil actions.

<sup>23</sup> Am I only a local God and not a God who operates widely? asks the Lord. <sup>24</sup> Can people hide in secret places where I can't see them? asks the Lord. Don't I operate everywhere in heaven and on earth? asks the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> I've listened to the prophets who prophesy lies in my name. They say, "I've had a dream! I've had a dream!" <sup>26</sup> How long will this continue? How long will these prophets go on prophesying these lies which are just the product of their own deluded minds? <sup>27</sup> They think the dreams that they repeat to one another will lead my people to forget me, just like their forefathers forgot me by worshiping Baal.

<sup>28</sup> A prophet who has a dream should say it's just a dream, but anyone I've spoken to should deliver my message faithfully. What is straw in comparison to grain? asks the Lord. <sup>29</sup> Doesn't my word burn like fire? asks the Lord. Isn't it like a hammer smashing a rock?

<sup>30</sup> Pay attention to this, declares the Lord. I'm opposed to those prophets who steal words from one another and then say it's a message from me.

<sup>31</sup> Pay attention to this declares the Lord. I'm opposed to those prophets who make up their own stories<sup>†</sup> and then announce, "This is what the Lord says."

<sup>32</sup> Pay attention to this declares the Lord, I'm opposed to those who prophesy fictional dreams.

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<sup>†</sup> **23:31** "Make up their own stories": literally, "take their own tongues."

They tell them in order to lead my people into sin with their wild lies. I didn't send them or give them any instructions, and they don't do anybody any good, declares the Lord.

<sup>33</sup> So when a prophet or priest or anyone else comes and asks you, "What is 'the burden of the Lord?'" <sup>‡</sup> tell them, I'm not giving you a burden. I'm giving up on you, declares the Lord.

<sup>34</sup> If a prophet or priest or anyone else claims, "This is the burden of the Lord," I will punish that person and their family.

<sup>35</sup> This is what everybody should say to their friends and relatives: "What answer has the Lord given?" or, "What has the Lord said?"

<sup>36</sup> Don't talk about "the burden of the Lord" anymore, because everybody has different ideas about this "burden," perverting the words of the living God, the Lord Almighty, our God.

<sup>37</sup> This is what you are to say ask any prophet: "What message has the Lord given you?" and "What has the Lord told you?"

<sup>38</sup> If they say, "This is the burden of the Lord," then this is the Lord's response: Because you said, "This is the burden of the Lord," and I warned you not to, <sup>39</sup> now I'm going to pick you up like a burden and throw you away, you and the city that I gave to you and your forefathers.

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<sup>‡</sup> **23:33** "The burden of the Lord" in the sense of some requirement that the Lord is imposing on the people. Clearly the people saw the various laws and regulations as "burdens" and related to the Lord as this legalistic "burden-giver." Though they lived evil lives it seems they thought that if they observed such "burdens," including new ones, then the Lord would be satisfied.

40 I will disgrace you forever; you shame will never be forgotten.

## 24

<sup>1</sup> The Lord showed me in vision two baskets of figs placed in front of the Lord's Temple. This happened after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had taken to Babylon Jehoiachin,\* son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, as well as the leaders of Judah, and the craftsmen and metal-workers from Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> One basket was full of very good figs, like those that ripen early, but the other basket only had very bad figs, so bad they couldn't be eaten.

<sup>3</sup> "Jeremiah," the Lord asked, "what can you see?"

"I see figs!" I replied. "The good figs look very good, but the bad figs look very bad, so bad they can't be eaten."

<sup>4</sup> Then a message from the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: The good figs represent to me the exiles from Judah, those I have sent away from here to the country of Babylonia. <sup>6</sup> I will watch over them and I will bring them back to this country. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. <sup>7</sup> I will give them the desire to know me, to know that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will come back completely committed to me.

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\* **24:1** Here called "Jeconiah."

<sup>8</sup> But the bad figs, so bad they cannot be eaten, says the Lord, represent the way I will deal with Zedekiah, king of Judah, his officials, and those who are left of Jerusalem, as well as those remaining in this country and those living in Egypt. <sup>9</sup> I'm going to make an example of them that will horrify and offend everyone on earth. They will be disgraced, mocked, ridiculed, and cursed everywhere I've exiled them. <sup>10</sup> I'm going to attack them with war and famine and plague, until they're completely wiped out from the country that I gave to them and their forefathers.

## 25

<sup>1</sup> This is the message that came to Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It concerned all the people of Judah. <sup>2</sup> So the prophet Jeremiah went and spoke to all the people of Judah and all of the people living in Jerusalem, telling them:

<sup>3</sup> From the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah until now, twenty-three years in total, messages from the Lord have come to me, and I have told you what he said time and again, but you have not listened.

<sup>4</sup> Even though the Lord has sent all his servants the prophets to you time and again, you don't bother to listen or pay any attention.

<sup>5</sup> The consistent message has been: Give up your evil ways and the evil things you're doing so you can live in the country that the Lord has given to you and your forefathers forever. <sup>6</sup> Don't



follow other gods and worship them, and don't anger me by making idols.\* Then I won't do anything to hurt you.

<sup>7</sup> But you've hurt yourselves by not listening to me, declares the Lord, because you angered me by making idols. <sup>8</sup> So this is what the Lord Almighty says: Because you have not obeyed what I told you, <sup>9</sup> watch as I summon all the people of the north, declares the Lord. I'm going to send for my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to attack this country and the people who live here, and all the surrounding nations. I will set them apart for destruction.† I'm going to totally destroy you, and people will be horrified at what's happened to you and will mock you.

<sup>10</sup> I will also put a stop to the cheerful sounds of celebration and the happy voices of the bride and bridegroom. No noise will come from millstones being used; no lamps will be lit. <sup>11</sup> This whole country will become an empty wasteland, and Judah and these other nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

<sup>12</sup> However, when these seventy years are over, I'm going to punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the country of Babylonia, for their sin, declares the Lord. I will completely destroy them.

<sup>13</sup> I will bring down on that country everything I threatened to do, everything that's written in

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\* **25:6** "By making idols:" literally, "by the works of your hands." † **25:9** A term used for an action that dedicated something to the Lord in terms of destroying it. See for example Joshua 6:17.

this book which Jeremiah prophesied against all the different nations. <sup>14</sup> Many nations and powerful kings will make slaves of them, the Babylonians, and I will pay them back for the evil they've done.

<sup>15</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, told me: Take this cup I'm handing to you. It contains the wine of my anger. You are to make all the nations I send you to drink from it. <sup>16</sup> They will drink and stumble around and go mad because of the war brought by the armies I'm sending to attack them.‡

<sup>17</sup> I took the cup the Lord handed to me and made all the nations he sent me to drink from it: <sup>18</sup> To Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, destroying them so that people were horrified at what happened to them and mocked them and cursed them (and they are still like this today); <sup>19</sup> to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and his officials, leaders, all his people <sup>20</sup> and all the foreigners living there; to all the kings of the country of Uz; to all the kings of the Philistines: Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and what's left of Ashdod; <sup>21</sup> to Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites; <sup>22</sup> to all the kings of Tyre and Sidon; to the kings of the Mediterranean sea coast; <sup>23</sup> to Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all those who trim their hair on the sides of their heads; <sup>24</sup> to all the kings of Arabia; and to all the kings of the different tribes living in the desert; <sup>25</sup> to all the kings of Zimri, Elam, and Media; <sup>26</sup> to all the kings of

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‡ **25:16** Literally, "because of the sword which I am sending among them."

the north; in fact to all the kingdoms on earth whether close or far away, one after another. After all of them, the king of Babylon<sup>§</sup> will drink it too.

<sup>27</sup> Tell them this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink, make yourselves drunk, and vomit. Because of the war you'll be killed, falling down never to get up again.

<sup>28</sup> If they should refuse to take the cup and drink from it, tell them that this is what the Lord Almighty says: You can't avoid drinking it—you have to! <sup>29</sup> Can't you see that I'm about to bring disaster down on my own city, so do you really think you wouldn't be punished as well? You won't go unpunished, for I am bringing war to everyone on earth, declares the Lord Almighty. <sup>30</sup> Give this whole message as a prophecy against them. Tell them:

The Lord will thunder from high above. He will thunder loudly from the holy place where he lives. He will give a great roar against the sheepfolds.\* He will give a loud shout like people treading the grapes, frightening everyone who lives on earth. <sup>31</sup> The sound will reach everywhere on the earth because the Lord is accusing the nations. He is judging everyone, executing the wicked, declares the Lord.

<sup>32</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: Watch out! Disaster is falling on one nation after another; an immense storm is building up in the

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§ 25:26 "Babylon": literally, "Sheshach", a code name for Babylon. \* 25:30 "Sheepfolds": or "shepherd's homes." Also verse 37.

far distance. <sup>33</sup> Those killed by the Lord at that time will cover the earth from one end to the other. No one will mourn them, or collect them, or bury them. They will be like piles of manure lying on the ground.

<sup>34</sup> Cry out and weep, you shepherds! Roll around on the ground mourning, you leaders of the flock. The time for you to be killed has come; you will fall, smashed like the finest pottery. <sup>35</sup> The shepherds won't be able to run away; the leaders of the flock won't escape. <sup>36</sup> Listen to the cries of the shepherds, the weeping of the leaders of the flock, for the Lord is destroying their pasturelands. <sup>37</sup> The peaceful sheepfolds have been ruined because of the Lord's fierce anger. <sup>38</sup> The Lord has left his den like a lion, because their country has been devastated by the invading armies, and because of the Lord's fierce anger.

## 26

<sup>1</sup> This message came from the Lord at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah king of Judah, <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord says: Go and stand in the Temple courtyard and deliver the whole message I have ordered you to give to everyone who comes from all the towns of Judah to worship there. Don't leave out a single word. <sup>3</sup> Maybe they'll they will listen, and each of them will give up their evil ways so that I won't have to carry out the disaster I'm planning to bring down on them because of the evil things they do.

<sup>4</sup> Tell them that this is what the Lord says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have given you, <sup>5</sup> and if you don't listen to the messages of my servants the prophets—I've sent them to you time and again, but you refused to listen— <sup>6</sup> then I will destroy this Temple like I did Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse word used by everyone on earth.

<sup>7</sup> The priests and prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah deliver this message in the Lord's Temple. <sup>8</sup> As soon as he had finished telling everyone all that the Lord had ordered him to say, the priests and prophets and all the people grabbed him, shouting, "You'll die for this! <sup>9</sup> How dare you claim to speak in the Lord's name here in the Temple and declare that it will be destroyed like Shiloh, and that this city will be left empty and abandoned?" Everyone crowded around Jeremiah threatening him in the Lord's Temple.

<sup>10</sup> When the leaders of Judah heard what happened they came from the king's palace to the Lord's Temple and sat at the entrance of the New Gate of the Temple to judge the case.

<sup>11</sup> The priests and prophets complained to the leaders and all the people, "This man is deserves the death penalty because he has committed treason\* by prophesying against this city. You heard it yourselves!"

<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah addressed all the leaders and all the people, saying, "The Lord sent me to deliver

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\* **26:11** "Committed treason": supplied for clarity.

every word of this prophecy against this Temple as you've heard. <sup>13</sup> So change your ways and do what's right, and do what Lord your God tells you, so that he won't have to carry out the disaster he has announced he will bring down on you. <sup>14</sup> As far as I'm concerned, I'm in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. <sup>15</sup> But be careful, because you need to be aware that if you kill me, you will make yourselves, this city, and everyone who lives here guilty of murder, because it's true that the Lord sent me to tell you everything he said."

<sup>16</sup> Then the leaders and all the people told the priests and prophets, "This man doesn't deserve the death penalty because he was speaking on behalf of the Lord our God."

<sup>17</sup> Some of the country's elders stood up and addressed everyone gathered there. <sup>18</sup> "Micah of Moresheth prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. He told all the people of Judah that this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Zion will become like a plowed field; Jerusalem will end up a pile of rubble; and the Temple mount will be overgrown with trees.'<sup>†</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Did Hezekiah king of Judah or anyone else in the country have him killed? Didn't Hezekiah respect the Lord and plead with him? Didn't the Lord change his mind about the disaster he had announced against them? But we are about to bring a great disaster on ourselves!"

<sup>20</sup> At around that time there was another man prophesying in the name of the Lord,

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<sup>†</sup> **26:18** See Micah 3:12.

Uriah, son of Shemaiah, from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against Jerusalem and against the country just as Jeremiah did. <sup>21</sup> King Jehoiakim and all his military officers and officials heard what he was saying, and the king wanted to have him executed. But when Uriah found out about it, he was frightened and ran away to Egypt.

<sup>22</sup> But King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan, son of Achbor, along with some others. <sup>23</sup> They brought Uriah back from Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim. The king killed him with a sword and had his body thrown into the public graveyard. <sup>24</sup> However, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, took Jeremiah's side so he was not handed over to the people to be killed.

## 27

<sup>1</sup> This message came to Jeremiah from the Lord at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah,\* son of Josiah, king of Judah. <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord told me: Make for yourself a harness and a yoke and strap it on your neck <sup>3</sup> Send a message to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon through the ambassadors who have come to Jerusalem to see Zedekiah king of Judah.

<sup>4</sup> Give them this order from the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, to convey to their masters: <sup>5</sup> It was by my strength and creative power that I made the earth and the human beings

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\* **27:1** Most Hebrew manuscripts have the name "Jehoiakim" instead of Zedekiah, but this does not fit with the rest of the chapter (Zedekiah is clearly identified in verses 3 and 12).

and animals that live there, and I give it to those who are right in my sight. <sup>6</sup> Now I have placed my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in charge of all these countries. I have even given him control over the wild animals. <sup>7</sup> All nations will serve him and his son and grandson, until the time that his own land comes under the control of other nations and powerful kings. <sup>8</sup> Any nation or kingdom that doesn't serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and doesn't submit to him<sup>†</sup> I will punish that nation by war and famine and plague, declares the Lord, until I let Nebuchadnezzar destroy it completely.

<sup>9</sup> Don't you listen to your prophets, your fortune-tellers, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums, or your magicians when they tell you, "You won't serve the king of Babylon." <sup>10</sup> They're prophesying a lie to you that will lead to your removal from your country. I will expel you and you will die. <sup>11</sup> But a nation that submits to the king of Babylon and serves him, I will leave in its own land, to cultivate it and live in it, declares the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> I gave the same message to Zedekiah king of Judah: Submit to the king of Babylon; serve him and his people, and live! <sup>13</sup> Why should you and your people die by war and famine and plague, as the Lord has said he would bring against any nation that does not serve the king of Babylon? <sup>14</sup> Don't listen to messages from prophets who say, "You won't serve the king of Babylon," for

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<sup>†</sup> **27:8** "Submit to him": literally, "place its neck under his yoke." Also verse 11.



they are prophesying a lie to you. <sup>15</sup> I didn't send them, declares the Lord, and yet they are giving false prophecies in my name. So I will expel you and you will die—you and the prophets who prophesy to you.

<sup>16</sup> Then I told the priests and all the people, This is what the Lord says: Don't listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, "Look! The objects from the Lord's Temple will shortly be returned from Babylon." They are prophesying a lie to you. <sup>17</sup> Don't listen to them. Serve the king of Babylon and live! Why should this city be destroyed?

<sup>18</sup> If they are truly prophets and really have the word of the Lord with them, they should be pleading now with the Lord Almighty that what's left in the Lord's Temple, in the palace of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem, isn't taken to Babylon.

<sup>19</sup> This what the Lord Almighty says about the pillars, the bronze sea, the bases, and the rest of the objects that are left in Jerusalem: <sup>20</sup> everything Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon didn't take when he took Jehoiachin †son of Jehoiakim king of Judah into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, together with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>21</sup> Again, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says about the objects left in the Lord's Temple, in the palace of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: <sup>22</sup> They will be taken away to Babylon and will stay there

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† 27:20 Here given as Jeconiah.

until the time I see to them again, declares the Lord. Only then will I bring them back so they will be in Jerusalem again.

## 28

<sup>1</sup> This is what happened in the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the fifth month of that same year, the fourth year.

The prophet Hananiah, son of Azzur, who was from Gibeon, told me in the Lord's Temple in front of the priests and all the people: <sup>2</sup> "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. <sup>3</sup> Before two years have passed I'm going to bring back to Jerusalem all the Temple objects that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed and took to Babylon. <sup>4</sup> I will also bring back to Jerusalem Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with all the exiles from Judah who were taken to Babylon, declares the Lord, because I'm going to break the yoke of the king of Babylon."

<sup>5</sup> Then the prophet Jeremiah responded to the prophet Hananiah in front of the priests and all the people who were standing in the Lord's Temple. <sup>6</sup> "Amen!" said Jeremiah. "I wish the Lord would do just that! I wish the Lord would fulfill your prophetic words and bring back Temple objects and all the exiles back to Jerusalem from Babylon.

<sup>7</sup> But even so, pay attention to this message I'm going to tell you and everyone here. <sup>8</sup> The prophets of long ago who came before you and

me prophesied war, disaster, and disease against many countries and great kingdoms. <sup>9</sup> When it comes to a prophet who prophesies peace, see if their prophecies come true. Only that will prove they are really sent by the Lord.”

<sup>10</sup> Then the prophet Hananiah removed the yoke from the prophet Jeremiah's neck and broke it. <sup>11</sup> Hananiah announced in front of everyone, “This is what the Lord says: Just like this, before two years have passed I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations.” Jeremiah the prophet left. <sup>12</sup> However, right after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from his neck, a message of the Lord came to Jeremiah: <sup>13</sup> “Go and tell Hananiah that this is what the Lord says: You may have broken a wooden yoke of wood, but you have replaced it with an iron yoke. <sup>14</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I have tied iron yokes on the necks of all these nations to force them to serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I have even given him control over the wild animals.”

<sup>15</sup> Then the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, “Listen to this, Hananiah! The Lord didn't send you, but you have convinced these people to believe in a lie. <sup>16</sup> So this is what the Lord says: I'm going to get rid of you from the earth. You will die this year because you have promoted rebellion against the Lord.”

<sup>17</sup> The prophet Hananiah died in the seventh month of that very year.

## 29

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah the prophet wrote this letter and sent it from Jerusalem to the elders who were left among the exiles, to the priests, the prophets, and everyone else who had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>2</sup> This was after King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metals-workers had been exiled from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Elasah, son of Shaphan, and Gemariah, son of Hilkiah, took the letter with them when Zedekiah king of Judah sent them to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. In the letter Jeremiah wrote:

<sup>4</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles who were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> Build yourselves houses there to live in. Plant gardens and grow food to eat. <sup>6</sup> Get married and have children. Arrange for your children to get married so they can have children too. Increase in number, don't decrease. <sup>7</sup> Help make the city where I've exiled you more prosperous. Pray to the Lord for it, since as it prospers, so will you.

<sup>8</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Don't be fooled by your prophets and fortune-tellers, and don't listen to any dreams they interpret for you. <sup>9</sup> They are prophesying lies to you in my name; I have not sent them, declares the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> This is what the Lord says: When the seventy years exile in Babylon are over, I will see to you and keep my promise to bring you back to

Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup> I know what I intend to do for you, declares the Lord. I plan good things for you and not bad. I'm going to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call for my help, you will come and pray to me, and I will answer you. <sup>13</sup> You will look for me and you will find me when you're completely committed to looking for me. <sup>14</sup> I will let you find me, declares the Lord. I will end your captivity, gathering you from all the nations and places where I scattered you, declares the Lord. I will bring you back home to the place from where I sent you into exile.

<sup>15</sup> But if you argue, "The Lord has provided prophets for us in Babylon," <sup>16</sup> this is what the Lord says about the king who sits on David's throne and everyone who's left in Jerusalem, your fellow citizens who weren't taken with you into exile. <sup>17</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: I'm going send war and famine and disease against them. I'll make them like rotten figs, so bad that they can't be eaten. <sup>18</sup> I will chase them down with war and famine and disease. I will make all the kingdoms of the earth horrified by them. They will become a curse word, totally ruined, people to be mocked and criticized among all the nations where I scatter them. <sup>19</sup> I'm going to do this because they haven't obeyed to my words, declares the Lord, which I sent to them time and again through my servants the prophets. You exiles haven't obeyed me either, declares the Lord.

<sup>20</sup> So listen to the word of the Lord, all you exiles I sent from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>21</sup> This

is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying lies to you in my name. I'm going to hand them over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will kill them right before your eyes. <sup>22</sup> Because of what happens to them, all the exiles of Judah in Babylon will curse others like this: "May the Lord treat you like Zedekiah and Ahab, burned alive by the king of Babylon!" <sup>23</sup> They did outrageous things in Israel—they committed adultery with their neighbor's wives and told lies in my name. I didn't tell them to say anything. I am the one who knows what they did, and I can witness to it, declares the Lord.

<sup>24</sup> Tell Shemaiah the Nehelamite <sup>25</sup> that this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: On your own authority you sent out letters to all the people of Jerusalem, to the priest Zephaniah, son of Maaseiah, and to all the priests, saying, <sup>26</sup> "Zephaniah,\* the Lord has chosen you as priest to replace Jehoiada, to be in charge of the Lord's Temple. In that capacity you are required to put in the stocks and neck irons any crazy person who claims to be a prophet. <sup>27</sup> So why haven't you not punished Jeremiah of Anathoth, who claims to be a prophet among you? <sup>28</sup> You should have done this because† he has sent a letter to us here in Babylon, stating, 'The exile will last a long time. So build yourselves houses there to live in. Plant gardens and grow food to eat.' "

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\* **29:26** Name supplied for clarity. † **29:28** "You should have done this because": supplied for clarity.

<sup>29</sup> However, Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet.

<sup>30</sup> Then the Lord told Jeremiah: <sup>31</sup> Send this message to all the exiles: This is what the Lord says about Shemaiah the Nehelamite. Since Shemaiah has prophesied to you, even though I didn't send him, and has convinced you to believe in a lie, <sup>32</sup> this is what the Lord says: I'm going to punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants. He won't have any family left among this people, and he won't experience the good things that I'm going to do for my people, declares the Lord, for he has promoted rebellion against the Lord.

## 30

<sup>1</sup> This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Write down in a book everything I've told you. <sup>3</sup> Look, the time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will bring back my people Israel and Judah from captivity, declares the Lord. I will bring them back to the country I gave to their forefathers, and they will own it again.

<sup>4</sup> This what the Lord said about Israel and Judah. <sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord says: Hear the cries of panic, cries of fear, not peace. <sup>6</sup> Think about it! Can men give birth? No. So why do I see every man holding his stomach with his hands like a woman in labor. Why is every face white as a sheet?

<sup>7</sup> What a terrible day it will be—a day like never before! This is the time of trouble for

Jacob's descendants, but they will be rescued from it. <sup>8</sup> On that day, declares the Lord Almighty, I will break the yoke from their necks and tear off their chains. Foreigners won't make them slaves anymore. <sup>9</sup> They will serve the Lord their God, and their king, David's descendant whom I will give them.

<sup>10</sup> As far as you're concerned, my servant Jacob, don't be afraid, declares the Lord, Israel, don't be discouraged. I promise to save you from your distant places of exile, your descendants from the countries where they're being held captive. The descendants of Jacob will go home to a quiet and comfortable life, free from any threats. <sup>11</sup> I am with you and I will save you, declares the Lord.

Even though I'm going to completely destroy all the nations where I scattered you, I won't completely destroy you. However, I will discipline you as you deserve, and you can be sure I won't leave you unpunished.

<sup>12</sup> This is what the Lord says: You have a wound that cannot be healed, you have a terrible injury. <sup>13</sup> There's no one to take care of your case, no cure for your sores, no healing for you. <sup>14</sup> All your lovers have forgotten about you; they don't bother looking for you anymore, because I have beaten you as if I were your enemy, the discipline of a cruel person, because of how wicked you are, because of your many sins.

<sup>15</sup> Why are you crying over your wound? Your pain can't be cured. I did this to you because of how wicked you are, because of your many



sins. <sup>16</sup> Even so, everyone who destroys you will be destroyed. All your enemies, every last one, will be sent into exile. Those who plundered you will be plundered, and all who robbed you will be robbed. <sup>17</sup> But I will give you back your health and heal your wounds, declares the Lord, because people say you've been abandoned and that no one cares about you, Zion.

<sup>18</sup> This is what the Lord says: I will bring Jacob's descendants back to their homes and have mercy on their families. The city will be rebuilt on top of its ruins, and the palace once again stand where it should. <sup>19</sup> People will be singing songs of thanks, the sounds of celebration. I will increase their number—they will not become less. I will honor them—they will not be treated as insignificant. <sup>20</sup> Their children will be looked after like they used to be. I will make their nation strong again, and punish anyone who attacks them. <sup>21</sup> Their leader will be from their own country, their ruler will be chosen from among them. I will invite him to come close to me, and he will do so, for would anyone dare to approach me without being asked? declares the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> You will be my people, and I will be your God.

<sup>23</sup> Watch out! The Lord has sent out a furious storm, a tornado swirling around the heads of the wicked. <sup>24</sup> The Lord's anger won't fade until he's finished doing everything he wants. Only then will you really understand.

## 31

<sup>1</sup> At that time, I will be the God of all Israel's families, and they will be my people, declares the Lord. <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord says: The Israelites who survive death by the sword were blessed by the Lord in the desert as they looked for peace and quiet.

<sup>3</sup> Long ago the Lord came and told us, My love for you will last forever. I hold you close to me with my trustworthy love. <sup>4</sup> I'm going to rebuild you, and it will happen. You will be rebuilt, Virgin Israel. You will pick up your tambourines again and run outside to dance with joy. <sup>5</sup> You will replant vineyards on Samaria's hills; those who plant and will enjoy the grapes.

<sup>6</sup> A day is coming when watchmen will call out from the hills of Ephraim, "Come on, let's go up to Zion, to worship the Lord our God!"

<sup>7</sup> This is what the Lord says: Sing happily for the descendants of Jacob; shout for the greatest of all nations! Let everybody know! Praise and call out, "Lord, save your people, those who are left of Israel!"

<sup>8</sup> Watch, because I will bring them back from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Everyone will return, even the blind and the lame, pregnant women, even mothers giving birth—a great gathering coming home, <sup>9</sup> They will come back with tears in their eyes, and they will be praying as I take them home. I will lead them beside streams of waters,

on level paths where they won't stumble. For I am Israel's Father; Ephraim\* is my firstborn.

<sup>10</sup> Listen, nations, to what the Lord has to say, and let others know about in faraway countries: The Lord who scattered Israel will gather them together and keep them safe, just like a shepherd looks after his flock. <sup>11</sup> The Lord has redeemed the descendants of Jacob and rescued them from their enemies who had defeated them. <sup>12</sup> They will return and celebrate with happy shouts on Mount Zion; their faces will beam over the Lord's wonderful gifts—the grain, new wine, and olive oil, and the young of their flocks and herds. Their life will be like a well-watered garden; and they won't ever be depressed again. <sup>13</sup> The girls will dance in celebration; young men and old people will join in too. I will turn their sorrow into joy, and I will comfort them and change their sadness into happiness. <sup>14</sup> I will give my priests everything they need and more, and my people will be more than satisfied with my goodness towards them, declares the Lord.

<sup>15</sup> This is what the Lord says: The sound of terrible weeping and mourning is heard in Ramah. It's Rachel crying for her children. They are dead, and she can't be comforted. <sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord says: Don't cry anymore, don't weep anymore, because you're going to be rewarded for what you've done, declares the

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\* **31:9** Ephraim was not literally the firstborn but is used as a wider description for Israel. More than birth order, firstborn refers more to the rights and privileges relating to this status.

Lord. Your children will return from the country of your enemies. <sup>17</sup> So you can have hope for the future, declares the Lord. Your children will return to their own country.

<sup>18</sup> Don't worry, I've heard Ephraim's groans, saying, "You disciplined me really hard as if I was a calf that hadn't been trained. Please bring me back, let me return, for you are the Lord my God. <sup>19</sup> When I came back to you I was sorry, and once I understood, I held my head in sadness.† I was ashamed and I blushed, embarrassed at what I'd done when I was young."

<sup>20</sup> But isn't Ephraim still my precious son, my lovely child? Even though I often have to scold him, I can't forget him. So I'm torn inside with longing, wanting to show how much I care about him! declares the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Put up markers on the road; make signposts for yourselves. You need to be sure you can find the highway, the road you traveled on. Come back, Virgin Israel, come back to your towns.

<sup>22</sup> How long are you going to waver in your decision, you unfaithful daughter? For the Lord has made something new happen here: a woman is going to protect a man.

<sup>23</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: When I bring them back home from exile, they will say again in the land of Judah and in its towns: "May the Lord bless you, holy mountain of Jerusalem, home of what is good and right. <sup>24</sup> The people of Judah and all its

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† **31:19** "I held my head in sadness": literally, "I struck my thigh."

towns will live together in the land, the farmers and those who move around with their flocks, <sup>25</sup> because I'm going to give rest to those who are tired and give strength to all those who are weak."

<sup>26</sup> At this I woke up and looked around. I'd had a very pleasant sleep.‡

<sup>27</sup> Look! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make the numbers of people and livestock grow in Israel and Judah. <sup>28</sup> I took care of them by uprooting them and tearing them down, by wiping them out and destroying them and bringing them disaster. Now I will take care of them by building them up and helping them grow, declares the Lord.

<sup>29</sup> At that time people won't repeat this proverb, "The fathers ate the unripe grapes, but their children got the sour taste." <sup>30</sup> No. Each person will die because of their own sins. If anyone eats unripe grapes, they will get the sour taste themselves.

<sup>31</sup> Look! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>32</sup> It won't be like the agreement that I made with their forefathers when I held their hands and led them out of Egypt. They broke that agreement, even though I was faithful like a husband to them, declares the Lord.

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‡ **31:26** It is unclear how this verse fits into the whole narrative. Some see it as Jeremiah's comment, others the reactions of those just mentioned.

<sup>33</sup> But this is the agreement I'm going to make with the people of Israel at that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws inside them and write them in their minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> No one will need to teach a neighbor or their brother, telling them, "You ought to know the Lord." For everyone will know me, from the smallest to the greatest. I will forgive them when they do wrong, and I will forget about their sins.

<sup>35</sup> This is what the Lord says, who provides the sun to give light during the day, who places in order the moon and stars to give light at night, who makes the sea rough so that its waves roar; his name is the Lord Almighty:

<sup>36</sup> Only if I allowed this order to fall apart, declares the Lord, would Israel's descendants stop being my people. <sup>37</sup> This is what the Lord says: Only if the heavens above could be measured, and the foundations of the earth below could be investigated, would I reject all of Israel's descendants because of everything they've done, declares the Lord.

<sup>38</sup> The time is coming, declares the Lord, when this city will be rebuilt for the Lord, all the way from the tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. <sup>39</sup> The builder's measuring line will again stretch out directly to Gareb Hill and then turn toward Goah. <sup>40</sup> The entire valley, where the dead are buried and the trash is dumped, and all the fields from the Kidron Valley as far as the Horse Gate to the east, will be holy to the Lord. Jerusalem will never again be torn down or destroyed.

## 32

<sup>1</sup> This is the Lord's message that came to Jeremiah in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah's reign, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. <sup>2</sup> This was when the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem. Jeremiah the prophet was imprisoned in the guard's courtyard, part of the king of Judah's palace.

<sup>3</sup> Zedekiah king of Judah had put him in prison, telling him: "Why do you have to prophesy like this? You say the Lord is saying, 'Look, I'm going to hand over this city to the king of Babylon, and he will capture it. <sup>4</sup> Zedekiah king of Judah won't escape from the Babylonians. He will be captured and taken to the king of Babylon to speak with him personally and see him face to face. <sup>5</sup> He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, where he'll remain until I deal with him, declares the Lord. You won't be successful if you fight against the Babylonians.' "

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah answered, "The Lord gave me a message, saying: <sup>7</sup> Your cousin Hanamel, son of Shallum, is coming to tell you, 'Why don't you buy my field in Anathoth because you have the right to redeem it and buy it?'

<sup>8</sup> Just as the Lord had said, my cousin Hanamel arrived to see me in the guard's courtyard and asked me, 'Please buy my field in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin because you have the right of

family ownership to redeem it.\* You should buy it for yourself.' " This convinced me that this was a message from the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> So I bought the field in Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel. I weighed out seventeen shekels of silver to pay him. <sup>10</sup> I signed the deed and sealed it, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver using the scales. <sup>11</sup> Then I took the deed of sale, both the sealed original containing the terms and conditions, and the unsealed copy, <sup>12</sup> and handed them to Baruch son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah. I did this in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, the witnesses who had signed the deed of sale, and all the people of Judah who were sitting there in the guard's courtyard.

<sup>13</sup> I gave Baruch these instructions in front of them, <sup>14</sup> "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Put these deeds of sale, the sealed original and the open copy, in a clay jar so they can be kept safe for a long time. <sup>15</sup> For this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: The time will come when once again houses, fields, and vineyards will be bought in this country."

<sup>16</sup> After I had given the deed of sale to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the Lord: <sup>17</sup> "Ah, Lord God! You created the heavens and the earth by your great strength and power. Nothing is too hard for you! <sup>18</sup> You give your trustworthy

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\* **32:8** In order to keep land ownership in the family, relatives had the right of "first refusal" when another family member was forced to sell their land. See Leviticus 25:25-28.



love to thousands, but you punish the sins of the fathers the consequences affect their children too., Great and powerful God whose name is the Lord Almighty, <sup>19</sup> you are the one who is supremely wise and who does incredible things. You watch what everyone does, and you reward them according to the way they live and what their actions deserve.

<sup>20</sup> You carried out signs and miracles in Egypt, and you still do so today, both here in Israel and among all people everywhere. As a result you gained a great reputation, and this is still true today. <sup>21</sup> You led your people Israel out of Egypt with signs and miracles, with your great power and strength that terrified people. <sup>22</sup> You gave them this land that you had promised to give their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.

<sup>23</sup> They came and took it over, but they didn't do what you said or follow your laws. They didn't do everything you ordered them to do, which is why you've brought all this disaster down on them. <sup>24</sup> Look at the siege ramps piled up against the city to capture it! Through war and famine and disease, the city will be taken by the Babylonians who are attacking it. You can see that everything you said would happen has happened.

<sup>25</sup> Yet, Lord God, you have told me, 'Buy yourself the field with silver in front of witnesses, even though the city has been handed over to the Babylonians!' "

<sup>26</sup> Then Lord gave Jeremiah this message:  
<sup>27</sup> Look! I am the Lord, the God of everyone. Is anything too hard for me to do?

<sup>28</sup> So this is what the Lord says: Listen! I'm going to hand over this city to the king of Babylon and the Babylonians, and they will capture it.  
<sup>29</sup> The Babylonians who are attacking the city are going to come and set fire to it. They will burn it down, including the houses belonging to the people who made me angry by burning incense to Baal on their rooftops, and by pouring out drink offerings in worship of other gods.

<sup>30</sup> From their earliest days all the people of Israel and of Judah have ever done has been evil in my sight. In fact all they've even done is to make me angry through their actions, declares the Lord. <sup>31</sup> This city has been such a source of anger and frustration from the time it was built right up till now. So I'm going to get rid of it, <sup>32</sup> because of all the evil things the people of Israel and Judah did that made me angry—their kings, and officials, their priests and prophets, all of those living in Judah and Jerusalem, everyone <sup>33</sup> They have turned their backs on me. They wouldn't even look at me. Even though I kept on trying to teach them, they refused to listen or accept instruction.

<sup>34</sup> They have put their disgusting idols in my Temple, making it unclean. <sup>35</sup> They have built pagan shrines to Baal in the Valley of Hinnom so they could sacrifice their sons and daughters by burning them in the fire. This is something I

never commanded. I never even thought of such a thing—doing something so awful and making the people of Judah guilty of sin.

<sup>36</sup> Now about this city. You are correctly saying, “It's going to be handed over to the king of Babylon through war and famine and disease.” However, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: <sup>37</sup> I promise to gather my people from all the lands where I exiled them because they made me so very angry. I will bring them back here and they will live in safety. <sup>38</sup> They will be my people, and I will be their God. <sup>39</sup> I will make sure they think the same way and act in harmony, so that they will always honor me so all will be good for them and their descendants.

<sup>40</sup> I will make an everlasting agreement with them: I'm never going to stop doing them good and I will help them to respect me so that they won't ever abandon me. <sup>41</sup> I will be delighted to treat them well, and I will commit myself with the whole of my being to helping them to grow as a nation in this land.

<sup>42</sup> This is what the Lord says: Just as certainly as I have brought this whole disaster down on my people, so I'm going to give to them all the good things I have promised. <sup>43</sup> Fields will once again be bought in this country that you're describing, saying, “It's been completely destroyed—no people or animals are left. It's been handed over to the Babylonians.” <sup>44</sup> People will buy fields with silver again, deeds will be signed, sealed, and witnessed. This will happen here in the land of Benjamin, in the areas

surrounding Jerusalem, and in all the towns of Judah—including the towns of the hill country, the foothills, and the Negev—because I will bring the people back from exile, declares the Lord.

## 33

<sup>1</sup> A second message came from the Lord to Jeremiah while he was still being held in the guard's courtyard of the guard.

<sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord says, the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who shaped it and set it in place, the Lord is his name: <sup>3</sup> Call out to me, and I will answer you, explaining to you amazing, hidden things about which you don't have any idea. <sup>4</sup> For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about Jerusalem's houses and the palaces of the kings of Judah that were demolished for materials to be used to defend against the siege ramps and the enemy attacks. <sup>5</sup> They come to fight the Babylonians but will only fill those houses with the dead bodies of those I'm going to kill in my furious anger. I have given up on this city because of all its wickedness.

<sup>6</sup> But even so, in the future I will restore and repair it, and I will heal its people and give them lasting peace and safety. <sup>7</sup> I will bring Judah and Israel back from exile and will make them as strong as before. <sup>8</sup> I will wash away all their sins that they committed against me, and I will forgive all their guilt from when they sinned in rebelling against me.

<sup>9</sup> Then this city will bring me a glorious reputation, celebrated and praised by all the

nations of the earth who get to hear of all the good things I do for it. They will tremble, amazed at how much good I have done for it, how I have made it so prosperous.

<sup>10</sup> This is what the Lord says: You call this place “a wasteland where there's no people or animals.” Well, here in the towns of Judah and in the empty streets of Jerusalem where no people or animals live, one day <sup>11</sup> the sounds of joy and celebration will be heard there again, the happy voices of bride and bridegroom, and the shouts of praise of those bringing thank offerings to the Lord's Temple, saying: “Thank the Lord Almighty! For the Lord is good; his trustworthy love lasts endures forever.” For I will bring the land back from its “captivity” too, says the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: In this wasteland where there's no people or animals, and in all its towns, once again there'll be pastures where shepherds can take their flocks.

<sup>13</sup> In all the towns, whether in the hill country, or the foothills, or the Negev, or the land of Benjamin or the towns around Jerusalem, or throughout the cities of Judah, flocks will once again be counted by their shepherds, says the Lord.

<sup>14</sup> Look! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will keep my promise to do good to the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>15</sup> At that time, right there and then, I will give you a good king from the line of David.\* He will do what is just and

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\* **33:15** Literally, “I will cause to sprout for David a righteous Branch.”

right throughout the country. <sup>16</sup> This is when Judah will be saved, and the people of Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name he will be called: The Lord Who Makes Us Right.

<sup>17</sup> This is what the Lord says: David will always have a descendant who will be king of Israel, <sup>18</sup> and the Levitical priests will always have a descendant to present burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sacrifices to me.

<sup>19</sup> A message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: <sup>20</sup> This is what the Lord says: If you were able to break my agreement with the day and with the night, so that they wouldn't come at the right time, <sup>21</sup> only then would my agreement be broken with David my servant and with the Levites who serve as my priests, so that David would not have a descendant to rule on his throne. <sup>22</sup> In the same way that the stars of heaven can't be counted, and the sand on the seashore can't be measured, that's how many times I will multiply the number of my servant David's descendants and the Levites who serve me.

<sup>23</sup> Another message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: <sup>24</sup> Have you heard what people are saying: "The Lord chose two families, but now he's rejected them"? So they look down on my people and don't consider them worthy of being called<sup>†</sup> a nation. <sup>25</sup> This is what the Lord says: Just as I can't break my agreement with the day and the night and the laws that regulate heaven

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<sup>†</sup> **33:24** "Worthy of being called" supplied for clarity.

and earth, <sup>26</sup> so I can't reject the descendants of Jacob and of my servant David, and I can't fail to make his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will bring them back from exile and I will be kind to them.

## 34

<sup>1</sup> This is the Lord's message that came to Jeremiah when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, all his army, along with troops from all the countries he ruled and other nations were attacking Jerusalem and all its nearby towns:

<sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Go and talk to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him that this is what the Lord says: Listen! I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he is going to burn it down. <sup>3</sup> You yourself won't escape being captured by him. You will certainly be taken prisoner and brought before him to speak with him personally and see him face to face. You will be taken to Babylon.

<sup>4</sup> Listen to what the Lord is telling you, Zedekiah king of Judah. This is what the Lord says about you: You won't be killed; <sup>5</sup> you will die in peace. You will have a proper funeral with incense burned for you as they did for your forefathers, the kings who ruled before you. They will weep for you, crying, "The king is dead." I myself am telling you this, declares the Lord.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah the prophet told Zedekiah king of Judah all this there in Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup> At this time

the king of Babylon's army was attacking the city and the Judean towns of Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities that had not yet been conquered in Judah.

<sup>8</sup> A message from the Lord came to Jeremiah after King Zedekiah had made a agreement with everyone in Jerusalem to announce a proclamation of freedom. <sup>9</sup> This meant that every slave owner should free their Hebrew slaves, both male and female. No one was to force their fellow citizens to remain slaves any longer. <sup>10</sup> All the officials and all the people who accepted this agreement did what they said. They freed their male and female slaves, not forcing them to remain slaves any longer. They obeyed and let them go free. <sup>11</sup> However, later on they changed their minds and took back the male and female slaves they'd freed, forcing them back into slavery.

<sup>12</sup> A message from the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, <sup>13</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I made a agreement with your forefathers when I led them out of Egypt, out of the prison-house of slavery, saying: <sup>14</sup> Every seventh year, each of you are to set free all fellow Hebrews who have sold themselves to you. They can serve you for six years, but then you must set them free. But your forefathers didn't pay attention and didn't obey what I told them.

<sup>15</sup> A little while ago you decided to do what's right, which made me happy. You all announced that you would free your slaves. You made a agreement before me in my Temple. <sup>16</sup> But now



you've changed your minds and dishonored me. Each of you took back the male and female slaves you'd set free to do whatever they wanted. You forced them to become your slaves again.

<sup>17</sup> So this is what the Lord says: You haven't obeyed me. You haven't announced freedom for your slaves, your own people. So now I announce "freedom" for you, declares the Lord: Freedom to be killed by war, by disease, and by famine! I will make all the kingdoms of the world horrified by you.

<sup>18</sup> They have broken my agreement, and have not kept the terms of the agreement they promised before me. So I'm going to cut them up just like the calf they cut in half to pass between its two pieces.\* <sup>19</sup> I will hand them over to their enemies who are trying to kill them. This includes the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests, and everyone else who passed between the pieces of the calf. <sup>20</sup> Their dead bodies will become food for birds of prey and wild animals. <sup>21</sup> I will hand over Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials to their enemies who are trying to kill them, to the army of the king of Babylon which had paused its attack on you.†

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\* **34:18** This refers to the way in which an agreement was made. See Genesis 15. † **34:21** The Babylonian army left Jerusalem temporarily to deal with an advancing Egyptian army. This had led the leaders of Jerusalem to believe that the danger had passed, and that the Egyptian army would help them. See Jeremiah 37.

<sup>22</sup> Listen! I will give the order, declares the Lord, and bring them back to Jerusalem. They will attack it, capture it, and burn it. I'm going to destroy the towns of Judah so nobody will live there.

## 35

<sup>1</sup> This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord during the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: <sup>2</sup> Go to where the Rechabites\* live. Invite them to come with you to one of the rooms in the Lord's Temple and offer them wine to drink.

<sup>3</sup> So I went to visit Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons—the whole Rechabite family. <sup>4</sup> Then I took them into the Lord's Temple, to a room used by the sons of Hanan, son of Igdaliah, a man of God. It was next to the one used by the officials, which was above the room of Maaseiah son of Shallum, who was the Temple doorkeeper. <sup>5</sup> I placed some jugs full of wine and some cups before the Rechabites and told them, "Have some wine to drink."

<sup>6</sup> "We don't drink wine," they said, "because our forefather Jonadab son of Rechab gave us these orders: 'You and your descendants must never drink wine. <sup>7</sup> Don't ever build houses or sow crops or plant vineyards. You're not to do this. Instead, you are to always live in tents so that you may have long lives as you move from place to place in the country.'

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\* **35:2** See 2 Kings 10:15-31; 1 Chronicles 2:55.

<sup>8</sup> We have done exactly what our forefather Jonadab son of Rechab told us. None of us have ever drunk wine, and that includes our wives and our sons and daughters as well as us. <sup>9</sup> We haven't built houses to live in, and we haven't had any vineyards or fields or grown any crops. <sup>10</sup> We've lived in tents and have obeyed our forefather Jonadab, following everything he ordered us to do.

<sup>11</sup> So when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the country we decided, 'Come on, let's go into Jerusalem to be safe from the armies of the Chaldeans,<sup>†</sup> Babylonians, and Arameans.' That's why we've stayed in Jerusalem."

<sup>12</sup> Then a message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: <sup>13</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem: Why don't you accept my instructions and obey what I tell you? the Lord asks. <sup>14</sup> The instructions of Jonadab son of Rechab have been followed. He ordered his descendants not to drink wine, and they have not drunk it to this day because they have obeyed their forefather's command. But I have told you what to do time and again, and yet you refuse to obey me!

<sup>15</sup> Time and again I've sent you so many of my servants the prophets to tell you: Everyone, stop your evil ways and do what's right! Don't

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<sup>†</sup> **35:11** "Chaldeans": this is usually translated "Babylonians," but Babylonians are also included here separately. The Chaldeans were part of Babylonia, coming from the south of the region.

go following other gods and worshiping them. Live in the land that I gave you and your fathers. But you haven't paid attention or obeyed me.

<sup>16</sup> These descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab have followed the command given to them by their forefather, but these people haven't obeyed me.

<sup>17</sup> So this is what the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Watch as I bring down on Judah and on all the people living in Jerusalem all the disasters I have threatened to do to them, because I have told them what to do but they haven't obeyed; I have appealed to them but they haven't responded.

<sup>18</sup> Then Jeremiah told the Rechabites: This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Because you have obeyed your forefather Jonadab's instructions and have followed his orders and have done everything he told you to do, <sup>19</sup> this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Jonadab son of Rechab will always have someone who will be in my presence serving me.

## 36

<sup>1</sup> This message from the Lord came to Jeremiah in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: <sup>2</sup> Get a scroll and write down everything I've told you condemning Israel, Judah, and all the other nations, from the time I first spoke to you during the reign of Josiah right up till now. <sup>3</sup> Maybe when the people of Judah hear about all the disasters I plan

to bring down on them, everyone will stop their evil ways. Then I will forgive their guilt and sin.

<sup>4</sup> So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah to come, and while Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote down on a scroll everything that the Lord had told Jeremiah. <sup>5</sup> Then Jeremiah gave Baruch these instructions: "I'm a prisoner here so I can't go into the Lord's Temple. <sup>6</sup> So you have to go to the Lord's Temple on a day when people are fasting, and read to them the Lord's messages from the scroll I dictated to you. Read them to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns. <sup>7</sup> Maybe they will come and ask the Lord for forgiveness, and all of them will stop their evil ways, for the Lord is threatening terrible anger against them."

<sup>8</sup> Baruch son of Neriah did exactly what Jeremiah the prophet had told him to do. He went and read the Lord's message from the scroll in the Temple.

<sup>9</sup> This is how it happened.\* A fast to honor the Lord was declared involving all the people of Jerusalem and everyone who had come there from the towns of Judah. This was in the ninth month of the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah. <sup>10</sup> Baruch read from the scroll what Jeremiah had dictated so that everyone could hear. He read it from the room of Gemariah son of Shaphan the scribe. This was in the upper Temple courtyard at the New Gate entrance.

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\* **36:9** Supplied for clarity.

<sup>11</sup> When Micaiah son of Gemariah, son of Shaphan, heard all the Lord's messages read from the scroll, <sup>12</sup> he went down to the royal secretary's room in the king's palace, where all the officials had gathered. Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Achbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the other officials were there. <sup>13</sup> Micaiah gave them a report of everything he'd heard Baruch read from the scroll to the people.

<sup>14</sup> The officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, son of Shelemiah, son of Cushi, to summon Baruch, telling him, "Bring the scroll that you read to the people, and come here." So Baruch went to see them taking the scroll with him.

<sup>15</sup> "Please sit down and read it to us," they said. So Baruch read it to them.

<sup>16</sup> After they'd heard everything, they were frightened and looked at each other. They said to Baruch, "We've got to tell the king about all this."

<sup>17</sup> Then they asked Baruch, "Now tell us, how did you come to write all this? Did Jeremiah dictate it to you?"

<sup>18</sup> "Yes, he dictated it," Baruch replied. "I wrote down in ink on the scroll everything he told me."

<sup>19</sup> The officials told Baruch, "You and Jeremiah are going to have to hide. Don't tell anyone where you are."

<sup>20</sup> Then the officials went to see the king in the courtyard. They had kept the scroll safe in

Elishama the secretary's room while they gave a full report to the king.

<sup>21</sup> The king sent Jehudi to fetch the scroll. He went and got it from Elishama the secretary's room. Then Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who were there standing next to him.

<sup>22</sup> It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in front of a fire in his winter quarters.

<sup>23</sup> Whenever Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, Jehoiakim would chop them off with a scribe's knife and toss them into the fire. Eventually the whole scroll was completely burned up.

<sup>24</sup> Despite hearing all these messages, the king and his attendants weren't frightened and didn't tear their clothes in remorse. <sup>25</sup> Even when Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah pleaded with the king not to burn the scroll, he refused to listen to them. <sup>26</sup> In fact the king ordered Jerahmeel, one of the princes,<sup>†</sup> as well as Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel, to go and arrest Baruch and Jeremiah. But the Lord hid them.

<sup>27</sup> After the king burned the scroll Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch, a message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: <sup>28</sup> Get another scroll and write everything out that was on the first scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah burned.

<sup>29</sup> Regarding Jehoiakim king of Judah announce that this is what the Lord says: You have

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<sup>†</sup> **36:26** "One of the princes": literally, "a son of the king," but Jehoiakim would have been too young to have had a grown son.

burned the scroll and asked, "Why did you write that the king of Babylon is going to come and destroy this country and kill all its people and animals?" <sup>30</sup> So this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He won't have anyone to succeed him as king, sitting on David's throne. His body will be thrown out to lie in the heat of the day and the cold of the night. <sup>31</sup> I'm going to punish him and his descendants and officials for their sins. I will bring down on them and on the people living in Jerusalem and Judah, all the disasters I warned them about but they refused to listen.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremiah got another scroll and gave it to Baruch. Jeremiah dictated everything that was in the scroll that Jehoiakim had burned in the fire and Baruch wrote it down. Even more messages of a similar kind were added.

## 37

<sup>1</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon replaced Jehoiachin\* son of Jehoiakim with Zedekiah son of Josiah as the ruling king of Judah. <sup>2</sup> But Zedekiah and his officers and everyone else in the country refused to obey what the Lord had said through Jeremiah the prophet.

<sup>3</sup> However, King Zedekiah sent Jehucal† son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, to Jeremiah the prophet with the message, "Please pray to the Lord our God for us!"

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\* **37:1** "Jehoiachin": here called "Coniah." † **37:3** Or "Jucal."  
Jeremiah 38:1.



<sup>4</sup> (At this time Jeremiah could come and go freely, because as yet they hadn't put him in prison.)

<sup>5</sup> Pharaoh's army was advancing from Egypt, and when the Babylonian army heard about it, they moved away from Jerusalem.

<sup>6</sup> Then a message from the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet: <sup>7</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, instructs you to tell the king of Judah, who sent you to ask me for help: Look! Pharaoh's army, which set out to help you, is going to return home to Egypt. <sup>8</sup> Then the Babylonians will return and attack Jerusalem. They will capture it and burn it down.

<sup>9</sup> This is what the Lord says: Don't fool yourselves by saying, "The Babylonians are gone for good," because they're not! <sup>10</sup> In fact, even if you were able to kill the whole Babylonian army attacking you, leaving only wounded men in their tents, they would still get up and burn this city down.

<sup>11</sup> When the Babylonian army moved away from Jerusalem because of the threat of Pharaoh's army, <sup>12</sup> Jeremiah was on his way out of Jerusalem to go to his home in the territory of Benjamin to claim his share of his family's property. <sup>13</sup> However, when he reached the Benjamin Gate, the guard captain, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, son of Hananiah, arrested him, saying, "You're defecting to the Babylonians!"

14 “That's not true,” Jeremiah replied. “I'm not defecting to the Babylonians!”

But Irijah refused to listen to him. He arrested Jeremiah and took him before the officers.‡  
15 The officers were furious with Jeremiah. They had him beaten and locked up in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which had been turned into a prison. 16 Jeremiah was placed in a cell in the underground dungeon and was kept there for a long time.

17 Some while later King Zedekiah secretly sent for him and had him brought to the royal palace where he asked, “Is there a message from Lord for me?”

“Yes there is,” Jeremiah replied. “You are going to be handed over to the king of Babylon.”

18 Then Jeremiah asked King Zedekiah, “What wrong have I done to you or your servants or these people, for you to put me in prison?”

19 Where are your prophets now, the ones who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon won't come and attack you and this country?’

20 Now please listen to me, my lord the king, and respond positively to my request. Don't send me back to prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe, otherwise I'll die there.”

21 King Zedekiah gave the order for Jeremiah to be held in the guard's courtyard and be provided with a loaf of bread every day from a bakery until there was no bread left in the city. So Jeremiah stayed in the guard's courtyard.

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‡ 37:14 Probably the same officers mentioned in verse 2.

## 38

<sup>1</sup> Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal\* son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malchijah heard what Jeremiah was telling everyone: <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord says: Anyone who remains in this city will die from war and famine and disease, but anyone who goes over to the Babylonians will live. Their reward will be to save their lives. <sup>3</sup> This is what the Lord says: Be sure of this—Jerusalem will be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon. He is going to capture it.

<sup>4</sup> The officers told the king, “This man deserves to die because he’s demoralizing the defenders left in the city, and all the people too, by telling them this. This man isn’t trying to help these people, he’s only going to destroy them.”

<sup>5</sup> “Well, you can do whatever you want to him,” King Zedekiah replied. “I can’t stop you.” <sup>6</sup> So they took Jeremiah and put him in the cistern belonging to Malchiah, the king’s son, which was in the guard’s courtyard. They lowered Jeremiah down with ropes into the cistern. It didn’t have any water, only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud.

<sup>7</sup> Ebed-melech the Cushite,† a royal official in the king’s palace, found out that they had put Jeremiah in the cistern. The king was sitting at the Benjamin Gate,‡ <sup>8</sup> so Ebed-melech left the

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\* **38:1** Or “Jehucal.” Jeremiah 37:3. † **38:7** “Cush” is usually thought to refer to upper Egypt. “Ebed-melech” means “servant of the king.” ‡ **38:7** This probably means that the king was deciding legal cases.

palace and went to talk to the king <sup>9</sup> “My lord the king, all these terrible things these men have done to Jeremiah the prophet are evil. They've put him in the cistern, and he'll starve to death there because there's no more bread left in the city.”

<sup>10</sup> So the king gave the order to Ebed-melech the Cushite, “Take thirty men with you and go and pull Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.” <sup>11</sup> Ebed-melech took the men and went to the storehouse under the palace. He took some rags and old clothes from there and then went to the cistern where he lowered them with ropes to Jeremiah.

<sup>12</sup> Ebed-melech the Cushite called down to Jeremiah, “Put these rags and old clothes under your arms to protect you from the ropes.” Jeremiah did so, <sup>13</sup> and using the ropes they pulled him up and took him out of the cistern. Jeremiah stayed there in the guard's courtyard.

<sup>14</sup> Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and met him at the third Temple entrance. “I need to ask you something,” the king told Jeremiah. “You mustn't hide anything from me.”

<sup>15</sup> “If I tell you then you'll definitely have me killed,” Jeremiah replied. “Even if I were to give you advice, you wouldn't listen to me anyway.”

<sup>16</sup> King Zedekiah solemnly promised Jeremiah in private, “As the Lord lives, who gave us this life, I won't have you killed, and I won't hand you over to those who want to kill you.”

<sup>17</sup> Then Jeremiah told Zedekiah, “This is what the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you hand yourself over to the officers of the king of Babylon, then you’ll live. Jerusalem won’t be burned down, and you and your family will survive. <sup>18</sup> But if you don’t hand yourself over to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given to the Babylonians. They will burn it down, and you yourself won’t escape being captured.”

<sup>19</sup> But King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the those people of Judah who have gone over to the Babylonians, because the Babylonians might hand me over the them so they could abuse me.”

<sup>20</sup> “They won’t hand you over,” Jeremiah replied. “If you obey what the Lord says by doing what I tell you, then things will go well for you and you’ll live. <sup>21</sup> But if you refuse to hand yourself over, this is what the Lord has told me: <sup>22</sup> All the women who are left in the palace of the king of Judah will be led out and handed over to the officials of the king of Babylon Those women will say: ‘Those good friends of yours! You were taken in by them and conquered by them. Your feet got stuck in the mid, so they abandoned you.’ <sup>23</sup> All your wives and children will be handed over to the Chaldeans. And you yourself will not escape, for you will be captured by the king of Babylon, and Jerusalem will be burned down.”

<sup>24</sup> Zedekiah warned Jeremiah, “Nobody can find out about this conversation, otherwise you’ll

die. <sup>25</sup> If the officers find out that I've talked with you, and they come and ask you, 'Tell us what you and the king were talking about! Don't hide anything from us, or we'll kill you;' <sup>26</sup> then you are to tell them, 'I was asking the king to grant my request not to return me to the house of Jonathan to die there.' "

<sup>27</sup> When all the officers came to Jeremiah wanting to know, he repeated to them exactly what the king had told him to say. So they didn't ask him anything more because no one had heard what had been said. <sup>28</sup> Jeremiah remained there in the guard's courtyard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

## 39

<sup>1</sup> In the tenth month of the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his whole army arrived at Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> On the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, the city wall was broken through. <sup>3</sup> All the officials of the king of Babylon came in and took over the city, making their headquarters at the Middle Gate. They were Nergal-sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-sarsekim the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag,\* and all the other officials of the king of Babylon.

<sup>4</sup> When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the defenders saw them there, they ran away. They

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\* **39:3** "Rabsaris" and "Rabmag" are functions that are not clear. However, they clearly refer to high royal officials.

escaped from the city during the night through the king's garden, passing through the gate between the two walls, and took the road to the Arabah.† <sup>5</sup> But the Babylonian army chased after them and caught up with Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They captured him and brought him before Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he put him on trial and punished him. <sup>6</sup> The king of Babylon had Zedekiah's sons killed as Zedekiah watched, and he also executed all of Judah's leaders there in Riblah. <sup>7</sup> Then he had Zedekiah's eyes gouged out, and had him bound with bronze chains and taken away to Babylon. <sup>8</sup> The Babylonians burned down the king's palace and the people's houses, and they demolished Jerusalem's city walls.

<sup>9</sup> Then Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried off to Babylon the rest of the people who had stayed in the city, together with those who had deserted and gone over to him. <sup>10</sup> But he left behind in the land of Judah some of the poorest people who didn't have any property. He gave them vineyards and fields at that time.

<sup>11</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given orders to Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard regarding Jeremiah, saying, <sup>12</sup> "Go and get Jeremiah and watch out that nothing bad happens to him. Do whatever he wants." <sup>13</sup> So Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard, Nebushazban the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag, and all the army captains of the king of

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† **39:4** "The Arabah": the Jordan Valley.

Babylon <sup>14</sup> took Jeremiah from the guard's courtyard, and they handed him over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him home. Jeremiah stayed there with his own people.

<sup>15</sup> During the time that Jeremiah had been kept prisoner in the guard's courtyard, a message from the Lord had come to him: <sup>16</sup> "Go and tell Ebed-melech the Cushite that this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am about to keep my promise I made against this city—to harm it and not to help it—you'll see it for yourself when it happens. <sup>17</sup> But when that day comes I'm going to save you, declares the Lord. You won't be handed over to the people you're afraid of. <sup>18</sup> I promise to rescue you so that you're won't be killed. Your reward will be your life, because you trusted in me, declares the Lord."

## 40

<sup>1</sup> This is the Lord's message that came to Jeremiah after Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard had released him at Ramah. Nebuzaradan had discovered Jeremiah bound in chains along with all the prisoners from Jerusalem and Judah who were being taken into exile in Babylon.

<sup>2</sup> When the commander of the guard found Jeremiah and he told him, "The Lord your God announced that disaster would come to this place, <sup>3</sup> and now the Lord has made it happen—he has done just what he said he would. This happened to you people because you sinned



against the Lord and did not obey what he said. <sup>4</sup> But notice that now I'm removing the chains from your wrists and releasing you. If you want to come with me to Babylon then you can come, and I will look after you. But if you think it's a bad idea to come with me to Babylon, you don't have to go any farther. Look, you're free to go anywhere in the country. Go wherever is good for you—do what you think is right.”

<sup>5</sup> Since Jeremiah didn't answer right away, Nebuzaradan went on, “Go back to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan. He's been appointed as governor over Judah by the king of Babylon. You can stay with him with your people, or you can go anywhere you want.” The commander of the guard gave him a food allowance and some money and let him go. <sup>6</sup> So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and stayed with him with the people who were still left in the country.

<sup>7</sup> The Judean army commanders and their men who were still in field found out that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam as governor of the country and had put him in charge of the poorest people of the country—the men, women, and children who hadn't been exiled to Babylon. <sup>8</sup> So they along with their men came to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah\* son of the

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\* **40:8** Also spelled Jaazaniah. See 2 Kings 25:23.

Maacathite.

<sup>9</sup> Geladaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, made them a solemn promise, saying, "Don't worry about serving the Babylonians. Stay here in the country and serve the king of Babylon, and things will go well for you. <sup>10</sup> I myself will stay here in Mizpah to represent you to the Babylonians when they come to meet with us. You yourselves should get busy harvesting grapes and summer fruit and olive oil, storing them in jars, and living in the towns you have occupied."

<sup>11</sup> Those people of Judea who were living in Moab, Ammon, Edom, and all the other countries heard that the king of Babylon had left some people behind in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, as their governor. <sup>12</sup> So they all came back from the different places where they'd been scattered and went to Gedaliah at Mizpah in Judah. They were able to harvest a large quantity of grapes and summer fruit.

<sup>13</sup> Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the men in the field came to Gedaliah at Mizpah <sup>14</sup> and told him, "Do you know that Baalis king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to kill you?" But Gedaliah didn't believe them.

<sup>15</sup> Johanan went and talked privately to Gedaliah at Mizpah. "Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah," he told him. "No one will find out. Why should he be allowed to kill you? All the people of Judah who have joined you

would be scattered, so that even those who have survived here would be killed!”

<sup>16</sup> But Gedaliah said to Johanan, “Don't do it! What you're saying about Ishmael isn't true.”

## 41

<sup>1</sup> In the seventh month of the year, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, a member of the royal family and one of the king's chief officers, came with ten of his men to see Gedaliah at Mizpah. While they were eating to have a meal together, <sup>2</sup> suddenly Ishmael and his ten men got up and attacked Gedaliah, killing him—the one appointed by the king of Babylon as the country's governor. <sup>3</sup> Ishmael also killed all the other Judeans who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, along with the Babylonian soldiers there.

<sup>4</sup> The day after Gedaliah had been murdered and before anyone knew about it, <sup>5</sup> a group of eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. They had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes, and cut themselves.\* They were carrying grain offerings and frankincense for the Lord's Temple. <sup>6</sup> Ishmael came out to meet them from Mizpah, weeping as he went along. When Ishmael met the men, he said, “Come and see what's happened to Gedaliah son of Ahikam!”

<sup>7</sup> But when they arrived in town, Ishmael and his men killed most of† them and threw their bodies into a cistern. <sup>8</sup> But ten of them pleaded

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\* **41:5** All signs of extreme grief and mourning. † **41:7** “Most of”: supplied for clarity in light of the next verse.

with Ishmael, “Don't kill us! We've got some good things hidden in the fields—wheat, barley, olive oil, and honey.” So Ishmael didn't kill them along with the others.

<sup>9</sup> (The cistern where Ishmael had thrown all the bodies of the men he'd killed, including Gedaliah, was a large one that King Asa had dug because of the threat of attack by Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael filled it with bodies.)

<sup>10</sup> Then Ishmael took all the people left in Mizpah prisoner, including the daughters of the king, as well as everyone else living there. These were the people that Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard had put under the care of Gedaliah. Ishmael took them prisoner and left to go to the Ammonites.

<sup>11</sup> Johanan and all the army commanders of the armies with him found out about all of Ishmael's crimes. <sup>12</sup> So they assembled all their men and went to attack Ishmael. They caught up with him near the large pool in Gibeon.

<sup>13</sup> When Ishmael's prisoners saw Johanan and all the army commanders with him, they were happy. <sup>14</sup> All those that Ishmael had taken prisoner at Mizpah turned around and ran back to Johanan. <sup>15</sup> Ishmael and eight of his men managed to escape from Johanan and get away to the Ammonites.

<sup>16</sup> Then Johanan and all the army commanders with him took charge of the survivors from Mizpah he'd rescued from Ishmael in Gibeon—the soldiers, women, children, and court officials that Ishmael had taken prisoner after he'd killed

Gedaliah. <sup>17</sup> They set off for Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem and stayed there, before leaving for Egypt <sup>18</sup> to get away from the Babylonians. They were afraid of what the Babylonians would do because Ishmael had assassinated Gedaliah, the governor of the country appointed by the king of Babylon.

## 42

<sup>1</sup> Then all the army commanders, together with Johanan son of Kareah, Jezaniah\* son of Hoshaiah, and everyone from the least to the most important came to <sup>2</sup> Jeremiah the prophet and said, "Please listen to our request. <sup>3</sup> Pray to the Lord your God for all of us. As you can see there's only a few of us left compared to how many there were before. In your prayer please ask the Lord your God to tell where to go and what to do."

<sup>4</sup> "I'll do as you ask," Jeremiah replied. "I will definitely pray to the Lord your God as you've requested, and I'll tell you everything he says. I won't keep anything back from you."

<sup>5</sup> Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we don't do everything that the Lord your God tells you we should. <sup>6</sup> Good or bad, we will obey what the Lord our God says, the one we're asking you to speak to. That way everything will go well with us, because we will be obeying what the Lord our God says."

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\* **42:1** "Jezaniah": given as "Azariah" in 43:2.

<sup>7</sup> Ten days later a message from the Lord came to Jeremiah. <sup>8</sup> He summoned Johanan, all the army commanders, and everyone from the least to the most important.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah told them, This what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to those of who you sent to me to present your request: <sup>10</sup> If you will stay right here in this country, then I will build you up and I won't tear you down; I will plant you and I won't uproot you; because I'm very sad about the disaster I have brought down on you.

<sup>11</sup> I know you fear the king of Babylon, but you don't need to be afraid of him, declares the Lord. I am with you to save you and rescue you from him. <sup>12</sup> I will be merciful to you, so that he will be merciful to you and will let you stay in your own country.

<sup>13</sup> But if you say, "We won't stay here in this country," and by doing so disobey what the Lord your God says; <sup>14</sup> or if you say instead, "No, we're going to Egypt to live there, where we won't experience war or hear trumpets sounding or go hungry;" <sup>15</sup> then listen to what the Lord says, you survivors from Judah! This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: If you're absolutely determined to go to Egypt and live there, <sup>16</sup> then the war you're so frightened of will catch up with you there, and the famine you're so terrified of will chase after you into Egypt, and you will die there. <sup>17</sup> Everyone who decides to go to Egypt and live there will die by war and famine and disease. Not a single one will survive or escape the disaster I will bring down on them.

<sup>18</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: In the same way that my furious anger was poured out on the people living in Jerusalem, so will my anger be poured out on you if you go to Egypt. People will be horrified at what happens to you, and you will become a curse word, an insult, an expression of condemnation. You won't ever see your homeland again.

<sup>19</sup> “The Lord has told you, survivors from Judah, ‘Don't go to Egypt,’ ” Jeremiah concluded. “Be absolutely clear about this warning I'm giving you today! <sup>20</sup> You've made a big mistake that will cost you your lives by sending me to the Lord your God, asking, ‘Pray to the Lord our God for us, and let us know everything the Lord our God says and we'll do it.’

<sup>21</sup> I have told you today what he said, but you have not obeyed everything the Lord your God sent me to tell you. <sup>22</sup> So you should know that without question you're going to die by war and famine and disease in Egypt where you want to go and live.”

## 43

<sup>1</sup> After Jeremiah finished telling everyone all that the Lord their God had send him to say, <sup>2</sup> Azariah son of Hoshaiah, Johanan son of Kareah, and all the proud and rebellious\* men

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\* **43:2** “Proud and rebellious”: The word used here has the basic meaning of pride, but always in a negative sense that includes arrogance, presumption, and rebellion.

told Jeremiah, "You're lying! The Lord our God hasn't sent you to tell us, 'You are not to go and live in Egypt.' <sup>3</sup> No, it's Baruch son of Neriah who's turned you against us in order to hand us over to the Babylonians so they can kill us or exile us to Babylon!"

<sup>4</sup> So Johanan son of Kareah and all the army commanders refused to obey the Lord's command to stay in the land of Judah. <sup>5</sup> Instead, Johanan son of Kareah and all the army commanders took with them all who were left of the people of Judah, those who had returned to the country from all the nations where they had been scattered. <sup>6</sup> These included men, women, and children, the king's daughters, and everyone Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard had allowed to remain with Gedaliah, as well as Jeremiah and Baruch. <sup>7</sup> They went to Egypt because they refused to obey the Lord's command. They went all the way to Tahpanhes.

<sup>8</sup> A message from Lord came to Jeremiah at Tahpanhes: <sup>9</sup> As the people of Judah watch, get some large stones and set them into the cement of the brick pavement in the entrance way to Pharaoh's palace at Tahpanhes.

<sup>10</sup> Tell them that this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I'm going to send for my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bring him here. I will place his throne over these stones that I have set into the pavement, and he will spread out his royal tent over them. <sup>11</sup> He will come and attack Egypt, bringing death to those destined to die, imprisonment to those



destined to be imprisoned, and the sword to those destined to be killed by the sword. <sup>12</sup> I will set fire to the temples of the gods of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar will burn them and loot their idols. He will pick the land of Egypt clean like a shepherd picks his cloak clean of fleas, and he will leave unharmed. <sup>13</sup> He will knock down the sacred pillars of the temple of the sun<sup>†</sup> in Egypt, and he will burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt.

## 44

<sup>1</sup> This is the message that came to Jeremiah regarding all the people of Judah living in Egypt—in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis—and in Upper Egypt. <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You saw the complete disaster that I brought down on Jerusalem and all the towns of Judah. You can see how today they're ruined and abandoned <sup>3</sup> because of the evil they did. They made me angry by burning incense and serving other gods that they hadn't ever known, and you and your forefathers hadn't known either. <sup>4</sup> I sent you all my servants the prophets time and again to warn you: "Don't do these offensive things that I hate."

<sup>5</sup> But you refused to listen or to pay attention. You didn't stop their wickedness or burning incense in worship of other gods. <sup>6</sup> That's why my furious anger poured out and set fire to the towns of Judah and burned in the streets of

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<sup>†</sup> **43:13** "Temple of the sun": the famous temple in Heliopolis ("Heliopolis" is the Greek for "City of the Sun").

Jerusalem, making them the abandoned ruins they still are today.

<sup>7</sup> So this is what the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Why are you hurting yourselves so badly by removing from Judah every man, woman, child, infant, so you don't have anyone left? <sup>8</sup> Why are you making me angry by what you do, burning incense to other gods in Egypt where you have come to live?

Because if this you will be destroyed, and will you will become a curse word, an expression of condemnation among all the nations on earth.

<sup>9</sup> Have you forgotten the evil of your forefathers and the evil of the kings of Judah and the evil of their wives, as well as your own evil and the evil your wives, all practiced in the country of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? <sup>10</sup> Even up to now you haven't shown any remorse or reverence. You haven't followed my rules and regulations I gave you and your forefathers.

<sup>11</sup> So this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am determined to bring disaster and to wipe out everyone from Judah. <sup>12</sup> I'm going to destroy you who are left who decided to go to Egypt to live there. You will die there, killed by the sword or by famine. Whoever you are, from the least to the most important, you're going to die by sword or by famine; and you will become a curse word, something horrible, an insult, an expression of condemnation. <sup>13</sup> I'm going to punish you who live in Egypt like I punished Jerusalem, by war and famine and

disease. <sup>14</sup> Nobody who is left from Judah who has gone to live in Egypt will escape or survive to return to the country of Judah. You long to go back and live there, but nobody will return except a few stragglers.

<sup>15</sup> All the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other gods, and all the women who were there, a great crowd of people, those living in Egypt and Upper Egypt all told Jeremiah, <sup>16</sup> “Even though you say this message is from the Lord, we're not going to listen to you” <sup>17</sup> In fact we're going to do everything we said we would. We'll burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and offer drink offerings to worship her as we did before, just like our fathers, our kings, and our officials who did the same things in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. Back then we had plenty of food and we were well off and nothing bad happened to us. <sup>18</sup> But ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to worship her, we've lost everything and have been dying as a result of war and famine.

<sup>19</sup> “On top of that,” the women added, “when we burned incense to the Queen of Heaven and poured out drink offerings to worship her, did we do this without our husbands knowing about it, that we baked cakes stamped with her image\* and poured out drink offerings to worship her?”

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah replied to all the people, both men and women, who were responding to him,

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\* **44:19** See 7:18.

21 “About that incense you burned to other gods<sup>†</sup> in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, as well as your fathers, your kings, your officials, and the ordinary people—don't you think the Lord wouldn't remember and think about it? 22 The Lord couldn't take it anymore—the evil things you did and your disgusting acts—so your country was turned into an uninhabited wasteland, a place of horror and a curse word to others, as it still is today. 23 As you can see today, the disaster you've experienced happened because you burned incense to other gods and sinned against the Lord, refusing to listen to the Lord or to follow his instructions, his rules, and his regulations.”

24 Then Jeremiah told everyone, including all the women, “Listen to the Lord's message, all you people from Judah living here in Egypt. 25 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You and your wives, you've said what you're going to do, and you've done what you said! You said, ‘We're going to keep our promise to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and to pour out drink offerings to worship her.’ So go ahead! Do what you've said! Keep your promises!

26 But even so, listen to what the Lord says, all you people from Judah living here in Egypt: I guarantee by all that I am, says the Lord, that none of you living in the Egypt will ever use my name or swear, ‘As the Lord God lives.’

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<sup>†</sup> 44:21 “To other gods”: supplied for clarity.

<sup>27</sup> I will take care of them in the bad sense, and not in the good sense. All the people from Judah who are in Egypt will die by sword or famine, until they are wiped out. <sup>28</sup> Those who manage to avoid being killed by the sword will go back to Judah from Egypt. But there will only be a few of them, and then all who were left from Judah and went to live in Egypt will know who's telling the truth—me or them!

<sup>29</sup> This is your sign to prove that I'm going to punish you here, declares the Lord, so that you'll know for certain that my threats against you will really happen. <sup>30</sup> This is what the Lord says: Look! I'm going to hand over Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt to his enemies who are trying to kill him, in the same way that I handed over Zedekiah king of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy who was trying to kill him.”

## 45

<sup>1</sup> This is what Jeremiah the prophet told Baruch son of Neriah when he wrote out on a scroll these messages that Jeremiah dictated. (This happened in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah.)

<sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: <sup>3</sup> You've been complaining, saying, “I'm in so much trouble because the Lord has given me sorrow to make my pain worse! I've worn myself out with my groans. I can't get any relief.”

<sup>4</sup> This is what Jeremiah was told to say to Baruch: This is what the Lord says: Across the whole country I'm going to tear down what I have built and uproot what I have planted. <sup>5</sup> So in your case, do you think you'll get special treatment? Stop looking for something like that! I'm going to bring disaster down on every living thing, declares the Lord. However, I promise you that your reward will be that you will continue living, wherever you go.

## 46

<sup>1</sup> In the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, the Lord's message that came to Jeremiah the prophet about foreign nations.

<sup>2</sup> This concerns Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt and the Egyptian army which was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates River by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

<sup>3</sup> Pick up both your small and large shields, and advance ready for battle! <sup>4</sup> Put the harnesses on the horses and get into your chariots; take your positions with your helmets on! Sharpen your spears; put on your armor!

<sup>5</sup> Why do I see their lines broken and retreating? Their soldiers are defeated. They run away so quickly they don't even look back because they're so terrified by what's happening around them, declares the Lord. <sup>6</sup> Even the fastest of them can't get away; the soldiers can't escape. There in the north beside the Euphrates they fall and die.

<sup>7</sup> Who is this that's coming, rising like the Nile, like swirling rivers whose waters flood? <sup>8</sup> Egypt is rising like the Nile; its waters swirl like flooding rivers, boasting, "I will rise and sweep over the earth; I will destroy towns and the people in them." <sup>9</sup> Horses, charge in! Chariots, drive like crazy! Have the infantry advance: soldiers from Ethiopia and Put carrying their shields, archers from Lydia with their bows.

<sup>10</sup> But this is the day of the Lord God Almighty, a day of retribution when he takes vengeance on his enemies. The sword will destroy until it is satisfied, until it's had enough of their blood. The Lord God Almighty is having a sacrifice in the north country beside the Euphrates.

<sup>11</sup> Go and find some healing ointment in Gilead, Virgin Daughter of Egypt! But whatever you use to help you will fail, because there's nothing that will heal you. <sup>12</sup> The other nations have heard how you were humiliated in defeat. Everyone can hear your cries of pain. Soldiers fall over each other, and die together.

<sup>13</sup> This is the message that the Lord gave to Jeremiah the prophet about the attack by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon on Egypt: <sup>14</sup> Shout a warning in Egypt! Tell everyone in Migdol, and in Memphis and Tahpanhes: Get ready to defend yourselves, because war is destroying everything around you.

15 Why did Apis your bull god run away?\* He couldn't stand his ground because the Lord has knocked him down.

16 Many soldiers† trip and fall over one another and say, "Come on! Let's get back home to our people where we were born, otherwise we're going to be killed." 17 When they get there they'll say about Pharaoh king of Egypt, "He just makes a lot of noise. He wasted his opportunity."

18 As I live, declares the King who has the name "the Lord Almighty," the king of Babylon‡ will come. He is like Mount Tabor that stands out from the other mountains, like Mount Carmel high above the sea. 19 Pack your bags ready for exile, daughter living in Egypt! Memphis is going to be destroyed, an empty place where no one lives. 20 Egypt is a beautiful young cow, but a stinging insect from the north is coming to attack her. 21 The soldiers that Egypt hired are like calves made fat for slaughter. They will also retreat. They won't stand and fight—they will all run away. Their day of destruction is coming; the time when they'll be punished. 22 The Egyptians will retreat with a rustle like a snake sliding away, because the enemy will attack them with

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\* **46:15** The follows the repointing into "nas hap," which is also the way the Septuagint translators read the word. Otherwise the translation would be, "Why have your strong men been swept away?" Apis was the bull god worshiped in Egypt, particularly in Memphis. † **46:16** These would be mercenary troops employed by the Egyptians to fight for them, as is clear from the context. ‡ **46:18** "King of Babylon": supplied for clarity since first referenced in verse 13.



axes, coming at them like wood-cutters chopping down trees. <sup>23</sup> They will cut them down like a thick forest, declares the Lord, because the invaders are like a swarm of locusts—there's so many of them that they can't be counted.

<sup>24</sup> The people of Egypt will be humiliated. They will be handed over to the people of the north. <sup>25</sup> The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Watch, because I will punish Amon, the god of Thebes, and Pharaoh. I will punish the people of Egypt with their gods and kings, and everyone who trusts in Pharaoh. <sup>26</sup> I'm going to hand them over to those who want to kill them, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his officers. But after all this happens, people will live in Egypt as they used to, declares the Lord.

<sup>27</sup> But you, descendants of Jacob my servant, you don't have to be fearful. Israelites, you don't need to be discouraged. I promise to rescue you from your distant places of exile, your descendants from the countries where they're being held captive. You will go home to a quiet and comfortable life, free from any threats. <sup>28</sup> You descendants of Jacob, don't be afraid! declares the Lord, for I will be with you. I will completely destroy all the nations where I've scattered you, I won't completely destroy you. However, I will discipline you as you deserve, and you can be sure I won't leave you unpunished.

## 47

<sup>1</sup> This is the message from the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet about the Philistines before Pharaoh attacked Gaza. <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord says: Look at the waters rising from the north! They will become an overflowing river that sweeps across the country and everything in it, flooding the towns and everyone's homes. The people will cry out for help; everyone who lives in the country will weep, <sup>3</sup> as they hear the sound of stallions charging, the rattling of chariots and the rumble of their wheels. Fathers won't go back to help their sons—they have no strength because they're terrified.

<sup>4</sup> The day has arrived when all the Philistines will be destroyed, when Tyre and Sidon will have no more allies to help them. The Lord is going to destroy the Philistines, those who are left from the island of Crete. <sup>5</sup> The people of Gaza will shave their heads;\* the town of Ashkelon lies in ruins. You who are left on the coastal plain, how long will you go on cutting yourself?

<sup>6</sup> Oh sword of the Lord, when are you going to stop killing? Go back in your sheath. Stop killing and stay there! <sup>7</sup> But how can the sword stop killing when the Lord has given it orders to attack Ashkelon and its coastlands?

## 48

<sup>1</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says about Moab: Disaster is coming to

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\* **47:5** A sign of mourning, as is the self-mutilation mentioned in the same verse.

the town of Nebo, because it will be destroyed. The town of Kiriathaim will be captured and humiliated; the fortress will be torn down and its people shamed. <sup>2</sup> No one praises Moab anymore. People in Heshbon are plotting, “We will destroy Moab as a nation. People of the town of Madmen, we will silence you too—you will be attacked by swords and chased down.”

<sup>3</sup> Listen to the cries from Horonaim: “Violence and terrible destruction!” <sup>4</sup> Moab will be smashed. Hear the little ones crying for help. <sup>5</sup> People weep as they go up to Luhith; and as they come down to Horonaim their sad cries at the destruction echo around.

<sup>6</sup> Run away! Save yourselves! Be like a scrawny tamarisk tree in the desert! <sup>7</sup> It's because you put your confidence in what you do and what you own that you too will be captured. Your god Chemosh will be taken into exile along with his priests and leaders. <sup>8</sup> The invaders will attack every town; not a single one will escape destruction. The valley will be ruined, and the plain will be destroyed, for the Lord has spoken.

<sup>9</sup> Put up gravestones in Moab,\* because the country will become a wasteland. Its towns will be turned into ruins where no one lives. <sup>10</sup> A curse on those who don't do the Lord's work properly. A curse on those who don't use their swords to kill. <sup>11</sup> The people of Moab have

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\* **48:9** This is one of the most problematic lines in Jeremiah. Other proposed translations include, “Put salt on the land of Moab,” “Give Moab wings so it can fly away,” “Give a flower to Moab,” etc. The Septuagint translates “Set marks upon Moab,” or “Place signs on Moab.”

been living comfortably since the country was founded. They're like wine that hasn't been disturbed, not poured from one container to another. So the taste and fragrance remains the same. They haven't experienced exile.

<sup>12</sup> But watch out, the time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will send them “winemakers” who will pour them out like wine. They will empty out the Moabites, and smash them like jars. <sup>13</sup> Then the Moabites will feel let down by Chemosh, just as the people of Israel felt let down when they trusted in the golden calf idol at Bethel.†

<sup>14</sup> How on earth can you Moabites say, “We're heroes, strong men ready to fight in battle”? <sup>15</sup> Moab is going to be destroyed and its towns conquered. Its finest young men will be killed, declares the King, whose name is the Lord Almighty. <sup>16</sup> Moab's doom is about to happen; destruction is rushing down on them.

<sup>17</sup> Mourn for them, all you surrounding nations, everyone who knows them! Let others know how the great scepter has been smashed, the rod that once proudly ruled!

<sup>18</sup> Come down from your glory and sit on the dusty ground, you who live in Dibon, for Moab's destroyer will come and attack you, destroying your fortresses. <sup>19</sup> Stand at the roadside and watch, you who live in Aroer. Ask the men and women who are running away to escape, “What's happened?”

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† **48:13** See 1 Kings 12.

<sup>20</sup> Moab has been humiliated because it has been defeated. Weep and wail! Shout out beside the River Arnon that Moab has been destroyed!

<sup>21</sup> Punishment has arrived on the towns of the high plain—on Holon, Jahzah, and Mephaath, <sup>22</sup> on Dibon, Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, <sup>23</sup> on Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, <sup>24</sup> on Kerioth, Bozrah, and on all the towns of Moab, whether far away or nearby.

<sup>25</sup> Moab's strength is gone; their power has been broken, declares the Lord. <sup>26</sup> Make the people of Moab drunk, because they defied the Lord. Then they will roll around in their own vomit, as people laugh at them.

<sup>27</sup> Didn't you Moabites used to ridicule the Israelites? But they weren't ever found to be thieves, were they? Yet whenever you talk about them, you shake your heads in contempt.

<sup>28</sup> You people living in Moab, run from your towns, go and live among the rocks. Be like a dove nesting on the cliffs at the entrance to a ravine.

<sup>29</sup> We know all about how pompous Moabites are, how extremely proud and conceited they are, arrogantly thinking so highly of themselves.

<sup>30</sup> I'm well aware of how disrespectful they are, declares the Lord, but it doesn't matter. They make empty boasts, and what they do is just as empty.

<sup>31</sup> So I will weep for Moab; I will cry out for all the Moabites; I will mourn for the people of Kir-heres. <sup>32</sup> will weep for you, people of the town of Sibmah with its vineyards, more than

I weep for the town of Jazer. Your vines have spread to the sea, and all the way to Jazer. But the destroyer has stolen your harvest of summer fruit and grapes. <sup>33</sup> There's no more celebration and happiness in Moab's orchards and fields. I have stopped the grape juice flowing from the winepresses. No one shouts for joy as they tread out the grapes. No, their shouts now are not because of joy!

<sup>34</sup> Cries for help reach from Heshbon to Elealeh and all the way to Jahaz. They're shouting out from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah, for even the water in the Nimrim Brook has dried up.

<sup>35</sup> I'm going to finish off those in Moab who sacrifice on the pagan high places and burn incense to their gods, declares the Lord. <sup>36</sup> So I mourn inside like a flute playing a sad song for Moab; like a flute playing a funeral tune for the people of Kir-heres, because they've lost everything of value that they worked for.

<sup>37</sup> As signs of their mourning,‡ every head is shaved, every beard is trimmed, every hand has a gash, and every waist is wearing sackcloth. <sup>38</sup> Everyone is mourning on all the flat roofs and streets of Moab, because I have smashed the country like a jar nobody wants, declares the Lord.

<sup>39</sup> Moab is completely shattered! Listen to them cry! See how the Moabites turn away in shame! All the surrounding nations are horrified

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‡ **48:37** "As signs of their mourning": supplied for clarity.

at what's happened to the country, and ridicule its people.

<sup>40</sup> This is what the Lord says: Watch as an enemy like an eagle swoops down, spreading its wings as it attacks Moab. <sup>41</sup> Kirioth has been conquered, and the fortresses captured. At that time Moab's warriors will be as scared as a woman in labor. <sup>42</sup> Moab will cease to exist as a nation because they defied the Lord.

<sup>43</sup> You people living in Moab, what's waiting for you are terror, traps, and snares, declares the Lord. <sup>44</sup> You will run away in terror and fall into a trap, and when you climb out of the trap, you'll be caught in a snare. I will do this to the Moabites at the time when they're punished, declares the Lord.

<sup>45</sup> Those who run away will be left defenseless in Heshbon where they went for protection, because fire blazes out from Heshbon, a fire from where Sihon once reigned. It burns up the whole country of Moab and its defiant people. §

<sup>46</sup> What a disaster has come to you Moabites! The people of Chemosh have been wiped out. Your sons and daughters have been taken prisoner and have gone into exile.

<sup>47</sup> But even so, later on, I will bring the people of Moab back from exile, declares the Lord. This is the end of the description of the judgment on Moab.

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§ 48:45 Literally, "It consumes the foreheads of Moab and the skulls of the sons of tumult."

## 49

<sup>1</sup> This is what the Lord says about the Ammonites:

Don't the Israelites have any children? Don't they have heirs to inherit their property? So why has Milcom\* taken over the territory belonging to the tribe of Gad? Why are his people living in their towns?

<sup>2</sup> Watch out! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will signal the attack on the Ammonite town of Rabbah.† It will be turned into a pile of ruins, and its villages will be burned down. Then the Israelites will drive out the people who took over their land, says the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> Weep, people of Heshbon, for the town of Ai has been destroyed. Cry for help, people of Rabbah! Put on clothes made of sackcloth and start mourning; run to and fro inside your city walls, because your god Milcom will go into exile along with his priests and leaders.

<sup>4</sup> Why do you boast that your valleys are so productive, you unfaithful people? You trust in your wealth, saying, "Who would dare attack us?"

<sup>5</sup> Watch out! I'm going to bring the surrounding nations to terrorize you, declares the Lord God Almighty. You will all be driven out and scattered, and no one will be able to gather you refugees together again. <sup>6</sup> However, later

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\* **49:1** "Milcom": the name of the principal Ammonite god, also identified as "Molech." † **49:2** "Rabbah": the Ammonite capital, known today as Amman, Jordan.



on I will bring you Ammonites back from exile, declares the Lord.

<sup>7</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says about Edom:‡

Aren't there any wise people left in Teman?§ Isn't there any good advice from those with insight? Has their wisdom rotted away? <sup>8</sup> Turn and run away! Find somewhere to hide, people of Dedan, because I'm bringing disaster down on you descendants of Esau when I punish you.

<sup>9</sup> If people harvesting grapes came to you, they'd leave some behind, wouldn't they? If thieves came during the night, they'd only steal what they wanted, wouldn't they? <sup>10</sup> But I'm going to strip the whole country of bare, leaving its people with nowhere to hide. All of Esau's descendants will be destroyed, along with their relatives and friends—they will all be gone.

<sup>11</sup> However, you can leave your orphans to me because I will protect them. Have your widows put their trust in me.

<sup>12</sup> This is what the Lord says: If those who were not required to drink from the cup of judgment had to do so, how could you not be punished yourselves? You won't go unpunished, because you have to drink it too. <sup>13</sup> I made myself a solemn promise, declares the Lord, that the town of Bozrah will become a place that horrifies people, a complete humiliation, a pile of ruins, and a name that's used as a curse word. All

‡ **49:7** For a parallel prophecy against Edom see Obadiah, who uses similar language. § **49:7** Teman was a district in the country of Edom.

its surrounding towns will also be left in ruins forever.

<sup>14</sup> I received this message from the Lord. He has sent a messenger to the nations:

Get yourselves ready to attack Edom! Prepare for battle! <sup>15</sup> Watch as I will make you insignificant compared to other nations—everyone will look down on you. <sup>16</sup> The fear you once created in others, and your pride in yourselves, has fooled you into overconfidence, you people living on the rocky mountain tops. Though you make your homes high out of reach like an eagle's nest, I will tear you down, even from there, declares the Lord. <sup>17</sup> People will be horrified at what's happened to Edom. Everyone passing by will be shocked, and will sneer at all its damage. <sup>18</sup> Just as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, along with their neighboring towns, says the Lord, nobody will live there—they will become uninhabited. <sup>19</sup> Watch out! I'm going to come like a lion from the tangled undergrowth beside the Jordan to attack the animals grazing\* the green pasture. In fact I'm going to chase the Edomites from their land very quickly.

Who will I choose to conquer them? Who is like me? Who can challenge me? Which leader† could oppose me?

<sup>20</sup> So listen to what the Lord has planned to do to Edom and the people of Teman: Their children will be dragged away like lambs from the flock,

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\* **49:19** “Attack the animals grazing”: supplied for clarity.

† **49:19** “Leader”: literally, “shepherd.”

and because of them their pasture will become a wasteland. <sup>21</sup> When they fall, the sound they make will make the earth shake; their cries will be heard all the way to the Red Sea. <sup>22</sup> Watch as an enemy like an eagle flies high, then swoops down, spreading its wings as it attacks Bozrah. At that time Edom's warriors will be as scared as a woman in labor.

<sup>23</sup> A prophecy about Damascus:

The towns of Hamath and Arpad<sup>‡</sup> are disturbed, because they've received bad news. They are fearful, restless like the sea. Nothing can calm their worries. <sup>24</sup> The people of Damascus are demoralized—they turn and run away in panic, overcome by pain and anguish like a woman in labor.

<sup>25</sup> Why isn't the city that is praised deserted, the city that made me happy?<sup>§</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For on that day its young men will die in its streets, all its defenders will be killed, declares the Lord of Hosts. <sup>27</sup> I'm going to set fire to the walls of Damascus; that will burn down the fortresses of Ben-hadad.

<sup>28</sup> A prophecy about the land of Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor that were attacked by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. This is what the Lord says:

Go and attack Kedar; destroy the people of the east! <sup>29</sup> Take their tents and their flocks! Carry off their tent curtains and all their possessions!

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<sup>‡</sup> **49:23** Two towns some considerable distance north of Damascus. <sup>§</sup> **49:25** Some believe this verse is not spoken by the Lord but by one of the city's residents.

Take their camels for yourselves. Shout out to them: "Terror is everywhere!"

<sup>30</sup> Run!\* Get away as far as you can! Find somewhere to hide, people of Hazor, declares the Lord. For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has made plans to attack and destroy you.

<sup>31</sup> Go and attack† that self-satisfied nation that thinks it's safe, declares the Lord. They don't have any barred gates and have no allies.

<sup>32</sup> Their camels and large herds will be plunder for you. I will scatter them everywhere, these desert people who trim their hair on the sides of their heads. I will bring disaster down on them from all directions, declares the Lord. <sup>33</sup> Hazor will become a place where jackals live, a place abandoned forever. No one will live there; it will become uninhabited.

<sup>34</sup> This is the Lord's message that came to Jeremiah the prophet about Elam. This was at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah. <sup>35</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says:

Look! I'm going to smash the bows of the Elamites, the weapon they rely on for their power. <sup>36</sup> I will bring winds from all directions to attack Elam, and I will scatter them in all directions. There won't be a nation that doesn't have some of Elam's exiles.

<sup>37</sup> I will smash the Elamites in front of their enemies, before those who want to kill them. In my furious anger I will bring disaster down on them, declares the Lord. I will chase them down

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\* **49:30** This verse is addressed to those being attacked. † **49:31** The Lord is speaking to Nebuchadnezzar again.

with the sword until I have destroyed them. <sup>38</sup> I will set up my throne in Elam, and destroy its king and officials, declares the Lord.

<sup>39</sup> However, later on I will bring the Elamites back from exile, declares the Lord.

## 50

<sup>1</sup> This is the Lord's message that he told Jeremiah the prophet to give about Babylon and the country of Babylonia.\*

<sup>2</sup> Tell everyone the news! Hold up a sign and shout it out, don't hold back! Tell them, Babylon has fallen! Her† god Bel is humiliated; the power of her god Marduk is broken; all Babylon's idols are humiliated and their power is broken.

<sup>3</sup> A northern nation will come and attack her and turn the country into a wasteland. No one will live there—both people and animals will desert it. <sup>4</sup> That's the time when the people of Israel and Judah will join together, weeping as they go to worship the Lord their God, declares the Lord. <sup>5</sup> They will ask the way to Zion, and start going in that direction. They will arrive and commit themselves to the Lord in an everlasting agreement that won't ever be forgotten.

<sup>6</sup> My people are sheep that are lost, led astray by their shepherds, making them wander aimlessly in the mountains. They go from place to place in the mountains and hills, forgetting

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\* **50:1** “The country of Babylonia”: literally, “the land of the Chaldeans.” † **50:2** Since here and in Revelation the city of Babylon is identified with the female pronoun, the allusion is maintained here.

where they used to rest. <sup>7</sup> All those who came across them attacked them. Their enemies declared, “We’re not to blame! They’re the ones who sinned against the Lord, their true resting place; the Lord who was the hope of their forefathers.” <sup>8</sup> Run away from the city of Babylon; get away from the country of Babylonia! Lead the way like the male goats that lead the flock.

<sup>9</sup> Look! I’m assembling a coalition of strong northern nations who will come and attack Babylon. They will line up in battle against her; she will be conquered from the north. Their arrows will be like the best warriors—they don’t miss! <sup>10</sup> Babylonia will be plundered—everyone who plunders her will have plenty of loot, declares the Lord.

<sup>11</sup> Though for now you Babylonians celebrate and sing triumphantly as you plunder my special people, though for now you jump around like a frisky young cow treading out the grain, and neigh like stallions, <sup>12</sup> you are going to bring shame on your mother, you are going to disgrace the one who gave birth to you. Watch as she becomes the least important of all the nations, a wilderness, a dry desert land. <sup>13</sup> Because of Lord’s angry punishment, she will be deserted, completely desolate. Everyone who passes by will be horrified at what has happened to Babylon, and sneer at all her wounds.

<sup>14</sup> All you archers, line up ready for battle around Babylon. Shoot at her! Don’t save your arrows, because she has sinned against the Lord.

<sup>15</sup> Shout war-cries against her from every side!

She holds up her hands in surrender. Her towers have collapsed; her walls are demolished. This is the Lord paying her back, so you too can pay her back—do the same to her as she did to others. <sup>16</sup> Stop the sower from sowing in the country of Babylon, and stop the harvester swinging the sickle to reap the grain. Under the threat of the enemies' swords, everyone runs home to their own people, they go back to where they came from.

<sup>17</sup> The Israelites are a flock that's been chased and scattered by lions. The first on the attack was the king of Assyria; then lastly Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon crushed their bones.

<sup>18</sup> So this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I'm going to punish the king of Babylon and his country just like I punished the king of Assyria. <sup>19</sup> I will lead the Israelites back to their pasturelands, to feed on Carmel and Bashan, to satisfy their appetites on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead. <sup>20</sup> This will be when the guilt and the sins of Israel and Judah will be looked for, but none will be found, because I will forgive those people who remain that I'm looking after, declares the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Go and attack the land of Merathaim, and the people living in Pekod.‡ Kill them with

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‡ **50:21** These are not actual place names. They mean “double rebellion” and “punishment.” However, they are similar in sound to two locations in Babylonia.

swords, set them apart for destruction,<sup>§</sup> along with everything they leave behind. Make sure you do everything I have ordered you to do, declares the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> The noise of battle is heard in the country, the noise of terrible destruction. <sup>23</sup> See how the hammer of the whole earth is lying broken in pieces in the ground! The nations look with horror on what Babylon has become! <sup>24</sup> Babylon, I set a trap for you, and you were caught before you realized it. You were hunted down and captured because you fought against the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> In his anger the Lord opened his armory to bring out his weapons, for this is what the Lord God Almighty is doing in the country of Babylonia.

<sup>26</sup> Come and attack her from every side! Open her granaries; collect the loot you take from her like piles of grain. Set her apart for destruction; don't leave any survivors. <sup>27</sup> Kill all her young bulls\* with the sword; let them be slaughtered. What a disaster for them, because their time has come when they're punished.

<sup>28</sup> (Listen to the refugees and survivors who have returned from Babylonia, announcing in Zion, "The Lord our God is paying them back for what happened to his Temple.")

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<sup>§</sup> **50:21** "Set apart for destruction": a special term that described a dedication to the Lord, indicating that what was promised was to be given over to the Lord and not retained.

\* **50:27** "Bulls": referring to the young men serving as soldiers for Babylon.



<sup>29</sup> Call up the archers to attack Babylon, yes, all of them! Completely surround her—don't let anyone escape. Pay her back for what she's done, because in her pride she defied the Lord, Israel's Holy One. <sup>30</sup> As a result her young men will be killed in the streets; all her soldiers will die that day, declares the Lord. <sup>31</sup> Watch out, because I'm against you, you arrogant people! declares the Lord God Almighty. Your time has come when I will punish you. <sup>32</sup> You arrogant people will trip and fall. Nobody will be there to pick you up. I'm going to set fire to your towns and burn up everything around you.

<sup>33</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: The people of Israel and Judah are being mistreated. All who captured them are holding onto them, refusing to let them go. <sup>34</sup> But the one who rescues them is powerful; the Lord Almighty is his name. He will defend them and their cause, so he may bring peace on earth, but trouble to the people of Babylon.

<sup>35</sup> A sword is raised to attack the Babylonians, declares the Lord, ready to attack those who live in Babylon, and her officials and wise men. <sup>36</sup> A sword is raised to attack her false prophets, and they will become fools. A sword is raised to attack her soldiers, and they will be terrified. <sup>37</sup> A sword is raised to attack her horses and chariots, along with all the foreign soldiers with her, and they will become like frightened women. A sword is raised to attack her stores of treasure, and they will be plundered. <sup>38</sup> A drought has hit her rivers, and they will dry up. For it's a country

full of pagan images. These horrible idols drive their worshipers mad. <sup>39</sup> Consequently desert animals and hyenas will live there, and it will be a home for owls. It will be uninhabited forever—it won't be lived in from one generation to the next. <sup>40</sup> In the same way that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, declares the Lord, no one will live there, no one will stay there.

<sup>41</sup> Look! An army is advancing from the north. A great nation and many kings are coming against you from the distant lands. <sup>42</sup> They're carrying bows and javelins. They are cruel and merciless. When they shout it's like the sea roaring. They ride on horses and attack in formation against you, people of Babylon. <sup>43</sup> The king of Babylon has heard the news and he's terrified. He's overcome with fear, in pain like a woman in labor.

<sup>44</sup> Watch out!† I'm going to come like a lion from the tangled undergrowth beside the Jordan to attack the animals grazing‡ the green pasture. In fact I'm going to chase the Babylonians from their land very quickly.

Who will I choose to conquer them? Who is like me? Who can challenge me? Which leader§ could oppose me? <sup>45</sup> So listen to what the Lord has planned to do to Babylon and the country of Babylonia: Their children will be dragged away

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† **50:44** The following passage parallels that given against Edom in 49:19-21. ‡ **50:44** "Attack the animals grazing": supplied for clarity. § **50:44** "Leader": literally, "shepherd."

like lambs from the flock, and because of them their pasture will become a wasteland. <sup>46</sup> The sound of Babylon's capture will make the earth shake; their cries will be heard throughout the nations.

## 51

<sup>1</sup> This is what the Lord says: Look! I'm going to stir up a destructive wind against Babylon and against the people of Babylonia.\* <sup>2</sup> I will send foreign soldiers to attack Babylon to winnow<sup>†</sup> her and turn her country into a wasteland—they will attack her from all directions when her time of trouble comes. <sup>3</sup> The archer doesn't need to use his bow; the infantryman doesn't need to put on his armor.‡ Don't spare her young soldiers; set apart her whole army for destruction!§ <sup>4</sup> They will fall down wounded in her streets, killed in the country of Babylonia.

<sup>5</sup> Israel and Judah have not been deserted by their God, the Lord Almighty, even though they sinned against the Holy One of Israel everywhere in their country.

<sup>6</sup> Escape from Babylon! Run for your lives! Don't get caught up in her punishment and die, for this is the time when the Lord pays her back

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\* **51:1** Literally, “Leb-kamai,” a code word for Babylonia.

† **51:2** “Winnowing” is the process by which grain is thrown into the air so that the wind can blow away the chaff. ‡ **51:3** The Hebrew of this line has been interpreted in different ways. It seems most likely that it is saying that the attacking army was able to conquer Babylon without much trouble. § **51:3** See footnote 50:21 for the meaning of “set apart for destruction.”

for her sins. <sup>7</sup> Once Babylon was a golden cup the Lord held in his hand. She made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine which is why they went mad. <sup>8</sup> Now, all of a sudden, Babylon has fallen. She has been smashed to pieces. Weep for her; get her some treatment for her pain. Maybe she can be healed.

<sup>9</sup> “We tried to heal her, but she couldn't be helped. So give up on her! All of us should go home to where we came from. The news of her punishment has reached everywhere, all the way to heaven. <sup>10</sup> The Lord has encouraged and supported us.\* Come on, let's tell people here in Jerusalem what the Lord has done for us!”

<sup>11</sup> Sharpen the arrows! Pick up the shields!† The Lord has encouraged the kings of the Medes, because his plan is directed at the destruction of Babylon. The Lord is paying them back for what happened to his Temple. <sup>12</sup> Raise the signal flag to attack the walls of Babylon; strengthen the guard; have the watchmen take their places; get the ambush ready. The Lord planned and carried out his threats against the people of Babylon.

<sup>13</sup> You people who live beside by many waters, and have so much wealth, this is the time of your end—your life will be cut short. <sup>14</sup> The Lord Almighty vowed by his own life, saying,

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\* **51:10** “Encouraged and supported us.” This is often translated as “vindication,” however this frequently has the meaning of being “proved right,” which is not the case here for the Israelites who went into exile because they were not right with God.

† **51:11** Or “Fill the quivers!”

I'm going to make sure to fill you with so many enemy soldiers they'll be like locusts. They will shout as they celebrate their victory over you.

<sup>15</sup> It was God who made the earth by his power. He created the world by his wisdom and by his understanding he put the heavens in place.

<sup>16</sup> The waters of the heavens rain down with a roar at his command. He makes the clouds to rise all over the earth. He makes lightning to accompany rain, and sends the wind from his storehouses.

<sup>17</sup> Everyone is stupid; they don't know anything. Every metalworker is embarrassed by the idols they make. For their images made of molten metal are fraudulent—they're not alive!

<sup>18</sup> They are useless, an object to be laughed at. They will be destroyed at the time of their punishment.

<sup>19</sup> The God of Jacob is not like these idols, for he is the creator of everything, including his own people that are special to him. The Lord Almighty is his name.

<sup>20</sup> You<sup>‡</sup> are my war club, the weapon I use in battle. I use you to destroy nations; I use you to destroy kingdoms. <sup>21</sup> I use you to destroy horses and their riders; I use you to destroy chariots and their drivers. <sup>22</sup> I use you to destroy men and women; I use you to destroy old men and youths; I use you to destroy young men and girls. <sup>23</sup> I use you to destroy shepherds and their flocks; I use you to destroy farmers and their cattle; I use you to destroy rulers and state officials.

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<sup>‡</sup> **51:20** "You": referring to Babylon.

<sup>24</sup> Right in front of you I'm going to pay back Babylon and everyone who live in Babylonia for all the evil they did to Jerusalem, declares the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> Watch out, because I am against you, you destructive monster who devastates the whole world, declares the Lord. I will reach out to attack you; I will roll you down the cliffs; I will turn you into a mountain of ash. <sup>26</sup> Nobody will be even able to find themselves a cornerstone or a foundation stone among your ruins, because you will be so utterly destroyed, declares the Lord.

<sup>27</sup> Raise a signal flag in the country! Blow the trumpet call to war among the nations! Get the nations ready to attack her; Summon the kingdoms to march against her: Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. Choose a commander to lead the armies to attack her; send into battle cavalry like a swarm of locusts. <sup>28</sup> Have the armies of the nations prepare for battle against her. This applies to the kings of the Medes, their leaders and all their officers, and every country they rule.

<sup>29</sup> The earth quakes and trembles because the Lord is determined to carry out what he threatened against Babylon—to turn Babylonia into a wasteland where no one lives. <sup>30</sup> Babylon's defenders have given up fighting—they're just sitting in their fortresses. They're worn out; they've become like frightened women. Babylon's houses are burning; the bars securing her gates have been smashed. <sup>31</sup> A runner hands his message over to another to carry; one messenger

follows another messenger, all of them alerting the king of Babylon to the news that his city has been completely conquered, <sup>32</sup> the river crossings have been captured, the marshlands set on fire and his soldiers are panicking.

<sup>33</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: The people of Babylon are like a threshing floor when the grain is trampled out. Her time of harvest will come very soon.

<sup>34</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon chewed me <sup>§</sup> up and sucked me dry, making me as empty as a jar with nothing in it. He swallowed me down as if he were some monster, filling himself with the tastiest parts of me and throwing the rest away.

<sup>35</sup> “Babylon must bear the responsibility for the violent attacks on us,” say the inhabitants of Zion. “The people of Babylonia must bear the responsibility for the blood shed in my city,” says Jerusalem.

<sup>36</sup> This is what the Lord says: Watch as I present your case for you and make your enemies pay for what they did to you. I'm going to dry up her river and her springs. <sup>37</sup> Babylon will be turned into a pile of rubble, a home for jackals, a place that horrifies people, a place they jeer at, a place where no one lives.

<sup>38</sup> The Babylonians will roar together like powerful lions and growl like lion cubs. <sup>39</sup> But while their passions are aroused, I will serve them a banquet and get them drunk. They'll

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§ 51:34 “Me”: referring to Jerusalem.

celebrate so much that they'll pass out and won't ever wake up, declares the Lord. <sup>40</sup> I will take them down like lambs to be slaughtered, like rams and goats.

<sup>41</sup> How could it be? Babylon\* has fallen! The most famous city in the world has been conquered! What a horrible sight Babylon has become to everyone watching! <sup>42</sup> It's as if the sea has flooded over Babylon, covering her in crashing waves. <sup>43</sup> The towns of Babylonia are in ruins, turned into a dry desert wasteland where no one lives—no one even passes by.

<sup>44</sup> I will punish Bel† in Babylon. I will force him to spit out what he swallowed. People of other nations won't run to worship him anymore. Even Babylon's wall has fallen.

<sup>45</sup> My people, come out of her! Each one of you, save yourselves from the Lord's furious anger. <sup>46</sup> Don't lose courage, and don't be afraid when you hear different rumors going around the country. There'll be one rumor one year, and another one the next, talking about violent revolution, of one ruler fighting against another.

<sup>47</sup> Look, the time is coming when I will punish Babylon's idols. The whole country will be humiliated; it will be full of the dead bodies of those who have been killed. <sup>48</sup> Then everyone in heaven and on earth will celebrate with shouts of joy at what's happened to Babylon, because the destroyers from the north will come and

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\* **51:41** Literally "Sheshach": a code name for Babylon.

† **51:44** "Bel": the major Babylonian god.



attack her, declares the Lord. <sup>49</sup> Babylon has to fall because of the Israelites and people of other nations she killed. <sup>50</sup> Those of you who have managed to escape being killed, leave now! Don't delay! Remember the Lord in this far away place; think about Jerusalem.

<sup>51</sup> "We are embarrassed because we've been mocked, and we held our heads in shame because foreigners went into the holy places of the Lord's Temple,"‡

<sup>52</sup> So keep watching, declares the Lord, because the time is coming when I will punish her for worshiping idols, and the sound of wounded people moaning will be heard throughout the country. <sup>53</sup> Even if Babylon could climb up into the sky to strengthen her high fortresses, those I send to attack her will destroy her, declares the Lord.

<sup>54</sup> A cry comes from Babylon; the noise of terrible destruction comes from the country of Babylonia. <sup>55</sup> For the Lord is going to destroy Babylon; he will put an end to her boastful talk. The waves of attacking army will roar like the crashing sea; the noise of their shouts will echo all around.

<sup>56</sup> A destroyer is coming to attack Babylon. Her soldiers will be taken prisoner, and their bows will be smashed, for the Lord is a God who punishes fairly; he will definitely pay them back. <sup>57</sup> I will make her leaders and wise men drunk, along with her commanders, officers, and soldiers. Then they will pass out, and won't ever

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‡ **51:51** These words are spoken by the Israelites.

wake up, declares the King, whose name is the Lord Almighty.

<sup>58</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: Babylon's massive walls will be knocked down to the ground and her high gates burned. All that the people worked for will be for nothing; other nations who came to help will wear themselves out, only to see what they've done go up in flames.

<sup>59</sup> This is the message that Jeremiah the prophet gave to Seraiah son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, when he accompanied King Zedekiah of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. Seraiah was the king's personal assistant. <sup>60</sup> Jeremiah had written on a scroll a description of all the disasters that would come to Babylon—all these words written here about Babylon.

<sup>61</sup> Jeremiah told Seraiah, "When you arrive in Babylon, make sure you read out loud everything written here, <sup>62</sup> and announce, 'Lord, you have promised to destroy this place so that none will be left—no people or animals. In fact it will be deserted forever.'

<sup>63</sup> After you finish reading this scroll out loud, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates.

<sup>64</sup> Then say, 'This is how Babylon will sink and won't ever rise again, because of the disaster I'm bringing down on her. Her people will grow tired.' "§ This is the end of Jeremiah's messages.

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§ 51:64 This final sentence appears to be out of place.

## 52

<sup>1</sup> Zedekiah was twenty-one when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah. She came from Libnah. <sup>2</sup> He did evil in the Lord's sight, just as Jehoiakim had done. <sup>3</sup> All this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, because of the Lord's anger, until he eventually banished them from his presence. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

<sup>4</sup> In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem with his entire army. He set up camp around the city and built siege ramps against the walls. <sup>5</sup> The city remained under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

<sup>6</sup> By the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine in the city was so bad that the people had nothing left to eat. <sup>7</sup> Then the city wall was broken through, and all the soldiers ran away, escaping at night through the gate between the two walls by the king's garden, even though the Babylonians had the city surrounded. They went in the direction of the Arabah,\* <sup>8</sup> but the Babylonian army chased after the king and caught up with him on the plains of Jericho. His whole army had scattered and left him.

<sup>9</sup> They captured the king and took him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he sentenced him. <sup>10</sup> The king of Babylon slaughtered

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\* **52:7** "Arabah": the Jordan Valley.

Zedekiah's sons while he watched, and also killed the officials of Judah there at Riblah. <sup>11</sup> Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him in bronze shackles. The king of Babylon took him to Babylon and imprisoned him there until the day he died.

<sup>12</sup> On the tenth day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, an officer of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> He burned down the Lord's Temple, the royal palace, and all the large buildings of Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the guard knocked down all the walls around Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup> Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, deported some of the poor people and those who were left in the city, even those who had gone over to the side of the king of Babylon, as well as the rest of the craftsmen. <sup>16</sup> But Nebuzaradan allowed others of the poor people who were left in the country to stay and take care of the vineyards and the fields.

<sup>17</sup> The Babylonians broke into pieces the bronze pillars, the movable carts, and the bronze Sea that belonged to the Lord's Temple, and they took all the bronze to Babylon. <sup>18</sup> They also took all the pots, shovels, lamp snuffers, sprinkling bowls, and all the other bronze items used in the Temple service. <sup>19</sup> The commander of the guard removed the basins, censers, sprinkling bowls, pots, lampstands, dishes and bowls, anything that was made of pure gold or silver.

<sup>20</sup> The amount of bronze that came from the two columns, the Sea, the twelve bronze bulls under it, and the movable carts, which Solomon had made for the Lord's Temple, all of this weighed more than could be measured.

<sup>21</sup> Each column was eighteen cubits tall and twelve cubits around. They were hollow with walls four fingers thick. <sup>22</sup> The bronze capital on top of one column was five cubits high, with a network of bronze pomegranates around it. The second column was the same, and also had a decorative network. <sup>23</sup> There were ninety-six bronze pomegranates around each column. Above the network were a total of one hundred pomegranates.

<sup>24</sup> The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah, the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest, second in rank, and the three Temple doorkeepers. <sup>25</sup> From those left in the city he took the officer in charge of the soldiers, and seven of the king's advisors. He also took the secretary to the army commander who was in charge of calling up the people for military service, and sixty other men who were present in the city. <sup>26</sup> Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, took them and brought them before the king of Babylon at Riblah. <sup>27</sup> The king of Babylon had them executed at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So the people of Judah had to leave their land.

<sup>28</sup> This is a record of the number of people Nebuchadnezzar took into exile. In the seventh year of his reign he took 3,023 Judeans. <sup>29</sup> In his

eighteenth year Nebuchadnezzar took another 832 from Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup> In his twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, took another 745 Judeans, making a total of 4,600.

<sup>31</sup> In the year Evil-merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from prison. This happened on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month of the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judah.

<sup>32</sup> The king of Babylon treated him well and gave him a position of honor higher than the other kings there with him in Babylon. <sup>33</sup> So Jehoiachin was able to remove his prison clothes, and he ate frequently at the king's table for the rest of his life. <sup>34</sup> The king provided Jehoiachin with a daily allowance for the rest of his life until he died.

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