

Jeremiah

¹ These are the messages of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah. Jeremiah belonged to the family of priests who lived in the town of Anathoth.* That town is in the land that belongs to the tribe of Benjamin. ² The LORD began to speak to Jeremiah in the 13th year[†] that Josiah, son of Amon, was king of the nation of Judah. ³ He continued to speak to Jeremiah during the time that Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, was king of Judah and during the eleven years and five months that Zedekiah, also a son of Josiah, was king of Judah. In the fifth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year as king, the people who lived in Jerusalem were taken away into exile.

God Calls Jeremiah

⁴ The LORD'S message came to me:

⁵ “Before I made you in your mother’s womb,
I knew you.
Before you were born,
I chose you for a special work.
I chose you to be a prophet to the nations.”

⁶ Then I said, “But, Lord GOD, I don’t know how to speak. I am only a boy.”

⁷ But the LORD said to me,

* 1:1 priests ... of Anathoth These priests probably belonged to the family of the priest Abiathar. Abiathar was a high priest in Jerusalem during the time David was king. He was sent away to Anathoth by King Solomon. See 1 Kings 2:26. † 1:2 the 13th year That is, 627 B.C.

“Don’t say, ‘I am only a boy.’

You must go everywhere I send you
and say everything I tell you to say.

⁸ Don’t be afraid of anyone.

I am with you, and I will protect you.”

This message is from the LORD.

⁹ Then the LORD reached out with his hand and touched
my mouth. He said to me,

“Jeremiah, I am putting my words in your mouth.

¹⁰ Today I have put you in charge of nations and kingdoms.

You will pull up and tear down.

You will destroy and overthrow.

You will build up and plant.”

Two Visions

¹¹ The LORD’S message came to me: “Jeremiah, what do
you see?”

I answered, “I see a stick made from almond wood.”

¹² The LORD said to me, “You have seen very well, and I
am watching[‡] to make sure that my message to you comes
true.”

¹³ The LORD’S message came to me again: “Jeremiah,
what do you see?”

I answered, “I see a pot of boiling water. That pot is
tipping over from the north.”

¹⁴ The LORD said to me, “Something terrible will come
from the north.

It will happen to all the people who live in this
country.

[‡] 1:12 watching This is a wordplay. *Shaqed* is the Hebrew word for “almond
wood,” and *shoqed* means “watching.”

15 In a short time I will call all the people in the northern kingdoms.”

This is what the LORD said.

“The kings of those countries will come
and set up their thrones near the gates of Jerusalem.

They will attack the city walls of Jerusalem.

They will attack all the cities in Judah.

16 And I will announce judgment against my people,
because they are evil and have turned away from me.

They offered sacrifices to other gods

and worshiped idols they made with their own
hands.

17 “As for you, Jeremiah, get ready.

Stand up and speak to the people.

Tell them everything that I tell you to say.

Don't be afraid of the people.

If you are afraid of them,

I will give you good reason to be afraid of them.

18 As for me, today I will make you like a strong city,
an iron column, a bronze wall.

You will be able to stand against everyone in the land,
against the kings of the land of Judah,
the leaders of Judah, the priests of Judah,
and against the people of the land of Judah.

19 All those people will fight against you,
but they will not defeat you,

because I am with you,
and I will save you.”

This message is from the LORD.

2

Judah Was Not Faithful

¹ The LORD'S message came to me: ² "Jeremiah, go and speak to the people of Jerusalem. Tell them that this is what the LORD says:

"At the time you were a young nation, you were faithful to me.

You followed me like a young bride.

You followed me through the desert,
through a land that had never been used for farm-
land.

³ The people of Israel were a holy gift to the LORD.

They were the first fruit he gathered.

Any people who tried to hurt them were judged guilty.

Bad things happened to those wicked people.' "

This message is from the LORD.

⁴ Family of Jacob, hear the LORD'S message.

Tribes of Israel, listen.

⁵ This is what the LORD says:

"Do you think that I was not fair to your ancestors?

Is that why they turned away from me?

Your ancestors worshiped worthless idols,
and they became worthless themselves.

⁶ Your ancestors did not say,

'The LORD brought us out of Egypt.

He led us through the desert,
through a dry and rocky land.

He led us through a dark and dangerous land.

No one lives there;
people don't even travel through that land.

But the Lord led us through that land.
So where is he now?

⁷ “I brought you into a good land,
a land filled with many good things.
I did this so that you could eat the fruit and crops that
grow there.
But you only made my land ‘dirty.’
I gave that land to you,
but you made it a bad place.

⁸ “The priests did not ask,
‘Where is the LORD?’
The people who know the law did not want to know me.
The leaders of the people of Israel turned against me.
The prophets spoke* in the name of the false god Baal.
They worshiped worthless idols.”

⁹ The LORD says, “So now I will accuse you again,
and I will also accuse your grandchildren.

¹⁰ Go across the sea to the Islands of Kittim.†
Send someone to the land of Kedar.

Look very carefully.
See if anyone has ever done anything like this.

¹¹ Has any nation ever stopped worshiping their old gods
so that they could worship new gods?

No! And their gods are not really gods at all!

But my people stopped worshiping their glorious God
and started worshiping idols that are worth nothing.

* 2:8 spoke Or “prophesied.” † 2:10 Islands of Kittim The name means the Island of Cyprus. But the name was often used for the other islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea.

- 12 “Skies, be shocked at what happened!
Shake with great fear!”
This message is from the LORD.
- 13 “My people have done two evil things.
They turned away from me,
and they dug their own water cisterns.‡
I am the source of living water;
those cisterns are broken and cannot hold water.
- 14 “Israel is not a slave, is he?
He was not born a slave, was he?
Then why did the enemy carry him away as a captive?
- 15 Like a lion the enemy has roared at Israel.
They have destroyed your^S land.
Your cities have been burned,
and no one is left in them.
- 16 People from Memphis and Tahpanhes*
have smashed the top of your head.
- 17 This trouble is your own fault.
The LORD your God was leading you the right way,†
but you turned away from him.
- 18 People of Judah, think about this:
How did it help you to go to Egypt and drink from the Nile River?
How did it help you to go to Assyria and drink from the Euphrates River?
- 19 You have done wrong,
and that will only bring punishment to you.

‡ 2:13 they dug ... cisterns That is, they made false gods. § 2:15 your Hebrew, “his,” referring to “Israel,” which here means his people, as in verse 16. * 2:16 Memphis and Tahpanhes Two cities in Egypt. † 2:17 was leading ... way This is not in the ancient Greek version.

Trouble will come to you,
 and it will teach you a lesson.
 Think about it and understand how bad it is to turn away
 from the LORD your God.
 It is wrong not to fear and respect me.”
 This message is from Lord GOD All-Powerful.

20 “Judah, long ago you broke free from me,
 like an ox that breaks its yoke and the ropes that held
 it.
 You said to me, ‘I will not serve you!’
 On every high hill and under every green tree,
 you acted like a prostitute.‡

21 Judah, I planted you like a special vine.
 You were all from good seed.
 How did you turn into a different vine
 that grows bad fruit?

22 Even if you wash yourself with lye,
 even if you use much soap,
 I can still see your guilt.”
 This message is from the Lord GOD.

23 “Judah, how can you say to me,
 ‘I am not guilty because I have not worshiped the
 Baal idols’?
 Think about what you did in the valley.
 Think about what you have done.
 You are like a fast she-camel
 that runs from place to place.

24 You are like a wild donkey that lives in the desert.
 At mating time, she sniffs the wind.
 No one can control her when she is in heat.
 At mating time, every male that wants her will get her.

‡ 2:20 On every ... prostitute This means the people worshiped their false gods in these places.

She is easy to find.

²⁵ Judah, stop chasing after idols!

Stop wanting those other gods.

But you say, 'It is no use! I cannot stop!

I love those other gods.

I can't stop chasing them.'

²⁶ "A thief is ashamed

when people catch him stealing.

The people of Israel should be ashamed too

and so should their kings and leaders, priests and prophets.

²⁷ They say to pieces of wood,

'You are my father.'

They say to a rock,

'You gave birth to me.'

All these people will be ashamed.

They don't look to me for help.

They have turned their backs to me.

But when the people of Judah get into trouble, they say to me,

'Come and save us!'

²⁸ But where are the idols you made for yourselves?

Let's see if they come and save you when you are in trouble!

People of Judah, you have as many idols

as you have cities!

²⁹ "Why do you argue with me?

You have all turned against me."

This message was from the LORD.

³⁰ "I punished you people of Judah,

but it did not help.

You did not come back

when you were punished.

With your swords you killed the prophets who came to you.

Like a dangerous lion, you killed the prophets.”

³¹ People of this generation,
pay attention to the LORD’S message!

“Have I been like a desert to the people of Israel?

Have I been like a dark and dangerous land to them?

My people say, ‘We are free to go our own way.

We will not come back to you!’

Why do they say these things?

³² A young woman does not forget her jewelry.

A bride does not forget to wear her wedding dress.

But my people have forgotten me
too many times to count.

³³ “Judah, you have become so good at finding lovers.

Even the worst women could learn some evil ways
from you.

³⁴ You have blood on your hands!

It is the blood of poor, innocent people.

You did not catch them breaking into your house.

You killed them for no reason!

³⁵ But still, you say, ‘I am innocent.

God is not angry with me.’

So I will also judge you guilty of lying, because you say,
‘I have done nothing wrong.’

³⁶ You go from one place to another looking for help,
always changing your mind.

But Egypt will also disappoint you,
just as Assyria did.

³⁷ So you will eventually leave Egypt too,

and you will hide your face in shame.
 You trusted these countries,
 but the LORD rejected them,
 so they cannot help you win.

3

- ¹ “If a man divorces his wife and she goes and marries
 someone else,
 the first husband cannot take her back.
 If he did,* it would make the land unclean.
 Judah, you and all your false gods are like a prostitute with
 many lovers!
 So why do you think you can come back to me?”
 This message is from the LORD.
- ² “Look up to the bare hilltops, Judah.
 Is there any place where you have not had sex with
 your lovers?
 You sat by the road waiting for lovers,
 like an Arab in the desert.
 You made the land ‘dirty’
 with all the evil sins you did
 when you were unfaithful to me.
- ³ You sinned, so the rain has not come.
 There has not been any springtime rains.
 But still you refuse to be ashamed.
 The look on your face is like that of a prostitute who
 refuses to be ashamed.
- ⁴ But didn’t you just call me ‘Father’?
 Didn’t you say, ‘You have been my friend since I was
 a child’?
- ⁵ You also said, ‘God will not always be angry with me.’

* 3:1 If he did It was against the Law of Moses for a man to marry a woman he had divorced if that woman had become another man’s wife. See Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

His anger will not continue forever.’

“Judah, you say that,
but you do as much evil as you can.”

The Two Bad Sisters: Israel and Judah

⁶ The LORD spoke to me during the time King Josiah was ruling the nation of Judah. He said, “Jeremiah, you saw the bad things Israel[†] did! You saw how she was unfaithful to me. She was unfaithful to me with every idol on every hill and under every green tree. ⁷ I said to myself, ‘Israel will come back to me after she has finished doing these evil things.’ But she did not come back to me. And Israel’s unfaithful sister, Judah, saw what she did. ⁸ Israel was unfaithful, and she knew why I sent her away. Israel knew that I divorced her because she committed the sin of adultery. But that did not make her unfaithful sister afraid. Judah was not afraid. She also went out and acted like a prostitute. ⁹ Judah did not care that she was acting like a prostitute. So she made her country ‘dirty.’ She committed the sin of adultery by worshiping idols made out of stone and wood. ¹⁰ Israel’s unfaithful sister did not come back to me with her whole heart. She only pretended that she came back to me.” This message is from the LORD.

¹¹ The LORD said to me, “Israel was not faithful to me, but she had a better excuse than unfaithful Judah. ¹² Jeremiah, look toward the north and speak this message:

“ ‘Come back, you faithless people of Israel.’
This message is from the LORD.

[†] 3:6 Israel Here, the name Israel means the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians about 100 years before Jeremiah’s time.

'I will stop frowning at you.

I am full of mercy.'

The LORD says, 'I will not be angry with you forever.

¹³ But you must recognize your sin.

You turned against the LORD your God.

That is your sin.

You worshiped the idols of other nations.

You worshiped them under every green tree.

You did not obey me.' "

This message is from the LORD.

¹⁴ The LORD says, "You people are unfaithful, but come back to me because I am your master. I will take one person from every city and two people from every family and bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ Then I will give you new rulers who will be faithful to me. They will lead you with knowledge and understanding. ¹⁶ In those days there will be many of you in the land." This message is from the LORD.

"At that time people will never again say, 'I remember the days when we had the Box of the LORD'S Agreement.' They will not even think about the Holy Box anymore. They will not even remember or miss it. They will never make another Holy Box. ¹⁷ At that time the city of Jerusalem will be called the 'LORD'S Throne.' All nations will come together in the city of Jerusalem to give honor to the name of the LORD. They will not follow their stubborn, evil hearts anymore. ¹⁸ In those days the family of Judah will join the family of Israel. They will come together from a land in the north to the land I gave to their ancestors."

¹⁹⁻²⁰ This message is from the LORD:

“I want to treat you like my own children.

I want to give you a pleasant land,
a land more beautiful than any other nation.

I thought you would call me ‘Father.’

I thought you would always follow me.

But you have been unfaithful to me, family of Israel!

You have been like an unfaithful wife who leaves her
husband.

²¹ You can hear crying on the bare hills.

The people of Israel are crying and praying for
mercy.

They became very evil.

They forgot the LORD their God.

²² “People of Israel, you are unfaithful to me, but come
back to me.

Come back and I will forgive[‡] you for being unfaith-
ful.”

“Just say, ‘Yes, we will come back,
because you are the LORD our God.

²³ It was foolish to worship idols on the hills.

All the loud parties on the mountains were wrong.

Surely the salvation of Israel

comes from the LORD our God.

²⁴ That terrible false god Baal has eaten everything our
fathers owned.

This has happened since we were children.

That terrible false god took our fathers’ sheep and cattle
and their sons and daughters.

²⁵ Let us lie down in our shame.

Let our shame cover us like a blanket.

We have sinned against the LORD our God.

[‡] 3:22 forgive Literally, “heal.”

We and our fathers have sinned.
We have not obeyed the LORD our God
from the time we were children.’ ”

4

¹ This message is from the LORD.

“Israel, if you want to come back,
then come back to me.

Throw away your idols.

Don’t wander farther away from me.

² If you do these things, you will be able to use my name
to make a promise.

You will be able to say, ‘As the LORD lives.’

You will be able to use these words in a truthful,
honest, and right way.

If you do these things, the nations will be blessed by the
Lord.

They will brag about what the Lord has done.”

³ This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and
to Jerusalem:

“Your fields have not been plowed.

Plow those fields!

Don’t plant seeds among the thorns.

⁴ Become the LORD’S people.

Change your hearts.*

Men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, if you don’t
change,

then I will become very angry.

* 4:4 Change your hearts Literally, “Be circumcised to the LORD. Cut away the foreskin of your hearts.” See “circumcise, circumcision” in the Word List. Jeremiah is saying that real circumcision must be from inside a person’s heart (mind).

My anger will spread fast like a fire,
 and it will burn you up.
 No one will be able to put out that fire
 because of the evil you have done.”

Disaster From the North

⁵ “Give this message to the people of Judah:

Tell everyone in the city of Jerusalem:
 ‘Blow the trumpet all over the country.’
 Shout out loud and say,
 ‘Come together!
 Let us all escape to the strong cities for protection.’
⁶ Raise the signal flag toward Zion.
 Run for your lives! Don’t wait!
 Do this because I am bringing disaster from the north.†
 I am bringing terrible destruction.”
⁷ A lion has come out of his cave.
 A destroyer of nations has begun to march.
 He has left his home to destroy your land.
 Your towns will be destroyed.
 There will be no one left to live in them.
⁸ The LORD is angry with us,
 so put on sackcloth and cry out loud!
⁹ The LORD says, “When this happens,
 the king and his officers will lose their courage.
 The priests will be filled with fear,
 and the prophets will be shocked.”

¹⁰ Then I, Jeremiah, said, “Lord GOD, you have tricked
 the people of Judah and Jerusalem. You said to them, ‘You

† 4:6 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

will have peace.’ But now the sword is pointing at their throats!”

¹¹ At that time this message will be given
to the people of Judah and Jerusalem:
“A hot wind blows from the bare hills.
It comes from the desert to my people.
It is not like the gentle wind that is used
to separate the grain from the chaff.

¹² It is a stronger wind than that,
and it comes from me.
Now I will announce my judgment
against the people of Judah.”

¹³ Look! The enemy rises up like a cloud.
His chariots look like a windstorm.
His horses are faster than eagles.
It will be very bad for us!
We are ruined!

¹⁴ People of Jerusalem,
wash the evil from your hearts.
Make your hearts pure so that you can be saved.
Don’t continue making evil plans.

¹⁵ Listen! The voice of a messenger
from the land of Dan[‡] is speaking.
Someone is bringing bad news
from the hill country of Ephraim[§]:

¹⁶ “Report it to this nation.*

[‡] 4:15 land of Dan The people from the tribe of Dan lived near the border in the northern part of Israel. They would be the first to be attacked by an enemy from the north. [§] 4:15 hill country of Ephraim This was the central part of the land that had been the northern kingdom of Israel. ^{*} 4:16 “Report ... nation The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

Spread the news to the people in Jerusalem.
Enemies are coming from a faraway country.
They are shouting words of war against the cities of
Judah.

¹⁷ The enemy has surrounded Jerusalem
like men guarding a field.
Judah, you turned against me,
so the enemy is coming against you.”
This message is from the LORD.

¹⁸ “The way you lived and the things you did
brought this trouble to you.
It is your evil that made your life so hard.
Your evil life brought the pain that hurts deep in
your heart.”

Jeremiah's Cry

¹⁹ My sadness and worry is making my stomach hurt.
I am bent over in pain.
I am so afraid.
My heart is pounding inside me.
I cannot keep quiet, because I have heard the trumpet
blow.
The trumpet is calling the army to war.

²⁰ Disaster follows disaster.
The whole country is destroyed.
Suddenly my tents are destroyed.
My curtains are torn down!

²¹ How long must I see the war flags?
How long must I hear the war trumpets?

²² The Lord said, “My people are foolish.
They don't know me.
They are stupid children.

They don't understand.
They are skillful at doing evil,
but they don't know how to do good."

Disaster Is Coming

²³ I looked at the earth.

It was empty; there was nothing on it.

I looked at the sky,

and its light was gone.[†]

²⁴ I looked at the mountains,
and they were shaking.

All the hills were trembling.

²⁵ I looked, but there were no people.

All the birds of the sky had flown away.

²⁶ I looked, and the good land had become a desert.

All the cities in that land were destroyed
by the LORD and his great anger.

²⁷ This is what the LORD says:

"The whole country will be ruined,

but I will not completely destroy the land.

²⁸ So the people in the land will cry for the dead.

The sky will grow dark.

I have spoken and will not change.

I have made a decision, and I will not change my
mind."

²⁹ The people of Judah will hear the sound
of the horse soldiers and the archers,
and the people will run away!

Some of them will hide in caves;[‡]

[†] 4:23 the earth ... gone Jeremiah is comparing his country to the time before people were put on the earth. See Genesis 1:1. [‡] 4:29 hide in caves This is from the ancient Greek version.

some will hide in the bushes;
 some will climb up into the rocks.
 All the cities of Judah will be empty.
 No one will live in them.

³⁰ Judah, you have been destroyed.
 So what are you doing now?
 Why are you putting on your best red dress?
 Why are you putting on your gold jewelry?
 Why are you putting on your eye makeup?
 You make yourself beautiful,
 but it is a waste of time.
 Your lovers hate you.
 They are trying to kill you.

³¹ I hear a cry like a woman in labor,
 a scream like a woman giving birth to her first baby.
 It is the cry of daughter Zion.[§]
 She is lifting her hands in prayer, saying,
 “Oh! I am about to faint!
 Murderers are all around me!”

5

The Evil of the People of Judah

¹ The Lord says, “Walk the streets of Jerusalem. Look around and think about these things. Search the public squares of the city. See if you can find one good person, one who does honest things and who searches for the truth. If you find one good person, I will forgive Jerusalem. ² The people make promises and say, ‘As the LORD lives.’ But they don’t really mean it!”

[§] 4:31 daughter Zion Another name for Jerusalem. See “Zion” in the Word List.

³ LORD, I know that you want people
to be loyal to you.
You hit the people of Judah,
but they did not feel any pain.
You destroyed them,
but they refused to learn their lesson.
They became very stubborn.
They refused to be sorry for the bad things they did.

⁴ But I said to myself,
“It must be only the poor who are so foolish.
They have not learned the way of the LORD.
They don’t know the teachings of their God.”

⁵ So I will go to the leaders of Judah.
I will talk to them.
Surely the leaders know the way of the LORD.
Surely they know the law of their God.”

But the leaders had all joined together
to break away from serving God.

⁶ So a lion from the forest will attack them.
A wolf from the desert will kill them.
A leopard is hiding near their cities,
to tear to pieces anyone who comes out.
That’s because the people have sinned again and again.
Many times they have wandered away from God.

⁷ God says, “People of Judah, why should I forgive you?
Your children have abandoned me.
They made promises to idols that are not really gods!
I gave your children everything they needed,
but they were still unfaithful to me!
They spent their time with prostitutes.

8 They are like horses that have had plenty to eat and are ready to mate.

They are like a horse that is calling its neighbor's wife.

9 Should I punish the people of Judah for doing these things?"

This message is from the LORD.

"You know I should punish a nation such as this.

I should give it the punishment it deserves.

10 "Go along the rows of Judah's grapevines.

Cut down the vines. (But don't completely destroy them.)

Cut off all their branches, because they don't belong to the LORD.

11 The family of Israel and the family of Judah have been unfaithful to me in every way."

This message is from the LORD.

12 "Those people lied about the LORD.

They said, 'He will not do anything to us.

Nothing bad will happen to us.

We will never see an army attack us.

We will never starve.'

13 The prophets are only empty wind.*

The word of God is not in them.†

Bad things will happen to them."

14 The LORD God All-Powerful said these things:

"The people said I would not punish them.

So, Jeremiah, the words I give you will be like fire,

* 5:13 wind This is a wordplay. The Hebrew word for wind is like the word for spirit. † 5:13 The word ... them Literally, "And the 'He said' is not in them."

and these people will be like wood.
That fire will burn them up completely.”

¹⁵ Family of Israel, this message is from the LORD.

“I will soon bring a nation from far away to attack you.

It is an old nation;
it is an ancient nation.

The people of that nation speak a language that you do not know.

You cannot understand what they say.

¹⁶ Their arrow bags are like open graves.

All their men are strong soldiers.

¹⁷ They will eat all the crops that you gathered.

They will eat all your food.

They will destroy your sons and daughters.

They will eat your flocks and your herds.

They will eat your grapes and your figs.

They will destroy your strong cities with their swords.

They will destroy the strong cities that you trust in.”

¹⁸ This message is from the LORD: “But, Judah, when these terrible days come, I will not fully destroy you.

¹⁹ The people of Judah will ask you, ‘Jeremiah, why has the LORD our God done this bad thing to us?’ Give them this answer: ‘You people of Judah have left me, and you have served foreign idols in your own land. You did these things, so now you will serve foreigners in a land that does not belong to you.’

²⁰ “Tell this message to the family of Jacob,
and tell it in the nation of Judah.

²¹ Hear this message,
you foolish people who have no sense.
You have eyes, but you don’t see!

You have ears, but you don't listen!

²² Surely you are afraid of me.”

This message is from the LORD.

“You should shake with fear in front of me.

I am the one who made the sandy shores to hold back the sea.

I made it that way to keep the water in its place forever.

The waves may pound the beach, but they will not destroy it.

The waves may roar as they come in, but they cannot go beyond the beach.

²³ But the people of Judah are stubborn.

They are always planning ways to turn against me.

They turned away from me and left me.

²⁴ The people of Judah never say to themselves,

‘Let's fear and respect the LORD our God.

He gives us autumn and spring rains at just the right time.

He makes sure that we have the harvest at just the right time.’

²⁵ You don't have these blessings because you have done wrong.

Your sins have kept these good things away from you.

²⁶ There are evil men among my people.

They are like men who make nets for catching birds.‡

They set their traps,

but they catch people instead of birds.

²⁷ Their houses are full of lies,

like a cage full of birds.

Their lies made them rich and powerful.

‡ 5:26 men ... birds The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

²⁸ They have grown big and fat *from the evil they have done.*

There is no end to the evil they do.

They will not plead the case of children who have no parents.

They will not help these orphans.

They will not let the poor be judged fairly.

²⁹ Should I punish the people of Judah for doing these things?"

This message is from the LORD.

"You know I should punish a nation such as this.

I should give it the punishment it deserves.

³⁰ "A terrible and shocking thing
has happened in the land of Judah.

³¹ The prophets tell lies.

The priests will not do what they were chosen to do,[§]
and my people love it this way!

But what will you people do when your punishment
comes?

6

The Enemy Surrounds Jerusalem

¹ "Run for your lives, people of Benjamin!

Run away from the city of Jerusalem!

Blow the war trumpet in the city of Tekoa!

Put up the warning flag in the city of Beth Hakkerem!

[§] 5:31 priests ... were chosen to do The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

Do these things because disaster is coming from the north.*

Terrible destruction is coming to you.

² Jerusalem,† you are like a beautiful meadow.‡

But I will destroy you!

³ Enemy shepherds will surround you with all their flocks.

They will set up their tents all around you, and each one will let his sheep eat the grass.

⁴ “Get ready to fight against Jerusalem.

Get up! We will attack the city at noon.

But it is already getting late.

The evening shadows are growing long.

⁵ So get up! We will attack the city at night!

Let’s destroy the strong walls that are around Jerusalem.”

⁶ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“Cut down the trees around Jerusalem, and build a siege mound§ against it.

This city should be punished

because inside there is no justice—only slavery.

⁷ As a well keeps its water fresh,

so Jerusalem keeps its wickedness fresh.

* 6:1 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel. † 6:2 Jerusalem Literally, “daughter Zion.” See “Zion” in the Word List. ‡ 6:2 you are like a beautiful meadow The Hebrew text here is hard to understand. § 6:6 siege mound A large pile of dirt and rock that an army put against the wall of a city they were attacking. This made it easier for the enemy soldiers to climb over the wall into the city.

I hear about the robbing and violence in this city all the time.

I see nothing but pain and sickness there all the time.

⁸ Listen to this warning, Jerusalem,

or I will turn my back on you.

I will make your land an empty desert.

No one will be able to live there.”

⁹ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“Gather* the people of Israel who were left on their land.

Gather them the way you would gather the last grapes on a grapevine.

Check each vine,

like the workers check each vine when they pick the grapes.”

¹⁰ Who can I speak to?

Who can I warn?

Who will listen to me?

The people of Israel have closed their ears,

so they cannot hear my warnings.

They don't like the LORD'S teachings.

They don't want to hear his message.

¹¹ But I am full of the LORD'S anger,

and I am tired of holding it in!

“Pour out my anger on the children playing in the streets

and on the young soldiers gathered there as well.

A man and his wife will both be captured

as well as all the old people.

¹² Their houses will be given to others.

Their fields and their wives will be given to other people.

* 6:9 Gather Or “glean.” There was a law that a farmer must leave some grain in his field during harvest, so that poor people and travelers could find something to eat. See Leviticus 19:9; 23:22.

I will raise my hand and punish the people of Judah.”
This message is from the LORD.

¹³ “All the people of Israel want more and more money.
All of them, from the least important to the most
important, are like that.
Even the prophets and priests tell lies.

¹⁴ They should bandage the wounds my people have
suffered,
but they treat their wounds like small scratches.
They say, ‘It’s all right, everything is all right.’
But it is not all right!

¹⁵ They should be ashamed of the evil things they do,
but they are not ashamed at all.
They don’t know enough to be embarrassed by their sins.
So they will be punished with everyone else.
They will be thrown to the ground when I punish the
people.”
This is what the LORD said.

¹⁶ This is what the LORD says:
“Stand at the crossroads and look.
Ask where the old road is.
Ask where the good road is,
and walk on that road.
If you do, you will find rest for yourselves.
But you people have said, ‘We will not walk on the
good road.’

¹⁷ I chose watchmen to watch over you.
I told them, ‘Listen for the sound of the war trumpet.’
But they said, ‘We will not listen!’

¹⁸ So listen, all you nations,

and pay attention, you people in those countries.[†]
 19 Hear this, people of the earth:
 I am going to bring disaster to the people of Judah
 because of all the evil they planned,
 and because they ignored my messages.
 They refused to obey my law.

20 “Why do you bring me incense from the country of
 Sheba[‡]?
 Why do you bring me sweet-smelling cane from a
 faraway country?
 Your burnt offerings don’t make me happy.
 Your sacrifices don’t please me.”

21 So this is what the LORD says:
 “I will give the people of Judah problems.
 They will be like stones that make people fall.
 Fathers and sons will stumble over them.
 Friends and neighbors will die.”

22 This is what the LORD says:
 “An army is coming from the north.[§]
 A great nation is coming from faraway places on
 earth.

23 The soldiers carry bows and spears.
 They are cruel; they have no mercy.
 They are so powerful.

[†] 6:18 pay ... countries The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

[‡] 6:20 Sheba A land south of Israel, located where part of Saudi Arabia is today. Sheba controlled the spice trade in the time of Jeremiah. [§] 6:22 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

They sound like the roaring ocean as they ride their horses.

That army is coming, ready for battle.

It is coming to attack you, Jerusalem.*”

²⁴ We have heard the news about that army,
and we are paralyzed with fear.

We feel trapped by our troubles,
in pain like a woman giving birth.

²⁵ Don't go out into the fields.

Don't go on the roads
because the enemy has swords,
and there is danger everywhere.

²⁶ My people, put on sackcloth
and roll in the ashes.†

Cry loudly for the dead.

Cry as if you lost an only son.

Do this because the destroyer
will come against us very quickly.

²⁷ “Jeremiah, I want you to be
like a worker who tests metals.

You will test my people
and watch how they live.

²⁸ My people have turned against me,
and they are very stubborn.

They say bad things about people.

They are like bronze and iron
that are covered with rust and tarnish.

²⁹ *They are like a worker who tried to make silver pure.*

* 6:23 Jerusalem Literally, “daughter Zion.” See “Zion” in the Word List.

† 6:26 roll in the ashes This is one way people showed that they were sad or crying for a dead person.

The bellows[‡] blew strongly, and the fire became hotter,
but only lead came from the fire.[§]

The worker wasted his time
trying to make that silver pure.

In the same way the evil was not removed from my
people.

³⁰ My people will be called ‘Rejected Silver.’

They will be given that name because the LORD did
not accept them.”

7

Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon

¹ This is the LORD’S message to Jeremiah: ² “Jeremiah, stand at the gate of the LORD’S house. Teach this message at the gate:

“ ‘Hear the message from the LORD, all you people of the nation of Judah. All you who come through these gates to worship the LORD, hear this message. ³ The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: Change your lives and do good things. If you do this, I will let you live in this place.* ⁴ Don’t trust the lies that some people say. They say, “This is the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD!†” ⁵ If you change your lives and do good things, I will let you live in this place. You

[‡] 6:29 bellows A tool for blowing air on a fire to make the fire hotter.

[§] 6:29 lead came from the fire Workers melted metals like silver to make the metals pure. Lead was the first metal to melt, so the workers poured the lead out, leaving the other metal pure. Here, Jeremiah is saying the people are all bad—they are all lead and no silver! * 7:3 I will ... place This can

also mean “I will live with you.” † 7:4 This is ... LORD Many people in Jerusalem thought the Lord would always protect the city where his Temple was, so it didn’t matter how evil they were.

must be fair to each other. ⁶ You must be fair to strangers. You must help widows and orphans. Don't kill innocent people! And don't follow other gods, because they will only ruin your lives. ⁷ If you obey me, I will let you live in this place. I gave this land to your ancestors for them to keep forever.

⁸ “But you are trusting lies that are worthless. ⁹ Will you steal and murder? Will you commit adultery? Will you falsely accuse other people? Will you worship the false god Baal and follow other gods that you have not known? ¹⁰ If you commit these sins, do you think that you can stand before me in this house that is called by my name? Do you think you can stand before me and say, “We are safe,” just so you can do all these terrible things? ¹¹ This Temple is called by my name. Is this Temple nothing more to you than a hideout for robbers? I have been watching you.’” This message is from the LORD.

¹² “You people of Judah, go now to the town of Shiloh. Go to the place where I first made a house for my name. The people of Israel also did evil things. Go and see what I did to that place because of the evil they did.† ¹³ You people of Israel were doing all these evil things. This message is from the LORD! I spoke to you again and again, but you refused to listen to me. I called to you, but you did not answer. ¹⁴ So I will destroy the house called by my name in Jerusalem. I will destroy that Temple as I destroyed Shiloh. And that house in Jerusalem that is called by my name is the Temple you trust in. I gave that place to you and to your ancestors. ¹⁵ I will throw you

† 7:12 Go ... they did Shiloh was probably destroyed by the Philistines in the time of Eli and Samuel. See 1 Sam. 4.

away from me just as I threw away all your brothers from Ephraim.’

¹⁶ “As for you, Jeremiah, don’t pray for these people of Judah. Don’t beg for them or pray for them. Don’t beg me to help them. I will not listen to your prayer for them. ¹⁷ I know you see what they are doing in the towns of Judah. You can see what they are doing in the streets of the city of Jerusalem. ¹⁸ This is what the people of Judah are doing: The children gather wood. The fathers use the wood to make a fire. The women make the dough and then make cakes of bread to offer to the Queen of Heaven. The people of Judah pour out drink offerings to worship other gods. They do this to make me angry. ¹⁹ But I am not the one they are really hurting.” This message is from the LORD. “They are only hurting themselves. They are bringing shame on themselves.”

²⁰ So this is what the Lord GOD says: “I will show my anger against this place. I will punish people and animals. I will punish the trees in the field and the crops that grow in the ground. My anger will be like a hot fire—no one will be able to stop it.”

Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

²¹ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: “Go and offer as many burnt offerings and sacrifices as you want. Eat the meat of those sacrifices yourselves. ²² I brought your ancestors out of Egypt. I spoke to them, but I did not give them any commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices. ²³ I only gave them this command: ‘Obey me and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Do all that I command, and good things will happen to you.’

²⁴ “But your ancestors did not listen to me. They did not pay attention to me. They were stubborn and did

what they wanted to do. They did not become good. They became even more evil—they went backward, not forward. ²⁵ From the day that your ancestors left Egypt to this day, I have sent my servants to you. My servants are the prophets. I sent them to you again and again. ²⁶ But your ancestors did not listen to me. They did not pay attention to me. They were very stubborn and did evil even worse than their fathers did.

²⁷ “Jeremiah, you will tell these things to the people of Judah. But they will not listen to you. You call to them, but they will not answer you. ²⁸ So you must tell them these things: ‘This is the nation that did not obey the LORD its God. These people did not listen to God’s teachings. They don’t know the true teachings.’

The Valley of Slaughter

²⁹ “Jeremiah, cut off your hair and throw it away. [§] Go up to the bare hilltop and cry, because the LORD has rejected this generation of people. He has turned his back on these people. And in anger he will punish them. ³⁰ Do this because I have seen the people of Judah doing evil things.” This message is from the LORD. “They have set up their idols, and I hate those idols. They have set up idols in the Temple that is called by my name. They have made my house ‘dirty’! ³¹ The people of Judah built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom where they killed their own sons and daughters and burned them as sacrifices. This is something I never commanded. Something like this never even entered my mind! ³² So I warn you. The days are coming,” says the LORD, “when people will not call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom anymore. No, they will call it the Valley of

§ 7:29 cut ... away This showed that Jeremiah was sad.

Slaughter. They will give it this name because they will bury the dead people in Topheth until there is no more room to bury anyone else. ³³ Then the bodies of the dead people will become food for the birds of the sky. Wild animals will eat the bodies of those people. There will be no one left alive to chase the birds or animals away. ³⁴ I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and happiness in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. There will be no more sounds of the bride and bridegroom in Judah or Jerusalem. The land will become an empty desert.”

8

¹ This message is from the LORD: “At that time men will take the bones of the kings and important rulers of Judah from their tombs. They will take the bones of the priests and prophets from their tombs. They will take the bones of all the people of Jerusalem from their tombs. ² They will spread the bones on the ground under the sun, the moon, and the stars. The people of Jerusalem love to worship the sun, the moon, and the stars. No one will gather the bones and bury them again. So the bones of those people will be like dung thrown on the ground.

³ “I will force the people of Judah to leave their homes and their land. They will be taken away to foreign lands. Some of the people of Judah who were not killed in the war will wish that they had been killed.” This message is from the LORD All-Powerful.

Sin and Punishment

⁴ “Jeremiah, say this to the people of Judah: ‘This is what the LORD says:

“ ‘You know if a man falls down,
he gets up again.

And if a man goes the wrong way,

he turns around and comes back.

⁵ The people of Judah went the wrong way.

But why do the people of Jerusalem continue going
the wrong way?

They believe their own lies.

They refuse to turn around and come back.

⁶ I have listened to them very carefully,

but they don't say what is right.

They are not sorry for their sins.

They don't think about the evil they have done.

They do things without thinking.

They are like horses running into a battle.

⁷ Even the birds in the sky

know the right time to do things.

The storks, doves, swifts, and thrushes

know when it is time to fly to a new home.

But my people don't know

what the LORD wants them to do.

⁸ “You keep saying, “We have the LORD'S teachings. So
we are wise!”

But this is not true, because the scribes have lied
with their pens.

⁹ These “wise people” refused to listen to the LORD'S
teachings.

So they are not really wise at all.

These “wise people” were trapped.

They became shocked and ashamed.

¹⁰ So I will give their wives to other men.

I will give their fields to new owners.

All the people of Israel want more and more money.

All of them, from the least important to the most
important, are like that.

Even the prophets and priests tell lies.

11 They should bandage the wounds my people have suffered,

but they treat their wounds like small scratches.

They say, "It's all right, everything is all right."

But it is not all right!

12 They should be ashamed of the evil things they do, but they are not ashamed at all.

They don't know enough to be embarrassed by their sins.

So they will be punished with everyone else.

They will be thrown to the ground when I punish the people.' "

This is what the LORD said.

13 " 'I will take away their fruit and crops

so that there will be no harvest, says the LORD.

There will be no grapes on the vine and no figs on the fig tree.

Even the leaves will become dry and die.

I will take away the things I gave them.' " *

14 "They will say, 'Why are we just sitting here?

Come, let's run to the strong cities.

If the LORD our God is going to make us die,

then let's die there.

We have sinned against the LORD,

so he has given us poisoned water to drink.

15 We hoped to have peace,

but nothing good has come.

We hoped that he would forgive us,

but only disaster has come.

16 From the land of the tribe of Dan,

* 8:13 I will take away ... gave them The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

we hear the snorting[†] of the enemy's horses.
 The ground shakes from the pounding of their
 hooves.
 They have come to destroy the land
 and everything in it.
 They have come to destroy the city
 and all the people who live there.' ”

17 “People of Judah, I am sending poisonous snakes[‡] to
 attack you.
 These snakes cannot be controlled.
 They will bite you.”
 This message is from the LORD.

18 God, I am very sad and afraid.

19 Listen to my people.
 Everywhere in this country, people are crying for
 help.
 They say, “Is the LORD still at Zion?
 Is Zion's King still there?”

But God says,
 “The people of Judah worshiped their worthless foreign
 idols.
 That made me very angry!
 Why did they do that?”

20 And the people say,
 “Harvest time is over.
 Summer is gone,
 and still we have not been saved.”

[†] 8:16 snorting The sound caused by forcing breath very hard through
 the nose. [‡] 8:17 poisonous snakes This probably means one of Judah's
 enemies.

²¹ My people are hurt, so I am hurt.
I am too sad to speak.

²² Surely there is some medicine in Gilead.
Surely there is a doctor in Gilead.
So why are the wounds of my people not healed?

9

¹ If my head were filled with water,
and if my eyes were a fountain of tears,
I would cry day and night for my people who have
been destroyed.

² If only I had a place in the desert—
a house where travelers spend the night—
so I could leave my people.
I could go away from them,
because they are all unfaithful to God.
They have all turned against him.

³ “They use their tongues like a bow;
lies fly from their mouths like arrows.
Lies, not truth,
have grown strong in this land.
They go from one sin to another.
They don’t know me.”
This is what the LORD said.

⁴ “Watch your neighbors!
Don’t trust your own brothers,
because every brother is a cheat.
Every neighbor talks behind your back.
⁵ Everyone lies to their neighbor.
No one speaks the truth.
The people of Judah have taught

their tongues to lie.

They sinned until they were too tired
to come back.

⁶ One bad thing followed another,
and lies followed lies.

The people refused to know me.”
This is what the LORD said.

⁷ So the LORD All-Powerful says,

“A worker heats metal in a fire to test it and see if it is
pure.

I will test the people of Judah like that.

I have no other choice.

My people have sinned.

⁸ The people of Judah have tongues as sharp as arrows.
Their mouths speak lies.

They all speak kindly to their neighbors,
but they are secretly planning ways to attack them.

⁹ Should I punish the people of Judah for doing these
things?”

This message is from the LORD.

“You know I should punish a nation such as this.
I should give it the punishment it deserves.”

¹⁰ I, Jeremiah, will cry for the mountains.

I will sing a funeral song for the empty fields,
because all the animals were taken away.

No one travels there now.

The sounds of cattle cannot be heard.

The birds have flown away,
and the animals are gone.

¹¹ The Lord says, * “I will make the city of Jerusalem a pile of garbage.

It will be a home for jackals.

I will destroy the cities in the land of Judah,
so no one will live there.”

¹² Is there a man who is wise enough to understand these things? Is there someone who has been taught by the LORD? Can anyone explain his message? Why was the land ruined? Why was it made like an empty desert where no one goes?

¹³ The LORD answered, “It is because the people of Judah stopped following my teachings. I gave them my teachings, but they refused to listen to me. They did not follow my teachings. ¹⁴ The people of Judah lived their own way. They were stubborn. They followed the false god Baal. Their fathers taught them to follow those false gods.”

¹⁵ So the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says, “I will soon make the people of Judah eat bitter food and drink poisoned water. ¹⁶ I will scatter the people of Judah throughout other nations. They will live in strange nations that they and their fathers never knew about. I will send men with swords. They will kill the people of Judah. They will kill them until all the people are gone.”

¹⁷ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“Now think about these things!

Call for the women who get paid to cry at funerals.

Send for the people who are good at that job.

¹⁸ The people say,

‘Let those women come quickly

* ^{9:11} The Lord says This is implied from the context.

and cry for us.
Then our eyes will fill with tears
that flow over our eyelids like streams of water.’

¹⁹ “The sound of loud crying is heard from Zion:
‘We are really ruined!
We are so ashamed!
We must leave our land,
because our houses have been destroyed.
Now our houses are only piles of rock.’ ”

²⁰ Now, women of Judah, listen to the message from the
LORD.
Listen to the words from his mouth.
Teach your daughters how to cry loudly.
Each of them must learn to sing this funeral song:
²¹ “Death has climbed in through our windows
and has come into our palaces.
Death has come to our children who play in the streets
and to the young men who meet in the public
places.”

²² This is what you should say: “The LORD says,
‘Dead bodies will lie
in the fields like dung.
Their bodies will lie on the ground like grain a farmer has
cut.
But there will be no one to gather them.’ ”

²³ This is what the LORD says:
“The wise must not brag about their wisdom.
The strong men must not brag about their strength.
The rich must not brag about their money.

²⁴ But if someone wants to brag, then let them brag about this:

Let them brag that they learned to know me.
 Let them brag that they understand that I am the LORD,
 that I am kind and fair,
 and that I do good things on earth.
 I love this kind of bragging.”
 This message is from the LORD.

²⁵ This is what the LORD says: “The time is coming when I will punish all those who are circumcised only in the body. ²⁶ I am talking about the people of the nations of Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and all those who live in the desert. The circumcision they do is not the kind the Lord wants. But the people of Israel are not really circumcised either. They are not circumcised in their hearts.†”

10

The Lord and the Idols

¹ Family of Israel, listen to the LORD! ² This is what the LORD says:

“Don’t live like people from other nations.

Don’t be afraid of special signs in the sky.*
 The other nations are afraid of what they see in the sky.
 But you must not be afraid of them.

³ The customs of other people are worth nothing.
 Their idols are nothing but wood from the forest.

† 9:26 circumcised in their hearts See the note at Jeremiah 4:4. * 10:2 special signs in the sky People believed that such things as comets, meteors, or eclipses of the sun and moon could be used to learn what was going to happen in the future.

Their idols are made by workers with their chisels.[†]
 4 They make their idols beautiful with silver and gold.
 They use hammers and nails to fasten their idols
 down
 so that they will not fall over.
 5 The idols of the other nations are like
 a scarecrow in a cucumber field.
 They cannot walk.
 They cannot talk, and the people must carry them.
 So don't be afraid of their idols.
 They cannot hurt you.
 And they cannot help you either.”

6 LORD, there is no one like you.

You are great!

Your name is great and powerful!

7 Everyone should respect you, King of all the nations.

You deserve their respect.

There are many wise men among the nations,
 but not one of them is as wise as you.

8 All the people of the other nations are stupid and foolish.

Their teachings come from worthless wooden statues.

9 They use silver from the city of Tarshish

and gold from the city of Uphaz and make their
 statues.

Carpenters and metalworkers make the idols.

They put blue and purple clothes on them.

“Wise men” make these “gods.”

10 But the LORD is the only true God.

He is the only God who is alive.

He is the King who rules forever.

[†] 10:3 chisels Sharp tools used to carve wood or stone.

The earth shakes when he is angry.

The people of the nations cannot stop his anger.

¹¹ The Lord says, “Tell them this message:

‘These false gods did not make heaven and earth.

They will be destroyed and disappear from heaven
and earth.’ ”[‡]

¹² God is the one who used his power and made the earth.

He used his wisdom and built the world.

With his understanding he stretched the sky over the
earth.

¹³ God causes the loud thunder,

and he causes great floods of water to fall from the
sky.

He makes clouds rise in the sky every place on earth.

He sends lightning with the rain.

He brings out the wind from his storehouses.

¹⁴ People are so stupid!

Metalworkers are fooled by the idols that they them-
selves made.

These statues are nothing but lies.

They are stupid.[§]

¹⁵ These idols are worth nothing.

They are something to make fun of.

In the time of judgment they will be destroyed.

[‡] 10:11 Tell this message ... earth This part was written in Aramaic, not Hebrew. This was the language people used often when writing to people in other countries. It was also the language spoken in Babylon. [§] 10:14 They are stupid Literally, “They have no spirit.” This might also mean “They are not alive.”

16 But Jacob's God* is not like the idols.

He made everything,
and Israel is the family that God chose to be his own
people.

His name is LORD All-Powerful.

Destruction Is Coming

17 Get everything you own and prepare to leave.

People of Judah, you are trapped in the city,
and the enemy is all around it.

18 This is what the LORD says:

“This time, I will throw the people of Judah out of this
country.

I will bring pain and trouble to them.

I will do this so that they will learn their lesson.”†

19 I am hurt badly.

I am injured and I cannot be healed.

But I told myself, “This is my sickness;

I must suffer through it.”

20 My tent is ruined.

All its ropes are broken.

My children left me.

They are gone.

No one is left to put up my tent.

No one is left to fix a shelter for me.

21 The shepherds are stupid.

They don't try to find the LORD.

They are not wise,

so their flocks are scattered and lost.

* 10:16 Jacob's God Literally, “Jacob's share.” This means that God and Jacob (the people of Israel) had a special relationship—God belonged to Israel, and Israel belonged to God.” † 10:18 they will learn their lesson The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

²² Listen! A loud noise!

The noise is coming from the north.[‡]

It will destroy the cities of Judah.

Judah will become an empty desert.

It will be a home for jackals.

²³ LORD, I know that our lives do not belong to us.

We have no control over what happens.

²⁴ So correct us, LORD!

But please be fair.

Don't punish us in anger,

or you will destroy us!

²⁵ If you are angry, then punish the other nations.

They don't know or respect you.

They don't worship you.

Those nations destroyed Jacob's family.

They destroyed Israel completely.

They destroyed Israel's homeland.

11

The Agreement Is Broken

¹ This is the message from the LORD: ² "Jeremiah, listen to the words of this agreement and tell them to the people living in Jerusalem and the rest of Judah. ³ Tell them that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Bad things will happen to anyone who does not obey this agreement.

⁴ I am talking about the agreement I made with your

[‡] 10:22 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

ancestors when I brought them out of that furnace* called Egypt.’ At that time I told them, ‘Listen to me and obey all the commands I give you. Then you will be my people and I will be your God.’

⁵ “I did this to keep the promise that I had made to your ancestors. I promised to give them a very fertile land—a land flowing with milk and honey. And you are living in that country today.”

I answered, “Amen, LORD.”

⁶ The LORD said to me, “Jeremiah, tell this message in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: ‘Listen to the words of this agreement, and then obey these laws.

⁷ I gave a warning to your ancestors at the time I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I have warned them again and again to this day. I told them to obey me. ⁸ But your ancestors did not listen to me. They were stubborn and did what their own evil hearts wanted. The agreement says that bad things will happen to them if they don’t obey. So I made all the bad things happen to them. I commanded them to obey the agreement, but they did not.’”

⁹ The LORD said to me, “Jeremiah, I know that the people of Judah and the people living in Jerusalem have made secret plans. ¹⁰ They are committing the same sins that their ancestors did. Their ancestors refused to listen to my message. They followed and worshiped other gods. The family of Israel and the family of Judah have broken the agreement I made with their ancestors.”

¹¹ So this is what the LORD says: “I will soon make something terrible happen to the people of Judah. They will not be able to escape. They will be sorry and cry to me

* 11:4 furnace Literally, “iron furnace.” That is, an oven hot enough to soften iron so that it can be hammered into something useful.

for help, but I will not listen to them. ¹²The people in the towns of Judah and in the city of Jerusalem will go and pray to their idols for help. They burn incense to those idols. But their idols will not be able to help the people of Judah when that terrible disaster comes.

¹³ “People of Judah, you have many idols—there are as many idols as there are towns in Judah. You have built many altars for worshiping that disgusting god Baal—there are as many altars as there are streets in Jerusalem.

¹⁴ “As for you, Jeremiah, don’t pray for these people of Judah. Don’t beg for them. Don’t say prayers for them. I will not listen. They will suffer and then call to me for help, but I will not listen.

¹⁵ “Judah is the one I love, but why is she in my temple?
She has done too many evil things.
Judah, do you think vows and sacrifices will keep you from
being destroyed?
Will I then allow you to enjoy your evil ways?”

¹⁶ The LORD gave you a name.
He called you, “A green olive tree, beautiful to look
at.”
But with a powerful storm, he will set that tree on fire,
and its branches will be burned up.†

¹⁷ The LORD All-Powerful planted you, and he said that disaster will come to you. That is because the family of Israel and the family of Judah have done evil things. They offered sacrifices to Baal, and that made him angry!

Evil Plans Against Jeremiah

† 11:16 The meaning of these verses is uncertain.

¹⁸ The LORD showed me that the men of Anathoth[‡] were making plans against me. He showed me what they were doing, so I knew they were against me. ¹⁹ Before he showed me this, I was like a gentle lamb waiting to be butchered. I did not understand that they were against me. They were saying this about me: “Let us destroy the tree and its fruit! Let us kill him! Then people will forget him.” ²⁰ So I prayed, “LORD All-Powerful, you are a fair judge. You know how to test people’s hearts and minds. I will tell you my arguments, and I will let you give them the punishment they deserve.”

²¹ The LORD said to me, “Those people from Anathoth are planning to take your life. They are telling you not to prophesy in the name of the LORD or they will kill you. This is what I have to say about them: ²² I, the LORD All-Powerful, promise that I will soon punish those people. Their young men will die in war. Their sons and daughters will die from hunger. ²³ No one from the city of Anathoth will be left. No one will survive. I will punish them and cause something bad to happen to them.”

12

Jeremiah Complains to God

¹ LORD, if I argue with you,
you are always right.

But I want to ask you about some things that don’t seem
right.

Why are wicked people successful?

[‡] 11:18 men of Anathoth Anathoth was Jeremiah’s hometown. The people who were plotting against him there included his own relatives. See Jeremiah 12:6.

Why do people you cannot trust have such easy lives?

² You have put these wicked people here like plants with strong roots.

They grow and produce fruit.

With their mouths they say that you are near and dear to them,

but in their hearts they are really far away from you.

³ But you know my heart, LORD.

You see me and test my mind.

Drag the evil people away like sheep to be killed.

Choose them for the day of slaughter.

⁴ How much longer will the land be dry?

How long will the grass be dry and dead?

The birds and the animals of this land have all died,
and it is the fault of the wicked.

But they are saying,

“Jeremiah will not live long enough to see what happens to us.”

God's Answer to Jeremiah

⁵ “Jeremiah, if running in a race against men makes you tired,

how will you race against horses?

If you trip and fall in a safe place,

what will you do in a dangerous place?

What will you do in the thornbushes

that grow along the Jordan River?

⁶ These men are your own brothers.

Members of your own family are making plans against you.

People from your own family are shouting at you.

Don't trust them,

even when they speak to you like friends.

The Lord Rejects Judah

7 “I have abandoned my house.

I have left my own property.*

I have given Judah, the one I love,
to her enemies.

8 My own people turned against me like a wild lion.

They roared at me, so I turned away from them.

9 My own people have become like

a dying animal surrounded by vultures.

These birds are circling around her.

Come on, wild animals.

Come get something to eat.

10 Many shepherds have ruined my vineyard.

They have trampled the plants in my field.

They have made my beautiful field a desert.

11 They have turned it into an empty desert.

It is dry and dead.

The whole land has been ruined,

and no one is left to care for it.

12 The empty hills are covered with soldiers

who have come to destroy everything.

The LORD is using them to punish that land from one end
to the other.

No one is safe.

13 The people will plant wheat,

but they will harvest only thorns.

They will work hard until they are very tired,

but they will get nothing for all their work.

They will be ashamed of their crop.

The LORD’S anger caused this.”

The Lord’s Promise to Israel’s Neighbors

* 12:7 house ... my own property That is, the people of Judah.

¹⁴ This is what the LORD says: “I will tell you what I will do for all those who live around the land of Israel. They are very wicked. They have destroyed the land I gave to the people of Israel. I will pull the evil people up and throw them out of their land, and I will pull the people of Judah up with them. ¹⁵ But after I pull them up out of their land, I will feel sorry for them. I will bring each family back to its own property and to its own land. ¹⁶ I want these people to learn their lessons well. In the past they taught my people to use Baal’s name to make promises. Now, I want them to learn to use my name. I want them to say, ‘As the LORD lives ...’ If they do that, I will allow them to be successful, and I will let them live among my people. ¹⁷ But if a nation does not listen to my message, I will completely destroy it. I will pull it up like a dead plant.” This message is from the LORD.

13

The Sign of the Loincloth

¹ This is what the LORD said to me: “Jeremiah, go and buy a linen loincloth.* Then put it around your waist. Don’t let it get wet.”

² So I bought a linen loincloth, just as the LORD told me to do, and I put it around my waist. ³ Then the message from the LORD came to me a second time. ⁴ This was the message: “Jeremiah, take the loincloth you bought and are wearing, and go to Perath.† Hide the loincloth there in a crack in the rocks.”

* 13:1 loincloth A common undergarment in ancient Judah. It was a short skirt that was wrapped around the hips. It reached about halfway down the thighs. † 13:4 Perath Probably a village near Jerusalem. This town is called Parah in the list of the cities of the land of Benjamin in Josh. 18:23. But this name also means the Euphrates River.

⁵ So I went to Perath and hid the loincloth there, just as the LORD told me to do. ⁶ Many days later the LORD said to me, “Now, Jeremiah, go to Perath. Get the loincloth that I told you to hide there.”

⁷ So I went to Perath and dug the loincloth out of the crack in the rocks where I had hidden it. But now I could not wear the loincloth, because it was ruined. It was not good for anything.

⁸ Then the message from the LORD came to me. ⁹ This is what the LORD said: “The loincloth is ruined and not good for anything. In the same way, I will ruin the proud people of Judah and Jerusalem. ¹⁰ I will ruin them because they refuse to listen to my messages. They are stubborn and do only what they want to do. They follow and worship other gods. They will be like this linen loincloth. They will be ruined and not good for anything. ¹¹ A loincloth is wrapped tightly around a man’s waist. In the same way, I wrapped the family of Israel and the family of Judah around me.” This message is from the LORD. “I did that so that they would be my people and bring me fame, praise, and honor. But my people did not listen to me.”

Warnings to Judah

¹² “Jeremiah, say to the people of Judah: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Every wineskin should be filled with wine.’ They will laugh and say to you, ‘Of course, we know that every wineskin should be filled with wine.’ ¹³ Then you will say to them, ‘This is what the LORD says: I will make everyone who lives in this land helpless, like a drunken man. I am talking about the kings who sit on David’s throne. I am also talking about the priests, the prophets, and all the people who live in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ I will make them stumble and fall against each another, even the fathers and sons.’ This message is from the LORD.

'I will not feel sorry or have pity for them. I will not allow compassion to stop me from destroying the people of Judah.'

¹⁵ Listen and pay attention.

The LORD has spoken to you.

Do not be proud.

¹⁶ Honor the LORD your God.

Praise him or he will bring darkness.

Praise him before you fall on the dark hills.

You people of Judah are hoping for light,
but the Lord will turn the light into thick darkness.
He will change it into the deepest gloom.

¹⁷ If you people of Judah don't listen to him,
I will hide and cry.

Your pride will cause me to cry.

I will cry very hard.

My eyes will overflow with tears,
because the LORD'S flock[‡] will be captured.

¹⁸ Tell these things to the king and his wife,

"Come down from your thrones.

Your beautiful crowns have fallen from your heads."

¹⁹ The cities in the Negev are locked.

No one can open them.

All the people of Judah have been taken away as captives.

They were carried away as prisoners.

²⁰ Jerusalem, look!

[‡] 13:17 LORD'S flock This is a figurative name for the people of Judah. The Lord is thought of as a shepherd, while his people are seen as his flock of sheep.

The enemy is coming from the north[§]!
 Where is the flock* you were once in charge of?
 That beautiful flock is gone now.

²¹ I will let your enemies become your rulers—
 people you once trusted with your secrets.
 What will you say then?

Surely you will feel great pain,
 like a woman giving birth.

²² You might ask yourself,
 “Why has this bad thing happened to me?”

It happened because of your many sins.
 Because of your sins, your skirt was torn off,
 and your sandals were taken away.
 They did this to embarrass you.

²³ A black man cannot change the color of his skin,
 and a leopard cannot change its spots.

In the same way, Jerusalem, you cannot change and do
 good.

You always do bad things.

²⁴ “I will force you to leave your homes.

You will run in all directions.

You will be like chaff blown away by the desert wind.

²⁵ This is what will happen to you.

This is your part in my plans.”

This message is from the LORD.

“Why will this happen?

Because you forgot me.

[§] 13:20 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel. * 13:20 flock Here, the word “flock” refers to all the towns around Jerusalem, as if Jerusalem were the shepherd and the towns of Judah were her flock.

You trusted false gods.

²⁶ Jerusalem, I will pull your skirt up over your face.
Everyone will see you,
and you will be ashamed.

²⁷ I saw the terrible things you did.[†]
I saw you laughing and having sex with your lovers.
I know about your plans to be like a prostitute.
I have seen you on the hills and in the fields.
It will be very bad for you, Jerusalem.
How long will you continue doing your dirty sins?"

14

Drought and False Prophets

¹ This is the LORD'S message to Jeremiah about the drought*:

² "The nation of Judah cries for people who have died.
The people in the cities of Judah grow weaker and weaker.
They lie on the ground.

People in Jerusalem, cry to God for help.

³ The leaders of the people send their servants to get water.
The servants go to the water storage places,
but they don't find any water.

The servants come back with empty jars,
so they are ashamed and embarrassed.

They cover their heads from shame.

[†] 13:27 I saw ... you did This is probably talking about worshiping false gods.
But part of that worship was having sex with temple prostitutes. * 14:1
drought A time when no rain falls and the crops become dry and die.

- 4 No one prepares the ground for crops.[†]
No rain falls on the land.
The farmers are depressed.
So they cover their heads from shame.
- 5 Even the mother deer in the field leaves her newborn
baby alone,
because there is no grass.
- 6 Wild donkeys stand on the bare hills.
They sniff the wind like jackals.
But their eyes cannot find any food,
because there are no plants to eat.
- 7 “We know that this is our fault.
We are now suffering because of our sins.
LORD, do something to help us for the good of your
name.
We admit that we have left you many times.
We have sinned against you.
- 8 God, you are the hope of Israel!
You save Israel in times of trouble.
But now it seems like you are a stranger in the land,
like a traveler who only stays one night.
- 9 You seem like a man who has been attacked by surprise,
like a soldier who does not have the power to save
anyone.
But, LORD, you are with us.
We are called by your name, so don’t leave us without
help!”

¹⁰ This is what the LORD says about the people of Judah:
“The people of Judah really love to leave me. They don’t
stop themselves from leaving me. So now the LORD will

[†] 14:4 No one ... crops This follows the ancient Greek version. The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

not accept them. Now he will remember the evil they do. He will punish them for their sins.”

¹¹ Then the LORD said to me, “Jeremiah, don’t pray for good things to happen to the people of Judah. ¹² They might begin to fast and pray to me, but I will not listen to their prayers. Even if they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings to me, I will not accept them. I will destroy the people of Judah with war. I will take away their food, and they will starve. And I will destroy them with terrible diseases.”

¹³ But I said, “Lord GOD, the prophets were telling the people something different. They were telling the people of Judah, ‘You will not suffer from war or from hunger. The Lord will give you peace in this land.’ ”

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to me, “Jeremiah, those prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or command them or speak to them. Their prophecies came from false visions, worthless magic, and their own wishful thinking. ¹⁵ So this is what I, the LORD, say about the prophets who are speaking in my name. I did not send them. They said, ‘No enemy will ever attack this country. There will never be hunger in this land.’ So those prophets will die from hunger or by an enemy’s sword. ¹⁶ And the people they spoke to will be thrown into the streets. The people will die from hunger and war. I will punish them, and no one will be there to bury them, their wives, their sons, or their daughters.

¹⁷ “Jeremiah, speak this message to the people of Judah:

‘My eyes fill with tears
night and day without stopping.

I cry for my virgin daughter,[‡] and for my dear people,
because someone hit them and crushed them.
They have been hurt very badly.

¹⁸ If I go into the country,
I see the bodies of those killed in war.

If I go into the city,
I see people sick from hunger.

The priests and prophets continue their work,
but they don't understand what is happening.' ”

¹⁹ Lord, have you completely rejected the nation of Judah?
Do you hate Zion?

You hurt us so badly that we cannot be made well again.
Why did you do that?

We were hoping for peace,
but nothing good has come.

We were hoping for a time of healing,
but only terror came.

²⁰ LORD, we know that we are wicked.
We know that our ancestors did evil things.
Yes, we sinned against you.

²¹ For the good of your name, don't push us away.
Don't take away the honor from your glorious
throne.

Remember your agreement with us
and do not break it.

²² Foreign idols don't have the power to bring rain.
The sky does not have the power to send down
showers of rain.

You, the LORD our God, are our only hope.
You are the one who made all these things.

[‡] 14:17 virgin daughter Another name for Jerusalem.

15

¹ The LORD said to me, “Jeremiah, even if Moses and Samuel were here to pray for the people of Judah, I would not feel sorry for them. Send the people of Judah away from me! Tell them to go! ² They might ask you, ‘Where will we go?’ Tell them this is what the LORD says:

“ ‘I have chosen some people to die.

They will die.

I have chosen some to be killed with swords.

They will be killed with swords.

I have chosen some to die from hunger.

They will die from hunger.

I have chosen some to be taken away to a foreign country.

They will be prisoners there.

³ I will send four kinds of destroyers against them.’

This message is from the LORD.

‘I will send the enemy with a sword to kill.

I will send the dogs to drag their bodies away.

I will send birds of the air and wild animals

to eat and destroy their bodies.

⁴ I will make the people of Judah

an example of something terrible for all the people
on earth.

I will do this to the people of Judah

because of what Manasseh* did in Jerusalem.

Manasseh was the son of King Hezekiah.

Manasseh was a king of Judah.’

⁵ “No one will feel sorry for you, city of Jerusalem.

No one will be sad and cry for you.

* 15:4 Manasseh Manasseh was the most evil king of Judah according to 2 Kings 21:1-16. He worshiped many gods.

No one will go out of their way to even ask how you are.

⁶ Jerusalem, you left me.”

This message is from the LORD.

“Again and again you left me!

So I will punish and destroy you.

I am tired of holding back your punishment.

⁷ I will separate the people of Judah with my pitchfork.[†]

I will scatter them at the city gates of the land.

My people have not changed,

so I will destroy them.

I will take away their children.

⁸ Many women will lose their husbands.

There will be more widows than there is sand in the sea.

I will bring a destroyer at noontime.

The destroyer will attack the mothers of the young men of Judah.

I will bring pain and fear on the people of Judah.

I will make this happen very quickly.

⁹ The enemy will attack with swords and kill the people.

They will kill the survivors from Judah.

A woman with seven children will lose them.

She will cry until she becomes weak and struggles to breathe.

She will be upset and confused,

because her bright day has become dark.”

This message is from the LORD.

Jeremiah Complains to God Again

¹⁰ Mother, I am sorry

that you gave birth to me.

[†] 15:7 pitchfork A tool with sharp points for throwing hay from one place to another.

I am the one who must accuse
and criticize the whole land.
I have not loaned or borrowed anything,
but everyone curses me.

¹¹ Surely, LORD, I have served you well.
In times of disaster and trouble,
I prayed to you about my enemies.

God Answers Jeremiah

¹² “Jeremiah, you know that no one
can shatter a piece of iron.

I mean the kind of iron that is from the north.[‡]
And no one can shatter a piece of bronze either.

¹³ The people of Judah have many treasures.
I will give these riches to other people.

They will not have to buy them,
because Judah has many sins.
The people sinned in every part of Judah.

¹⁴ People of Judah, I will make you slaves of your enemies.
You will be slaves in a land that you never knew.

I am very angry.
My anger is like a hot fire,
and you will be burned.”

¹⁵ LORD, you understand me.

Remember me and take care of me.
People are hurting me.

Give them the punishment they deserve.
You are being patient with them.

But don't destroy me while you remain patient with
them.

[‡] 15:12 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

Think about me.

Think about the pain I suffer for you.

¹⁶ Your words came to me, and I ate them up.

They made me very happy.

I was glad to be called by your name,

LORD God All-Powerful.

¹⁷ I never sat with the crowd
as they laughed and had fun.

I sat by myself because of your influence on me.

You filled me with anger at the evil around me.

¹⁸ I don't understand why I still hurt.

I don't understand why my wound is not cured and
cannot be healed.

I think you have changed.

You are like a spring of water that became dry.

You are like a spring whose water has stopped flow-
ing.

¹⁹ Then the LORD said, "Jeremiah, if you change and come
back to me,

I will not punish you.

If you change and come back to me,

then you may serve me.

If you speak important things, not worthless words,

then you may speak for me.

The people of Judah should change and come back to you.

But don't you change and be like them.

²⁰ I will make you strong.

The people will think you are strong,

like a wall made of bronze.

The people of Judah will fight against you,

but they will not defeat you.

They will not defeat you,

because I am with you.

I will help you, and I will save you.”

This message is from the LORD.

²¹ “I will save you from these evil people.

They frighten you, but I will save you from them.”

16

The Day of Disaster

¹ The LORD’S message came to me: ² “Jeremiah, you must not get married. You must not have sons or daughters in this place.”

³ This is what the LORD says about the sons and daughters who are born in the land of Judah and about their mothers and fathers: ⁴ “They will die from terrible disease. And no one will cry for them or bury them. Their bodies will lie on the ground like dung. Or they will die in war or starve to death. Their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the wild animals of the earth.”

⁵ So the LORD says, “Jeremiah, don’t go into a house where people are eating a funeral meal. Don’t go there to cry for the dead or to show your sorrow. Don’t do these things, because I have taken back my blessing. I will not be kind to the people of Judah. I will not feel sorry for them.” This message is from the LORD.

⁶ “Important people and common people will die in the land of Judah. No one will bury them or cry for them. No one will cut himself or shave his head to show sorrow for them. ⁷ No one will bring food to those who are crying for the dead. No one will comfort those whose mother or father has died. No one will offer a drink to comfort those who are crying for the dead.

⁸ “Jeremiah, don’t go into a house where the people are having a party. Don’t go into that house and sit down

to eat and drink. ⁹ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel says: I will soon stop the sounds of people having fun. I will stop the happy sounds of people enjoying a wedding party. This will happen during your lifetime. I will do these things very soon.

¹⁰ “Jeremiah, you will tell the people of Judah these things, and the people will ask you, ‘Why has the LORD said these terrible things to us? What have we done wrong? What sin have we done against the LORD our God?’ ¹¹ You must tell them: ‘Terrible things will happen to you because your ancestors stopped following me.’ This message is from the LORD. ‘They stopped following me and began to follow and serve other gods. They worshiped those other gods. Your ancestors left me and stopped obeying my law. ¹² But you people have sinned more than your ancestors. You are very stubborn, and you are doing only what you want to do. You are not obeying me. Because you do only what you want to do, ¹³ I will throw you out of this country. I will force you to go to a foreign land. You will go to a land that you and your ancestors never knew. There you can serve false gods all you want to. I will not help you or show you any favors.’

¹⁴ “People make promises and say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives—the Lord who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt’ But the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when people will not say that. ¹⁵ They will say something new. They will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives—the Lord who brought the Israelites out of the northern land, who brought them out of all the countries where he had sent them’ Why will they say that? Because I will bring the Israelites back to the land that I gave to their ancestors.

¹⁶ “I will soon send for many fishermen to come to this land.” This message is from the LORD. “They will catch

the people of Judah. After that happens, I will send for many hunters* to come to this land. They will hunt the people of Judah on every mountain and hill and in the cracks of the rocks. ¹⁷ I see everything they do. The people of Judah cannot hide the things they do. Their sin is not hidden from me. ¹⁸ I will pay the people of Judah back for the evil things they did—I will punish them two times for every sin. I will do this because they have made my land ‘dirty.’ They made my land ‘dirty’ with their terrible idols. I hate those idols, but they have filled my country with their idols.”

¹⁹ LORD, you are my strength and my protection.

You are a safe place to run to in time of trouble.

The nations will come to you from all around the world.

They will say, “Our fathers had false gods.

They worshiped those worthless idols,

but the idols did not help them.

²⁰ Can people make real gods for themselves?

No, they can only make statues that are not really gods.”

²¹ “So I will teach those who make idols.

Right now I will teach them about my power and my strength.

Then they will know that I am God.

They will know that I am the LORD.

17

Guilt Written on the Heart

* 16:16 fishermen ... hunters This means the enemy soldiers from Babylon.

¹ “The sins of Judah are written where they cannot be erased—
 cut into stone with an iron pen,
 cut deep with a hard tip into the stone that is the hearts
 of the people.

 Their sins are carved into the horns of their altars.*
² Their children remember the altars
 that were dedicated to false gods.
 They remember the wooden poles
 that were dedicated to Asherah.
 They remember those things
 under the green trees and on the hills.

³ They remember those things
 on the mountains in the open country.
 The people of Judah have many treasures.
 I will give those things to other people.
 People will destroy all the high places in your country.
 You worshiped there, and that was a sin.

⁴ You will lose the land I gave you.
 I will let your enemies take you to be their slaves.
 That is because I am very angry.
 My anger is like a hot fire, and you will be burned
 forever.”

Trusting in People and Trusting in God

⁵ This is what the LORD says:
 “Bad things will happen to those who put their trust in
 people.
 Bad things will happen to those who depend on
 human strength.
 That is because they have stopped trusting the LORD.

* 17:1 horns of their altars The corners of altars were shaped like horns, and the blood of sacrifices was smeared on them. So Jeremiah may mean that the people’s sins have made their altars unfit for sacrifices.

6 They are like a bush in a desert where no one lives.
It is in a hot and dry land.
It is in bad soil.
That bush does not know about the good things that God
can give.

7 “But those who trust in the LORD will be blessed.
They know that the LORD will do what he says.
8 They will be strong like trees planted near a stream
that send out roots to the water.
They have nothing to fear when the days get hot.
Their leaves are always green.
They never worry, even in a year that has no rain.
They always produce fruit.

9 “Nothing can hide its evil as well as the human mind.
It can be very sick,
and no one really understands it.

10 But I am the LORD,
and I can look into a person’s heart.
I can test a person’s mind and decide what each one
should have.
I can give each person the right payment for what
they do.

11 Sometimes a bird will hatch an egg that it did not lay.
Those who cheat to get money are like that bird.
But when their lives are half finished, they will lose the
money.
At the end of their lives, it will be clear that they were
fools.”

12 From the very beginning, our Temple
has been a glorious throne for God.
It is a very important place.

13 LORD, you are the hope of Israel.
 You are like a spring of living water.
 Those who stop following the LORD
 will have a very short life.†

Jeremiah's Third Complaint

14 LORD, if you heal me, I surely will be healed.
 Save me, and I surely will be saved.
 Lord, I praise you!

15 The people of Judah continue to ask me questions.
 They say, "Jeremiah, what about the message from
 the LORD?
 Let's see that message come true."

16 Lord, I did not run away from you.
 I followed you.
 I became the shepherd‡ you wanted.
 I did not want the terrible day to come.
 You know what I said.
 You see all that is happening.

17 Please don't make me afraid of you.
 I depend on you in times of trouble.

18 People are hurting me.
 Make them ashamed,
 but don't disappoint me.
 Let them be filled with fear,
 but don't give me any reason to fear.
 Bring the terrible day of disaster to my enemies.

† 17:13 will have a very short life Literally, "he will be written in the dirt."
 This might mean that a person's name was written on a list of people who
 would soon die, or that a person's life will soon be gone—like a name written
 in the sand. ‡ 17:16 shepherd God's people are sometimes called his
 "sheep," and the person who takes care of them is called the "shepherd."

Break them, and break them again.

Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

¹⁹ This is what the LORD said to me: “Jeremiah, go and stand at the People’s Gate,[§] where the kings of Judah go in and out. Tell the people my message, and then go to all the other gates of Jerusalem and do the same.”

²⁰ Say to the people, “Listen to this message from the LORD. Listen, kings of Judah. Listen, all you people of Judah. All you who come through these gates into Jerusalem, listen to me! ²¹ This is what the LORD says: ‘Be careful that you don’t carry a load on the Sabbath day. And don’t bring a load through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. ²² Don’t bring a load out of your houses on the Sabbath day. Don’t do any work on that day. You must make the Sabbath day a holy day. I gave this same command to your ancestors, ²³ but they did not obey me. They did not pay attention to me. Your ancestors were very stubborn. I punished them, but it did not do any good. They did not listen to me. ²⁴ But you must be careful to obey me, says the LORD. You must not bring a load through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath. You must make the Sabbath day a holy day. You will do this by not doing any work on that day.

²⁵ “If you obey this command, the kings and leaders will be from David’s family. It will be the kings who sit on David’s throne and the leaders from Judah and Jerusalem who come through the gates of Jerusalem riding on chariots and on horses. And Jerusalem will have people living in it forever. ²⁶ People will come to

[§] 17:19 People’s Gate This might be one of the gates into Jerusalem or perhaps one of the southern gates into the Temple area used by those who were not priests.

Jerusalem from the towns and villages of Judah, from the land where the tribe of Benjamin lives,* from the western foothills, from the hill country, and from the Negev. All these people will bring burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, incense, and thank offerings to the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem.

²⁷ “But if you don’t listen to me and obey me, bad things will happen. If you carry loads into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, you are not keeping it as a holy day. So I will start a fire that cannot be put out. That fire will start at the gates of Jerusalem, and it will burn until it burns even the palaces.’ ”

18

The Potter and the Clay

¹ This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² “Jeremiah, go down to the potter’s house. I will give you my message there.”

³ So I went down to the potter’s house and saw him working with clay at the wheel. ⁴ He was making a pot from clay. But there was something wrong with the pot. So the potter used that clay to make another pot. With his hands he shaped the pot the way he wanted it to be.

⁵ Then this message from the LORD came to me: ⁶ “Family of Israel, you know that I can do the same thing with you. You are like the clay in the potter’s hands, and I am the potter.” This message is from the LORD. ⁷ “There may come a time when I will speak about a nation or a kingdom that I will pull up by its roots or tear down and destroy it. ⁸ But if the people of that nation change their

* ^{17:26} the land where ... Benjamin lives The land of Benjamin was just north of the land of Judah.

hearts and lives and stop doing evil things, I will change my mind and not bring on them the disaster I planned.
⁹ There may come another time when I speak about a nation that I will build up or plant. ¹⁰ But if I see that nation doing evil things and not obeying me, I will think again about the good I had planned to do for them.

¹¹ “So, Jeremiah, say to the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am the potter preparing troubles for you and making plans against you. So stop doing the evil things you are doing. Each person must change and start doing good.’ ¹² But the people of Judah will answer, ‘We don’t care what you say. We will continue to do what we want. We will do the evil our stubborn hearts want.’”

¹³ Listen to what the LORD says:

“Ask the other nations this question:

‘Have you ever heard of anything so bad?’

Israel, who is as dear to me as a young daughter,
has done this terrible thing!

¹⁴ It is as strange as not finding snow on Lebanon’s
mountains
or seeing the cool streams that come from there stop
flowing.

That just does not happen!

¹⁵ But my people have forgotten me.

They burn offerings to worthless idols.

They have left the right way that their ancestors followed,
and they stumble on the path they have chosen.

Instead of staying on the good road I showed them,
they prefer to walk on bumpy paths.

¹⁶ So their land will become an empty desert,

a place for people from now on to make fun of.
All who pass by there will be shocked by what has happened.

They will just shake their heads at what they see.

¹⁷ Like a strong east wind, I will scatter my people.

I will use their enemies to scatter them like dust.
When disaster comes upon them,
they will see me leaving, not coming to help.”

The People Plan Evil and Jeremiah Prays

¹⁸ Then the enemies of Jeremiah said, “Come, let us make plans against Jeremiah. We will always have a priest to tell us what the law says. We will still have wise men to advise us and prophets to tell us a message from God. So who needs Jeremiah? Let’s tell lies to ruin him and stop listening to what he says.”

¹⁹ LORD, listen to me!

Listen to what my enemies are saying.

²⁰ I have done only good to them.

It is not right for them to pay me back with evil.

But they are preparing a death trap for me!

Remember that I prayed to you for them.

I asked only good for them.

I tried to keep you from punishing them in anger.

²¹ So now make their children starve to death!

Let their enemies kill them with swords.

Let their wives lose their children and husbands.

Let their men die from disease,
and let their young men be killed in battle.

²² Let them cry out in their houses,

when you suddenly bring an enemy against them.

Let it happen because they prepared a death trap for me.

They hid traps for me to step in.

²³ LORD, you know about their plans to kill me.
So don't forgive their crimes or erase their sins.
Make them fall down in defeat.
Punish them in your anger!

19

The Broken Jar

¹ The LORD said to me, "Jeremiah, go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take some of the elders of the people and some priests with you. ² Go out to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the front of the Potsherd Gate.* I have a message I want you to announce there. ³ Say to those who are with you, 'King of Judah and people of Jerusalem, listen to this message from the LORD! This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: I will soon make a terrible thing happen to this place! Everyone who hears about it will be amazed and full of fear. ⁴ I will do these things because the people of Judah have stopped following me. They have made this a place for foreign gods. The people of Judah have burned sacrifices in this place to other gods. The people long ago did not worship those gods. Their ancestors did not worship them. These are new gods from other countries. The kings of Judah filled this place with the blood of innocent children. ⁵ The kings of Judah built high places for the god Baal. They use those places to burn their sons in the fire. They burned their sons as burnt offerings to the god Baal. I did not tell them to do that. I did not ask them to offer their sons as sacrifices. I never even thought of such a thing. ⁶ Now people call this

* 19:2 Potsherd Gate The exact location of this gate is not known, though it was probably at the southwestern part of the city.

place Topheth and the Valley of Hinnom. But I give you this warning. This message is from the LORD: The days are coming, when people will call this place the Valley of Slaughter. ⁷ At this place, I will ruin the plans of the people of Judah and Jerusalem. The enemy will chase them, and I will let the people of Judah be killed with swords in this place. I will make their dead bodies food for the birds and wild animals. ⁸ I will completely destroy this city. People will whistle and shake their heads when they pass by Jerusalem. They will be shocked when they see how the city was destroyed. ⁹ The enemy will bring its army around the city. That army will not let people go out to get food, so the people in the city will begin to starve. They will become so hungry that they will eat the bodies of their own sons and daughters, and then they will begin to eat each other.’

¹⁰ “Jeremiah, tell this to the people, and while they are watching, break the jar. ¹¹ Then say this: ‘The LORD All-Powerful says, I will break the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, just as someone breaks a clay jar! And like a broken jar, the nation of Judah cannot be put together again. It will be the same for the nation of Judah. The dead people will be buried here in Topheth until there is no more room. ¹² I will do this to these people and to this place. I will make this city like Topheth.’ This message is from the LORD. ¹³ ‘The houses in Jerusalem will become as “dirty” as this place, Topheth. The kings’ palaces will be ruined like this place, Topheth, because the people worshiped false gods on the roofs of their houses.† They worshiped the stars and burned sacrifices to honor them. They gave drink offerings to false gods.’ ”

† 19:13 roofs of their houses People built their houses with flat roofs that were used as an extra room.

¹⁴ Then Jeremiah left Topheth where the LORD had told him to speak. Jeremiah went to the LORD'S Temple and stood in the courtyard of the Temple. Jeremiah said to all the people: ¹⁵ "This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel says: 'I said I would bring many disasters to Jerusalem and the villages around it. I will soon make this happen because the people are very stubborn. They refuse to listen and obey me.'"

20

Jeremiah and Pashhur

¹ Pashhur son of Immer was a priest. He was the highest officer in the Temple of the LORD. When he heard Jeremiah say those things in the Temple yard, ² he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten. And he had Jeremiah's hands and feet locked between large blocks of wood. This was at the Upper Gate of Benjamin of the LORD'S Temple. ³ The next day Pashhur took Jeremiah out from between the blocks of wood. Then Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD'S name for you is not Pashhur. Now his name for you is, 'Surrounded by Terror.' ⁴ That is your name because of what the LORD says: 'I will soon make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. You will watch enemies killing your friends with swords. I will give all the people of Judah to the king of Babylon. He will take them away to the country of Babylon, and his army will kill the people of Judah with their swords. ⁵ The people of Jerusalem worked hard to build things and become wealthy, but I will give all these things to their enemies. The king in Jerusalem has many treasures, but I will give all the treasures to the enemy. The enemy will take them and carry them away to the country of Babylon. ⁶ And, Pashhur, you and all the people living in your house will

be taken away. You will be forced to go and live in the country of Babylon. You will die in Babylon, and you will be buried in that foreign country. You told lies to your friends. You said these things would not happen. But all your friends will also die and be buried in Babylon.’ ”

Jeremiah's Fifth Complaint

⁷ LORD, you tricked me, and I certainly was fooled.

You are stronger than I am, so you won.

I have become a joke.

People laugh at me and make fun of me all day long.

⁸ Every time I speak, I shout.

I am always shouting about violence and destruction.

I tell the people about the message that I received from the LORD.

But they only insult me and make fun of me.

⁹ Sometimes I say to myself, “I will forget about him.

I will not speak anymore in his name.”

But when I say that, his message is like a fire burning inside me!

It feels like it is burning deep in my bones!

I get tired of trying to hold his message inside.

And finally, I am not able to hold it in.

¹⁰ I hear people whispering against me.

Everywhere, I hear things that frighten me.

Even my friends are speaking against me.

People are just waiting for me to make a mistake.

They are saying, “Let us lie and say that he did something bad.

Maybe we can trick Jeremiah.

Then we will have him.

We will finally be rid of him.

Then we will grab him

and take our revenge on him.”

¹¹ But the LORD is with me.
 He is like a strong soldier.
 So those who are chasing me will fall.
 They will not defeat me.
 They will fail.
 They will be disappointed.
 They will be ashamed,
 and they will never forget that shame.

¹² LORD All-Powerful, you test good people.
 You look deeply into a person’s mind.
 I told you my arguments against these people.
 So let me see you give them the punishment they
 deserve.

¹³ Sing to the LORD!
 Praise the LORD!
 He saves the lives of the poor!
 He saves them from the wicked!

Jeremiah’s Sixth Complaint

¹⁴ Curse the day that I was born!
 Don’t bless the day my mother had me.
¹⁵ Curse the man who told my father the news that I was
 born.
 “It’s a boy!” he said.
 “You have a son.”
 He made my father very happy
 when he told him the news.
¹⁶ Let that man be like the cities the LORD destroyed.*
 He had no pity on them.
 Let him hear shouts of war in the morning;

* 20:16 cities the LORD destroyed That is, Sodom and Gomorrah. See Genesis 19.

let him hear battle cries at noontime,
¹⁷ because he did not kill me
 while I was in my mother's womb.
 If he had killed me then,
 my mother would have been my grave,
 and I would not have been born.
¹⁸ Why did I have to come out of her body?
 All I have seen is trouble and sorrow,
 and my life will end in shame.

21

God Rejects King Zedekiah's Request

¹ This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the LORD. This was when King Zedekiah of Judah sent Pashhur* son of Malkijah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah. They brought a message for Jeremiah. ² They said to Jeremiah, "Pray to the LORD for us. Ask him what will happen. We want to know, because King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is attacking us. Maybe the LORD will do great things for us, as he did in the past. Maybe he will make Nebuchadnezzar stop attacking us and leave."

³ Then Jeremiah answered Pashhur and Zephaniah. He said, "Tell King Zedekiah, ⁴ 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: You have weapons of war in your hands that you are using to defend yourselves from the Babylonians and their king. But I will make those weapons worthless.

"The army from Babylon is outside the wall all around the city. Soon I will bring that army into Jerusalem. ⁵ I myself will fight against you people of Judah. I will fight

* 21:1 Pashhur This is not the same Pashhur as the man in Jeremiah 20:1.

against you with my own powerful hand. I am very angry with you, so I will fight against you with my own powerful arm. I will fight very hard against you and show how angry I am. ⁶ I will kill everything living in Jerusalem, both people and animals. They will die from a terrible disease that will spread all through the city. ⁷ After that happens,' ” says the LORD, “ ‘I will give King Zedekiah of Judah and all his officials to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. And I will give to Nebuchadnezzar the people who remain alive in Jerusalem—those who did not die from the terrible disease and the people who did not die in war or from hunger. I will give them all to King Nebuchadnezzar. The people of Judah will be captured by their enemies who want to kill them. Nebuchadnezzar’s army will use their swords to kill the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar will not show any mercy. He will not feel sorry for them.’

⁸ “Also tell the people of Jerusalem, ‘This is what the LORD says: Understand that I will let you choose to live or die. ⁹ Anyone who stays in Jerusalem will die in war or from hunger or disease. But anyone who goes out of Jerusalem and surrenders to the Babylonians attacking you will live. Only those who leave the city will win anything in this war—their lives! ¹⁰ I have decided to make trouble for the city of Jerusalem. I will not help this city! I will give it to the king of Babylon, who will burn it with fire.’ ” This message is from the LORD.

¹¹ “Say this to Judah’s royal family: ‘Listen to the message from the LORD. ¹² Family of David, this is what the LORD says:

“ ‘You must judge people fairly every day.
Protect the victims from the criminals.

If you don't do that, I will become very angry.
My anger will be like a fire that no one will be able to
put out.
This will happen because you have done evil things.'

¹³ "Jerusalem, I am against you.
You sit on top of the mountain.
You sit like a queen over this valley.
You people of Jerusalem say,
'No one can attack us.
No one can come into our strong city.'"
This message is from the LORD.

¹⁴ "You will get the punishment you deserve.
I will start a fire in your forests
that will completely burn everything around you."
This message is from the LORD.

22

Judgment Against Evil Kings

¹ The LORD said, "Jeremiah, go down to the king's palace. Go to the king of Judah and tell this message there: ² 'Listen to this message from the LORD, King of Judah. You rule from David's throne, so listen. King, you and your officials must listen well. All of your people who come through the gates of Jerusalem must listen to the message from the Lord. ³ This is what the LORD says: Do what is right and fair. Protect those who have been robbed from the ones who robbed them. Don't hurt or do anything wrong to orphans or widows. Don't kill innocent people. ⁴ If you obey these commands, kings who sit on David's throne will continue to come through

the gates into the city of Jerusalem. They will come through the gates with their officials. The kings, their officials, and their people will come riding in chariots and on horses. ⁵ But I, the LORD, tell you that if you don't obey these commands, then I promise with an oath in my own name that this king's palace will be destroyed—it will become a pile of rocks.' ”

⁶ This is what the LORD says about the palace where the king of Judah lives:

“The palace is tall like the forests of Gilead,
like the mountains of Lebanon.
But I will make it like a desert,
as empty as a city where no one lives.

⁷ I will send men to destroy the palace,
each armed with weapons.

They will cut up your strong, beautiful cedar beams
and throw them into the fire.

⁸ “People from many nations will pass by this city. They will ask one another, ‘Why has the LORD done such a terrible thing to Jerusalem? Jerusalem was such a great city.’ ⁹ This will be the answer to that question: ‘God destroyed Jerusalem because the people of Judah stopped following the agreement of the LORD their God. They worshiped and served other gods.’ ”

Judgment Against King Jehoahaz

¹⁰ Don't cry for the king who has died.*

Don't cry for him.

But cry very hard for the king

* 22:10 the king who has died That is, King Josiah who was killed in battle against the Egyptians in 609 B.C.

who must leave this place.[†]
 Cry for him because he will never return
 or see his homeland again.

¹¹ This is what the LORD says about Jehoahaz[‡] son of Josiah, who became king of Judah after his father Josiah died: “Jehoahaz has gone away from Jerusalem. He will never return. ¹² Jehoahaz will die in the place where the Egyptians have taken him, and he will not see this land again.”

Judgment Against King Jehoiakim

¹³ “It will be very bad for King Jehoiakim.
 He is doing wrong so that he can build his palace.
 He is cheating people so that he can build rooms upstairs.
 He is not paying his own people.
 He is making them work for nothing.

¹⁴ “Jehoiakim says,
 ‘I will build myself a great palace, with huge rooms
 upstairs.’
 So he built it with large windows.
 He used cedar wood for paneling, and he painted it
 red.

¹⁵ “Jehoiakim, having a lot of cedar in your house
 does not make you a great king.
 Your father Josiah was satisfied to have food and drink.
 He did what was right and fair,

[†] 22:10 the king ... place This means Josiah’s son, Jehoahaz. He became king after Josiah died. He is also called Shallum. King Neco of Egypt defeated Josiah. And Neco took Jehoahaz off the throne of Judah and made him a prisoner in Egypt. [‡] 22:11 Jehoahaz The Hebrew text has “Shallum,” another name for Jehoahaz.

so everything went well for him.

¹⁶ Josiah helped poor and needy people,
so everything went well for him.

Jehoiakim, what does it mean “to know God”?

It means living right and being fair.

That is what it means to know me.

This message is from the LORD.

¹⁷ “Jehoiakim, your eyes look only for what benefits
yourself.

You are always thinking about getting more for
yourself.

You are willing to kill innocent people.

You are willing to steal things from other people.”

¹⁸ So this is what the LORD says to King Jehoiakim son of
Josiah:

“The people of Judah will not cry for Jehoiakim.

They will not say to each other, ‘Brother, I am so sad!
Sister, I am so sad!’

They will not cry for Jehoiakim.

They will not say about him, ‘Master, I am so sad!
King, I am so sad!’

¹⁹ The people of Jerusalem will bury Jehoiakim like a
donkey.

They will drag his body away and throw it outside
the gates of Jerusalem.

²⁰ “Judah, go up to the mountains of Lebanon and cry out.

Let your voice be heard in the mountains of Bashan.

Cry out in the mountains of Abarim,

because all your ‘lovers’ will be destroyed.

²¹ “Judah, you felt safe, but I warned you.

I warned you, but you refused to listen.

You have lived like this from the time you were young.

And from the time you were young,
you have not obeyed me, Judah.

²² Judah, the punishment I give will come like a storm,
and it will blow all your shepherds away.

You thought some of the other nations would help you.

But these nations will also be defeated.

Then you will really be disappointed.

You will be ashamed of all the evil things you did.

²³ “King, you seem so safe in your palace of cedar.

It’s as if you live in Lebanon![§]

But when your punishment comes, you will groan.

You will be in pain like a woman giving birth!”

Judgment Against King Jehoiachin

²⁴ “As surely as I live,” says the LORD, “I will do this to you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah: Even if you were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. ²⁵ Jehoiachin, I will give you to King

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the Babylonians. Those are the people you are afraid of. They want to kill you.

²⁶ I will throw you and your mother into another country where neither of you was born. You and your mother will die in that country. ²⁷ Jehoiachin, you will want to come back to your land, but you will never be allowed to come back.”

[§] 22:23 It’s as if ... Lebanon The king’s palace in Jerusalem was built with wood from the mountains of Lebanon, which was famous for its cedar trees.

²⁸ Jehoiachin is like a broken pot that someone threw away.

He is like a pot that no one wants.

Why will Jehoiachin and his children be thrown out and sent away into a foreign land?

²⁹ Land, land, land of Judah!

Listen to this message from the LORD!

³⁰ The LORD says, "Write this down about Jehoiachin:

'He does not have children anymore!

Jehoiachin will not be successful

because none of his children will sit on the throne of David.

None of his children will rule in Judah.' "

23

¹ "It will be very bad for the shepherds of the people of Judah. They are destroying the sheep. They are making the sheep run from my pasture in all directions." This message is from the LORD.

² They are responsible for my people. And this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to them: "You shepherds have made my sheep run away in all directions. You have forced them to go away, and you have not taken care of them. But I will take care of you—I will punish you for the evil things you did." This message is from the LORD:

³ "I sent my sheep to other countries. But I will gather together my sheep that are left, and I will bring them back to their pasture. When my sheep are back in their pasture, they will have many children and grow in number. ⁴ I will place new shepherds over my sheep. They will take care of my sheep, and my sheep will never again feel afraid. None of my sheep will be lost." This message is from the LORD.

The Good “Branch”

⁵ This message is from the LORD:

“The time is coming,

when I will raise up a good ‘branch’ from David’s family.

He will be a king who will rule in a wise way.

He will do what is fair and right in the land.

⁶ When he rules, Judah will be saved,

and Israel will live in safety.

This will be his name:

The LORD Makes Things Right for Us.*

⁷ “So the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when people will not make a promise by saying, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, the one who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt ...’ ⁸ But people will say something new: ‘As surely as the LORD lives, the one who brought the Israelites out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had sent them’ Then the people of Israel will live in their own land.”

Judgments Against False Prophets

⁹ A message to the prophets:

I am very sad—my heart is broken.

All my bones are shaking.

Because of the LORD and his holy words,

I am like a man who is drunk.

¹⁰ The land of Judah is full of people who commit adultery.

They are unfaithful in many ways.

So God cursed the land,

and it became very dry.

* ^{23:6} The LORD Makes Things Right for Us This is a wordplay. In Hebrew this is like the name Zedekiah, the king of Judah at the time this prophecy was probably given. But Jeremiah is talking about another king.

The plants are dried and dying in the pastures.

The fields have become like the desert.

The prophets are evil.

They use their influence and power in the wrong way.

¹¹ This message is from the LORD:

“The prophets and even the priests are evil.

I have seen them doing evil things in my own Temple.

¹² *I will stop giving my messages to them.*

They will walk in darkness.

The road will be slippery for those prophets and priests,
and they will fall in that darkness.

I will bring disaster on them;

I will punish them.”

This message is from the LORD.

¹³ “I saw the prophets of Samaria doing wrong things.

I saw them prophesy in the name of the false god Baal.

They led the people of Israel away from me.

¹⁴ I have even seen the prophets of Jerusalem doing sinful things.

They are committing adultery and living a life of lies.

They support their fellow prophets

and never stop doing evil.

They have become like Sodom;

they are all like Gomorrah.”

¹⁵ So this is what the LORD All-Powerful says about those
Jerusalem prophets:

“I will make them suffer.

Their food will be bitter, their water like poison.

I will punish them because they started a spiritual sickness
that spread through the whole country.”

¹⁶ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“Don’t pay attention to what those prophets are saying to you.

They are trying to fool you.

They talk about visions,

but they did not get their visions from me.

Their visions come from their own minds.

¹⁷ Some of the people hate the real messages from the LORD,

so the prophets give them a different message.

They say, ‘You will have peace.’

Some of the people are very stubborn.

They do only what they want to do.

So the prophets say,

‘Nothing bad will happen to you!’

¹⁸ But none of these prophets has stood in the heavenly council.[†]

None of them has seen or heard the message from the LORD.

None of them has paid close attention to his message.

¹⁹ Now the punishment from the LORD will come like a storm.

His anger will be like a tornado.

It will come crashing down on the heads of those wicked people.

²⁰ The LORD’S anger will not stop

[†] 23:18 heavenly council The people in the Old Testament often talk about God as the leader of a council of heavenly beings (angels). Compare 1 Kings 22:19-23; Isaiah 6:1-8 and Job 1 and 2.

until he finishes what he plans to do.
When that day is over,
you will understand this clearly.

²¹ I did not send those prophets,
but they ran to tell their messages.

I did not speak to them,
but they spoke in my name.

²² If they had stood in my heavenly council,
then they would have told my messages to the
people of Judah.

They would have stopped the people from doing bad
things.

They would have stopped them from doing evil.”

²³ This message is from the LORD.

“I am God, and I am always near.

I am not far away.

²⁴ Someone might try to hide from me in some hiding
place.

But it is easy for me to see that person, says the LORD,
because I am everywhere in heaven and earth.”

This message is from the LORD: ²⁵ “There are prophets
who tell lies in my name. They say, ‘I have had a dream!
I have had a dream!’ I heard them say those things.

²⁶ How long will this continue? They think up lies and
then they teach them to the people. ²⁷ They are trying
to make the people of Judah forget my name by telling
each other these false dreams. They are trying to make
my people forget me, just as their ancestors forgot me and
worshiped the false god Baal. ²⁸ Straw is not the same as
wheat! In the same way, the dreams of those prophets are
not messages from me. If people want to tell about their

dreams, let them. But those who hear my message must speak it truthfully.” This is what the LORD says. ²⁹ Yes, the LORD says, “You must treat my message carefully, like a fire or like a hammer that can smash a rock.”

³⁰ This message is from the LORD: “So I am against the false prophets. They keep stealing my words from each other.” ³¹ Yes, the LORD says, “I am against the false prophets. They use their own words and pretend that it is a message from me. ³² I am against the false prophets who tell false dreams.” This message is from the LORD. “They mislead my people with their lies and false teachings. I did not send them to teach the people. I never commanded them to do anything for me. They cannot help the people of Judah at all.” This message is from the LORD.

The Sad Message From the Lord

³³ “The people of Judah, or a prophet, or a priest may ask you, ‘Jeremiah, what is the announcement of the LORD?’ You will answer them and say, ‘You are a heavy load[‡], and I will throw down this heavy load.’ This message is from the LORD.

³⁴ “A prophet, or a priest, or maybe one of the people might say, ‘This is an announcement from the LORD’ Because of that lie, I will punish that person and their whole family. ³⁵ This is what you will say to one another: ‘What did the LORD answer?’ or ‘What did the LORD say?’ ³⁶ But you will never again use the expression, ‘The announcement of the LORD.’ That is because his message should not be a heavy load for anyone. But you changed

[‡] 23:33 heavy load This is a wordplay. The Hebrew word for “announcement” is like the word translated “heavy load.”

the words of our God. He is the living God, the LORD All-Powerful!

³⁷ “If you want to learn about God’s message, ask a prophet, ‘What answer did the LORD give you?’ or ‘What did the LORD say?’ ³⁸ But don’t say, ‘What was the announcement from the LORD?’ If you use these words, the LORD will say this to you: ‘You should not have called my message an “announcement from the LORD.” I told you not to use those words. ³⁹ But you called my message a heavy load, so I will pick you up like a heavy load and throw you away from me. I gave the city of Jerusalem to your ancestors. But I will throw you and that city away from me, ⁴⁰ and I will make you a disgrace forever. You will never forget your shame.’”

24

The Good Figs and the Bad Figs

¹ The LORD showed me these things: I saw two baskets of figs arranged in front of the Temple of the LORD. (I saw this vision after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took Jehoiachin* as a prisoner. Jehoiachin, the son of King Jehoiakim, and all his important officials were taken away from Jerusalem. They were taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took away all the carpenters and metalworkers of Judah.) ² One basket had very good figs in it, the kind that ripen early in the season. But the other basket had rotten figs. They were too rotten to eat.

³ The LORD said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

I answered, “I see figs. The good figs are very good, and the rotten figs are very rotten. They are too rotten to eat.”

* 24:1 Jehoiachin The Hebrew text has “Jeconiah,” another name for King Jehoiachin, who was taken prisoner in the year 597 B.C.

⁴ Then the message from the LORD came to me. ⁵ The LORD, the God of Israel, said, “The people of Judah were taken from their country. Their enemy brought them to Babylon. Those people will be like these good figs. I will be kind to them. ⁶ I will protect them. I will bring them back to the land of Judah. I will not tear them down—I will build them up. I will not pull them up—I will plant them so that they can grow. ⁷ I will make them want to know me. They will know that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will do this because the prisoners in Babylon will turn to me with their whole hearts.”

⁸ But the LORD also says, “I will treat King Zedekiah of Judah like those figs that are too rotten to eat. Zedekiah, his high officials, all those who are left in Jerusalem, and those people of Judah who are living in Egypt will be like those rotten figs. ⁹ I will punish them. Their punishment will shock all the people on earth. People will make fun of those people from Judah. People will tell jokes about them and curse them in all the places where I scatter them. ¹⁰ I will bring war, famine, and disease against them. I will attack them until they have all been killed. Then they will no longer be on the land that I gave to them and to their ancestors.”

25

A Summary of Jeremiah's Message

¹ This is the message that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah. This message came in the fourth year that Jehoiakim* son of Josiah was king of Judah. The fourth year of his time as king was the first year

* 25:1 the fourth year ... Jehoiakim This was about 605 B.C.

that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. ² This is the message that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and all the people of Jerusalem:

³ I have been a prophet for these past 23 years, from the 13th year that Josiah son of Amon was the king of Judah. And from that time until today, I have spoken messages to you from the LORD again and again. But you have not listened. ⁴ The LORD has sent his servants, the prophets, to you over and over again. But you have not listened to them. You have not paid any attention to them.

⁵ Those prophets said, “Change your lives and stop doing evil! If you change, you can return to the land that the LORD gave you and your ancestors long ago. He gave you this land to live in forever. ⁶ Don’t follow other gods. Don’t serve or worship them. Don’t worship idols that someone has made. That only makes me angry with you. By doing this you only hurt yourselves.”[†]

⁷ “But you did not listen to me.” This message is from the LORD. “You worshiped idols that someone made, and that made me angry. And it only hurt you.”

⁸ So this is what the LORD All-Powerful says, “You have not listened to my messages. ⁹ I will soon send for all the tribes of the north.[‡]” This message is from the LORD. “I will soon send for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He is my servant. I will bring those people against the land of Judah and against the people of Judah. I will bring them against all the nations around you too. I will destroy all those countries. I will make those lands like

[†] 25:6 By doing this you only hurt yourselves This is from the ancient Greek version. The standard Hebrew text has “Then I will not hurt you.” [‡] 25:9 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

an empty desert forever. People will see those countries, and whistle at how badly they were destroyed. ¹⁰ I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and happiness in those places. There will be no more happy sounds of the brides and bridegrooms. I will take away the sound of people grinding meal. I will take away the light of the lamp. ¹¹ That whole area will be an empty desert. All these people will be slaves of the king of Babylon for 70 years.

¹² “But when the 70 years have passed, I will punish the king of Babylon. I will punish the nation of Babylon.” This message is from the LORD. “I will punish the land of the Babylonians for their sins. I will make that land a desert forever. ¹³ I said many bad things will happen to Babylon, and all of them will happen. Jeremiah spoke about those foreign nations. And all the warnings are written in this book. ¹⁴ Yes, the people of Babylon will have to serve many nations and many great kings. I will give them the punishment they deserve for all the things they have done.”

Judgment on the Nations of the World

¹⁵ The LORD, the God of Israel, said this to me: “Jeremiah, take this cup of wine from my hand. It is the wine of my anger. I am sending you to different nations. Make all the nations drink from this cup. ¹⁶ They will drink this wine. Then they will vomit and act like crazy people. They will do this because of the war that I will soon bring against them.”

¹⁷ So I took the cup of wine from the LORD’S hand. I went to those nations and I made them drink from the cup. ¹⁸ I poured this wine for the people of Jerusalem and Judah. I made the kings and leaders of Judah drink from the cup. I did this so that they would become an empty desert. I did this so that place would be destroyed so badly

that people would whistle and say curses about it. And it happened—Judah is like that now.

¹⁹ I also made Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, drink from that cup. I made his officials, his important leaders, and all his people drink from it.

²⁰ I also made all the Arabs and all the kings of the land of Uz drink from the cup.

I made all the kings of the land of the Philistines drink from the cup. These were the kings of the cities of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and what remains of the city Ashdod.

²¹ Then I made the people of Edom, Moab, and Ammon drink from the cup.

²² I made all the kings of Tyre and Sidon drink from the cup.

I also made all the kings of the faraway countries drink from that cup. ²³ I made the people of Dedan, Tema, and Buz drink from the cup. I made all those who cut their hair at their temples drink from the cup. ²⁴ I made all the kings of Arabia drink from the cup. These kings live in the desert. ²⁵ I made all the kings from Zimri, Elam, and Media drink from the cup. ²⁶ I made all the kings of the north, those who were near and far, drink from the cup. I made them drink one after the other. I made all the kingdoms that are on earth drink from that cup. Finally, after all these other nations, the king of Babylon will drink from it too.

²⁷ “Jeremiah, say to those nations, this is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘Drink this cup of my anger. Get drunk from it and vomit. Fall down and don’t get up. Don’t get up because I am bringing wars against you.’

²⁸ “They will refuse to take the cup from your hand. They will refuse to drink it, but you will tell them, ‘This

is what the LORD All-Powerful says: You will surely drink from this cup! ²⁹ I am already making these bad things happen to Jerusalem, the city that is called by my name. Maybe you people think that you will not be punished, but you are wrong. You will be punished! I am giving the command for war to come against all the people of the earth.’ ” This message is from the LORD.

³⁰ “Jeremiah, you will give them this message:

‘The LORD shouts from above.

He shouts from his holy Temple.

He shouts against his people.

His shouts are loud like the songs of people walking on grapes to make wine.

³¹ The noise spreads to all the people on earth.

What is all the noise about?

The LORD tells why he is punishing all the nations.

He has given his arguments against them.

He has judged them,

and now he is killing the wicked with his sword.’ ”

This message is from the LORD.

³² This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“Disasters will soon spread

from country to country.

They will come like a powerful storm

to all the faraway places on earth!”

³³ The dead bodies of those killed by the LORD will reach from one end of the earth to the other. No one will cry for them. No one will gather up their bodies and bury them. They will be left lying on the ground like dung.

- ³⁴ Shepherds, you should be leading the sheep.
 Start crying, you great leaders!
 Roll around on the ground in pain, you leaders of the
 sheep.
- It is now time for your slaughter.
 You will be scattered everywhere, like pieces flying
 from a broken jar.
- ³⁵ There will be no place for the shepherds to hide.
 They will not escape.
- ³⁶ I hear the shepherds shouting.
 I hear the leaders of the sheep crying,
 because the LORD is destroying their pastures.
- ³⁷ Those peaceful pastures will be ruined
 because of the LORD'S anger.
- ³⁸ He is like an angry lion that has left his cave.
 And because of his terrible anger
 and by the attacks of the enemy army,
 their land will become an empty desert.

26

Jeremiah's Lesson at the Temple

¹ This message came from the LORD during the first year that Jehoiakim* son of Josiah was king of Judah. ² The LORD said, "Jeremiah, stand in the Temple yard of the LORD. Give this message to all the people of Judah who are coming to worship at the Temple of the LORD. Tell them everything that I tell you to speak. Don't leave out any part of my message. ³ Maybe they will listen and obey my message. Maybe they will stop living such evil lives. If they change, I will change my mind about my plans to

* 26:1 the first year ... Jehoiakim This was 609 B.C.

punish them. I am planning this punishment because of the many evil things they have done. ⁴ You will say to them, ‘This is what the LORD says: I gave my teachings to you. You must obey me and follow my teachings. ⁵ You must listen to what my servants say to you. The prophets are my servants. I have sent my prophets to you again and again, but you did not listen to them. ⁶ If you don’t obey me, I will make my Temple in Jerusalem just like my Holy Tent at Shiloh.† People all over the world will think of Jerusalem when they ask for bad things to happen to other cities.’ ”

⁷ The priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah say all these words at the LORD’S Temple. ⁸ Jeremiah finished speaking everything the LORD had commanded him to say to the people. Then the priests, the prophets, and all the people grabbed Jeremiah. They said, “You will die for saying such terrible things! ⁹ How dare you say such a thing in the name of the LORD! How dare you say that this Temple will be destroyed like the one at Shiloh! How dare you say that Jerusalem will become a desert with no one living in it!” All the people gathered around Jeremiah in the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁰ Now the rulers of Judah heard about everything that was happening. So they came out of the king’s palace. They went up to the LORD’S Temple. They took their places at the entrance of the New Gate. The New Gate is a gate leading to the LORD’S Temple. ¹¹ Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the rulers and all the other people. They said, “Jeremiah should be killed. He said bad things about Jerusalem. You heard him say those things.”

† 26:6 my Holy Tent at Shiloh The Holy Place at Shiloh was probably destroyed during the time of Samuel. See Jeremiah 7 and 1 Sam. 4.

¹² Then Jeremiah spoke to all the rulers of Judah and all the other people. He said, “The LORD sent me to say these things about this Temple and this city. Everything that you have heard is from the Lord. ¹³ You people, change your lives! You must start doing good! You must obey the LORD your God. If you do that, he will change his mind. He will not do the bad things he told you about. ¹⁴ As for me, I am in your power. Do to me what you think is good and right. ¹⁵ But if you kill me, be sure of one thing. You will be guilty of killing an innocent person. You will make this city and everyone living in it guilty too. The LORD really did send me to you. The message you heard really is from the Lord.”

¹⁶ Then the rulers and all the people spoke. They said to the priests and the prophets, “Jeremiah must not be killed. What he told us comes from the LORD our God.”

¹⁷ Then some of the elders stood up and spoke to all the people. ¹⁸ They said, “Micah the prophet was from the city of Moresheth. He was a prophet during the time that Hezekiah was king of Judah. Micah said this to all the people of Judah: ‘This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

Zion will be destroyed.

It will become a plowed field.

Jerusalem will become a pile of rocks.

Temple Mount will be an empty hill[‡] overgrown with bushes.’

Micah 3:12

¹⁹ “King Hezekiah of Judah and the people of Judah did not kill Micah. You know that Hezekiah respected the LORD and wanted to please him. So the LORD changed

[‡] 26:18 empty hill Or “high place,” a term usually used for local shrines (places for worship) where people often worshiped idols.

his mind and didn't do the bad things to Judah that he said he would do. If we hurt Jeremiah, we will bring many troubles on ourselves. And those troubles will be our own fault."

²⁰ In the past there was another man who spoke the LORD'S message. His name was Uriah son of Shemaiah from the city of Kiriath Jearim. Uriah said the same things against this city and this land that Jeremiah did. ²¹ King Jehoiakim, his army officers, and the leaders of Judah heard Uriah and became angry. King Jehoiakim wanted to kill Uriah, but Uriah heard about it. Uriah was afraid, so he escaped to the land of Egypt. ²² But King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Acbor and some other men to Egypt. ²³ They brought Uriah from Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim ordered Uriah to be killed with a sword. Uriah's body was thrown into the burial place where the poor are buried.

²⁴ There was an important man named Ahikam son of Shaphan who supported Jeremiah. He kept Jeremiah from being killed by the priests and prophets.

27

The Lord Made Nebuchadnezzar Ruler

¹ A message from the LORD came to Jeremiah. It came during the fourth year that Zedekiah* son of Josiah was king of Judah. ² This is what the LORD said to me: "Jeremiah, make a yoke out of straps and poles. Put that yoke on the back of your neck. ³ Then send a message to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. Send

* 27:1 the fourth year ... Zedekiah The standard Hebrew text has "At the beginning of the kingship of Jehoiakim." This is probably a scribal error. Verse 3 talks about Zedekiah, and 28:1 says "that same year" was the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign (594–593 B.C.).

the message with the messengers of these kings who have come to Jerusalem to see King Zedekiah of Judah. ⁴ Tell them to give the message to their masters. Tell them that this is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘Tell your masters that ⁵ I made the earth and all the people on it. I made all the animals on the earth. I did this with my great power and my strong arm. I can give the earth to anyone I want. ⁶ Now I have given all your countries to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He is my servant. I will make even the wild animals obey him. ⁷ All nations will serve Nebuchadnezzar and his son and his grandson. Then the time will come for Babylon to be defeated. Many nations and great kings will make Babylon their servant.

⁸ “‘But if some nations or kingdoms refuse to serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and refuse to be put under his control, I will punish them, says the LORD. I will destroy them with war, hunger, and disease. I will use Nebuchadnezzar to destroy any nation that fights against him. ⁹ So don’t listen to your prophets. Don’t listen to those who use magic to tell what will happen in the future. Don’t listen to those who say they can interpret dreams. Don’t listen to those who talk to the dead or to people who practice magic. All of them tell you, “You will not be slaves to the king of Babylon.” ¹⁰ But they are telling you lies. They will only cause you to be taken far from your homeland. I will force you to leave your homes, and you will die in another land.

¹¹ “‘But the nations that put their necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and obey him will live. I will let them stay in their own country and serve the king of Babylon,’ says the LORD. ‘The people from those nations will live in their own land and farm it.’ ”

¹² I gave the same message to King Zedekiah of Judah. I said, “Zedekiah, you must place your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and obey him. If you serve the king of Babylon and his people, you will live. ¹³ If you don’t agree to serve the king of Babylon, you and your people will die from war, hunger, and disease. This is what the LORD said would happen. ¹⁴ But the false prophets are saying, ‘You will never be slaves to the king of Babylon.’

“Don’t listen to those prophets, because they are telling you lies. ¹⁵ ‘I didn’t send them,’ says the LORD. ‘They are telling lies and saying that the message is from me. So I will send you people of Judah away. You will die, and the prophets who spoke to you will die also.’ ”

¹⁶ Then I told the priests and all the people that this is what the LORD says: “Those false prophets are saying, ‘The Babylonians took many things from the LORD’S Temple. These things will be brought back soon.’ Don’t listen to them because they are telling you lies. ¹⁷ Don’t listen to those prophets. Serve the king of Babylon. Accept your punishment, and you will live. There is no reason for you to cause this city of Jerusalem to be destroyed. ¹⁸ If they are prophets and their message is from the LORD, let them pray. Let them pray to the LORD about the things that are still in the LORD’S Temple, in the king’s palace, and in Jerusalem. Let them pray that all those things will not be taken away to Babylon.

¹⁹ “This is what the LORD All-Powerful says about the things that are still left in Jerusalem. In the Temple, there are the pillars, the bronze sea, the moveable stands, and other things.† King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon left those things in Jerusalem. ²⁰ He didn’t take them away when

† [27:19 pillars ... other things](#) For a description of these things, see [1 Kings 7:23-37](#).

he took Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah away as a prisoner. Nebuchadnezzar also took other important people away from Judah and Jerusalem. ²¹ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says about the things still left in the LORD'S Temple and in the king's palace and in Jerusalem: ²² 'All those things will also be taken to Babylon. They will be brought to Babylon until the day comes when I go to get them,' says the LORD. 'Then I will bring those things back. I will put them back in this place.' "

28

The False Prophet Hananiah

¹ In the fifth month of the fourth year that Zedekiah* was king of Judah, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur spoke to me. Hananiah was from the town of Gibeon. Hananiah was in the LORD'S Temple when he spoke to me. The priests and all the people were there also. This is what Hananiah said: ² "The LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke that the king of Babylon has put on the people of Judah. ³ Before two years are over, I will bring back all the things that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took from the LORD'S Temple. Nebuchadnezzar has carried those things to Babylon. But I will bring them back here to Jerusalem. ⁴ I will also bring the king of Judah, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, back to this place. And I will bring back all the people of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar forced to leave their homes and go to Babylon,' says the LORD. 'So I will break the yoke that the king of Babylon put on the people of Judah.' "

* 28:1 the fourth year ... Zedekiah This was about 594–593 B.C.

⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah answered the prophet Hananiah. They were standing in the Temple of the LORD. The priests and all the people there could hear Jeremiah's answer. ⁶ Jeremiah said to Hananiah, "Amen! May the LORD do that. May the LORD make the message you say come true. May he bring the things of the LORD'S Temple back to this place from Babylon. And may he bring all those who were forced to leave their homes back to this place.

⁷ "But listen to what I have to say to you and to all the people. ⁸ There were prophets long before you and I became prophets, Hananiah. They spoke against many countries and great kingdoms and always warned that war, hunger, and disease would come to them. ⁹ So the prophet who says that we will have peace must be tested. People can know that he really was sent by the LORD only if his message comes true."

¹⁰ Jeremiah was wearing a yoke around his neck. The prophet Hananiah took the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and broke it. ¹¹ Then Hananiah spoke loudly so that all the people could hear him. He said, "This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way, I will break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He put that yoke on all the nations of the world, but I will break it before two years are over.'"

After Hananiah said that, Jeremiah left the Temple.

¹² Then the message from the LORD came to Jeremiah. This happened after Hananiah had taken the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and had broken it. ¹³ The LORD said to Jeremiah, "Go and tell Hananiah that this is what the LORD says: 'You have broken a wooden yoke, but I will make a yoke of iron in the place of the wooden yoke.

¹⁴ The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, is the one

saying this. I will put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these nations. I will do that to make them serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and they will be slaves to him. I will even give Nebuchadnezzar control over the wild animals.’”

¹⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, “Listen, Hananiah! The LORD did not send you. But you have made the people of Judah trust in lies. ¹⁶ So this is what the LORD says: ‘Soon I will take you from this world, Hananiah. You will die this year, because you taught the people to turn against the LORD.’”

¹⁷ Hananiah died in the seventh month of that same year.

29

A Letter to the Captives in Babylon

¹ Jeremiah sent a letter to the captives in Babylon. He sent it to the elders, the priests, the prophets, and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. ² (This letter was sent after King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the carpenters, and the metalworkers had been taken from Jerusalem.) ³ King Zedekiah of Judah sent Elash son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah to King Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah gave them the letter to take to Babylon. This is what the letter said:

⁴ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says to all the people he sent into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ “Build houses and live in them. Settle in the land. Plant gardens and eat the food you grow. ⁶ Get married and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons, and let

your daughters be married. Do this so that they also may have sons and daughters. Have many children and grow in number in Babylon. Don't become fewer in number. ⁷ Also, do good things for the city I sent you to. Pray to the LORD for the city you are living in, because if there is peace in that city, you will have peace also.” ⁸ The LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says, “Don't let your prophets and those who practice magic fool you. Don't listen to the dreams they have. ⁹ They are telling lies, and they are saying that their message is from me. But I didn't send it.” This message is from the LORD.

¹⁰ This is what the LORD says: “Babylon will be powerful for 70 years. After that time, I will come to you people who are living in Babylon. I will keep my good promise to bring you back to Jerusalem. ¹¹ I say this because I know the plans that I have for you.” This message is from the LORD. “I have good plans for you. I don't plan to hurt you. I plan to give you hope and a good future. ¹² Then you will call my name. You will come to me and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will search for me, and when you search for me with all your heart, you will find me. ¹⁴ I will let you find me.” This message is from the LORD. “And I will bring you back from your captivity. I forced you to leave this place. But I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have sent you,” says the LORD, “and I will bring you back to this place.”

¹⁵ You people might say, “But the LORD has given us prophets here in Babylon.” ¹⁶ But this is what the LORD says about your relatives who were not carried away to Babylon. I am talking about the king who is sitting on David's throne now and all the other people who are

still in the city of Jerusalem. ¹⁷ The LORD All-Powerful says, “I will soon bring war, hunger, and disease against those who are still in Jerusalem. And I will make them the same as bad figs that are too rotten to eat. ¹⁸ I will attack those who are still in Jerusalem with war, hunger, and disease. And I will cause such pain that all the kingdoms of the earth will be frightened at what has happened to those people. They will be destroyed. People will whistle with amazement when they hear what happened. And people will use them as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to people. People will insult them wherever I force them to go. ¹⁹ I will make all these things happen because the people of Jerusalem have not listened to my message.” This message is from the LORD. “I sent my message to them again and again. I used my servants, the prophets, to give my messages to them, but they didn’t listen.” This message is from the LORD. ²⁰ “You people are captives. I forced you to leave Jerusalem and go to Babylon. So listen to the message from the LORD.”

²¹ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah: “These two men have been telling you lies. They have said that their message is from me. I will give these two prophets to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. And he will kill them in front of all you who are captives in Babylon. ²² They will be an example of a terrible way to die. Yes, in the future, when the Jewish captives want something bad to happen to someone, they will say this curse: ‘May the LORD treat you like Zedekiah and Ahab, those men the king of Babylon burned in the fire!’ ²³ They did very bad things among the people of Israel. They committed the sin of

adultery with their neighbors' wives. They also spoke lies and said those lies were a message from me. I did not tell them to do that. I know what they have done. I am a witness." This message is from the LORD.

God's Message to Shemaiah

²⁴ Also give a message to Shemaiah from the Nehelam family. ²⁵ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: "Shemaiah, you sent letters to all the people in Jerusalem and to the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah. You also sent letters to all the priests. You sent those letters in your own name and not by my authority. ²⁶ Shemaiah, this is what you said in your letter to Zephaniah: 'Zephaniah, the LORD has made you priest in place of Jehoiada. You are to be in charge of the LORD'S Temple. You should arrest anyone who acts like a crazy person* and acts like a prophet. You should put that person's feet between large blocks of wood and put neck irons† on him. ²⁷ Now Jeremiah is acting like a prophet. So why didn't you arrest him? ²⁸ Jeremiah has sent this message to us in Babylon: You people in Babylon will be there for a long time, so build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what you grow.'"

²⁹ Zephaniah the priest read the letter to Jeremiah the prophet. ³⁰ Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah: ³¹ "Jeremiah, send this message to all the captives in Babylon: 'This is what the LORD says about Shemaiah, the man from the Nehelam family: Shemaiah has spoken to you, but I didn't send him. He has made

* ^{29:26} crazy person Here, Shemaiah is referring to Jeremiah. See verses 27-28. † ^{29:26} neck irons A ring made from iron. People put the rings around prisoners, necks. They often fastened a chain to the ring to control the prisoners.

you believe a lie. ³² Because Shemaiah has done that, this is what the LORD says: I will soon punish Shemaiah, the man from the Nehelam family. I will completely destroy his family, and he will not share in the good things I will do for my people.’” This message is from the LORD. “‘I will punish Shemaiah because he has taught the people to turn against the LORD.’”

30

Promises of Hope

¹ This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the LORD. ² The LORD, the God of the people of Israel, said, “Jeremiah, write in a book the words I have spoken to you. Write this book for yourself. ³ Do this because the days will come”—this message is from the LORD—“when I will bring my people, Israel and Judah, back from exile.” This message is from the LORD. “I will put the people back in the land that I gave to their ancestors. Then my people will own that land again.”

⁴ The LORD spoke this message about the people of Israel and Judah. ⁵ This is what the LORD said:

“We hear people crying from fear.
There is fear, not peace.

⁶ “Ask this question and consider it:
Can a man have a baby? Of course not!
Then why do I see every strong man holding his stomach
like a woman having labor pains?
Why is everyone’s face turning white
like a dead man?

⁷ “This is a very important time for Jacob.

This is a time of great trouble.
There will never be another time like this,
but Jacob will be saved.

⁸ “At that time,” says the LORD All-Powerful, “I will break the yoke from the necks of the people of Israel and Judah, and I will break the ropes holding you. People from foreign countries will never again force my people to be slaves. ⁹ The people of Israel and Judah will not serve foreign countries. No, they will serve the LORD their God. I will send them David their king,* and they will serve him.

¹⁰ “So Jacob, my servant, don’t be afraid!”

This message is from the LORD.

“Israel, don’t be afraid.

I will save you from that faraway place.

You are captives[†] in that faraway land,
but I will save your descendants.

I will bring them back from that land.

Jacob will have peace again.

People will not bother Jacob.

There will be no enemy to frighten my people.

¹¹ People of Israel and Judah, I am with you.”

This message is from the LORD.

“I will save you.

I sent you to those nations,
but I will completely destroy all of them.

It is true; I will destroy those nations,
but I will not destroy you.

* 30:9 David their king This means another king of Israel who will be great like King David. † 30:10 captives People taken away as prisoners. Here, it means the Jewish people who were taken to Babylon.

You must be punished for the bad things you did,
but I will discipline you fairly.”

¹² This is what the LORD says:

“You people of Israel and Judah have a wound that cannot
be cured.

You have an injury that will not heal.

¹³ There is no one to care for your sores,
so you will not be healed.

¹⁴ You became friends with many nations,
but those nations don’t care about you.
Your ‘friends’ have forgotten you.

I hurt you like an enemy.

I punished you very hard.

I did this because of your great guilt.

I did this because of your many sins.

¹⁵ Israel and Judah, why are you still crying about your
wound?

There is no cure for it.

I did this to you because of your great guilt.

I did this because of your many sins.

¹⁶ Those nations destroyed you,
but now they have been destroyed.

Israel and Judah, your enemies will become captives.

They stole things from you,
but others will steal from them.

They took things from you in war,
but others will take things from them in war.

¹⁷ And I will bring your health back
and heal your wounds,” says the LORD,

“because other people said you were outcasts.‡

‡ 30:17 outcasts People who are thrown out of a group by others who don’t like or respect them.

They said, ‘No one cares about Zion.’ ”

¹⁸ This is what the LORD says:

“Jacob’s people are now in captivity,
but they will come back.

And I will have pity on Jacob’s houses.

The city[§] is now only an empty hill covered with ruined
buildings,

but the city will be rebuilt on its hill.

And the king’s palace will be rebuilt where it should
be.

¹⁹ People in those places will sing songs of praise,
and there will be the sound of laughter.

I will give them many children.

Israel and Judah will not be small.

I will bring honor to them.

No one will look down on them.

²⁰ Jacob’s family will be like the family of Israel long ago.

I will make Israel and Judah strong,

and I will punish those who hurt them.”

²¹ The LORD says,

“One of their own people will lead them.

That ruler will come from my people.

People can come close to me only if I ask them to.

So I will ask that leader to come to me,

and he will be close to me.

²² You will be my people,

and I will be your God.”

²³ The LORD was very angry!

He punished the people.

[§] 30:18 city This probably refers to Jerusalem. But it might also mean all the cities of Israel and Judah.

The punishment came like a storm.

It came like a tornado against those wicked people.

²⁴ The LORD will be angry until he is through punishing them.

He will be angry until he finishes the punishment he planned.

When that day comes,

you people of Judah will understand.

31

The New Israel

¹ This is what the LORD said, “At that time I will be the God of all the tribes of Israel. And they will be my people.”

² This is what the LORD says:

“The people who escaped the enemy’s sword will find comfort in the desert.

Israel will go there looking for rest.”

³ From far away, the LORD

will appear to his people.

The Lord says, “I love you people with a love that continues forever.

That is why I have continued showing you kindness.

⁴ Israel, my bride, I will rebuild you.

You will be a country again.

You will pick up your tambourines again.

You will dance with all the other people who are having fun.

⁵ You farmers of Israel will plant vineyards again.

You will plant the vineyards on the hills around the city of Samaria.

The farmers will enjoy the fruit from the vineyards.

6 There will be a time when watchmen* shout this message:
 ‘Come, let’s go up to Zion to worship the LORD our God!’
 Even the watchmen in the hill country of Ephraim† will shout that message.”

7 This is what the LORD says:
 “Be happy and sing for Jacob!
 Shout for Israel, the greatest of the nations!
 Sing your praises and shout:
 ‘LORD, save your people!‡
 Save those who are left alive from the nation of Israel.’

8 Remember, I will bring Israel
 from that country in the north.
 I will gather the people of Israel
 from the faraway places on earth.
 Some of the people will be blind and crippled.
 Some of the women will be pregnant and ready to give birth.
 But many people will come back.

9 They will come back crying,
 but I will lead them and comfort them.
 I will lead them by streams of water.
 I will lead them on an easy road,
 where they will not stumble.
 I will lead them in that way because I am Israel’s father.

* 31:6 watchmen This usually means a guard who stands on the city walls watching for people coming to the city. Here, it probably means the prophets.

† 31:6 hill country of Ephraim This was the central part of the land that had been the northern kingdom of Israel. ‡ 31:7 LORD, save your people Or “LORD has saved his people!” This is often a shout of victory.

And Ephraim is my firstborn son.

¹⁰ “Nations, listen to this message from the LORD!

Tell this message in the faraway lands by the sea:

‘God scattered the people of Israel,

but he will bring them back together.

And he will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’

¹¹ The LORD will bring Jacob back.

He will save his people from those who are stronger.

¹² The people of Israel will come to the top of Zion,

and they will shout with joy.

Their faces will shine with happiness about the good things the LORD gives them.

He will give them grain, new wine, olive oil, young sheep and cattle.

They will be like a garden that has plenty of water.

And the people of Israel will not be troubled anymore.

¹³ Then the young women of Israel will be happy and dance.

And the men, young and old, will join in the dancing.

I will change their sadness into happiness.

I will comfort my people, making them happy instead of sad.

¹⁴ I will give the priests plenty of food.

And my people will be filled and satisfied with the good things I give them.”

This message is from the LORD.

¹⁵ This is what the LORD says:

“A sound is heard in Ramah—
bitter crying and great sadness.

Rachel[§] cries for her children,
and she refuses to be comforted,
because her children are gone.”

¹⁶ But the LORD says, “Stop crying.
Don’t fill your eyes with tears.
You will be rewarded for your work.”
This message is from the LORD.
“The people of Israel will come back from their
enemy’s land.

¹⁷ Israel, there is hope for you.”
This message is from the LORD.
“Your children will come back to their own land.

¹⁸ I have heard Ephraim crying:
‘Lord, you punished me, and I learned my lesson.
I was like a calf that was never trained.

Please stop punishing me,
and I will come back to you.
You really are the LORD my God.

¹⁹ I wandered away from you.
But I finally realized how wrong I was.
So I changed my heart and life.

I am ashamed and embarrassed
about the foolish things I did when I was young.’”

²⁰ The LORD says,
“You know that Ephraim is my dear son.
I love that child.
Yes, I often criticized Ephraim,
but I still think about him.
I love him very much,
and I really do want to comfort him.

[§] 31:15 Rachel Jacob’s wife. Here, this means all the women who are crying for their husbands and children who have died in the war with Babylon.

- 21 “People of Israel, repair the road signs.
 Put up signs that show the way home.
 Watch the road.
 Remember the road you are leaving on.
 Israel, my bride, come home.
 Come back to your towns.
- 22 Unfaithful daughter,
 how long will you wander around?

“The LORD has created something new in the land:
 A woman surrounding a man.*”

23 This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: “I will again do good things for the people of Judah. I will bring back those who were taken away as prisoners. At that time the people in the land of Judah and in its towns will once again use these words: ‘May the LORD bless you, good home and holy mountain[†]!’

24 “People in all the towns of Judah will live together in peace. Farmers and those who move around with their flocks will live peacefully together in Judah. 25 I will give rest and strength to those who are weak and tired.”

26 After hearing that, I, Jeremiah, woke up and looked around. My sleep was very pleasant.

27 “The days are coming,” says the LORD, “when I will help the family of Israel and Judah to grow. I will help their children and animals to grow too. It will be like planting and caring for a plant. 28 In the past I watched

* 31:22 A woman surrounding a man The Hebrew text here is hard to understand. It might be part of some saying that was familiar to the people in Jeremiah’s time. † 31:23 good home and holy mountain This was a blessing for the Temple and for Mount Zion, the mountain the Temple was built on.

over Israel and Judah, but I watched for the time to pull them up. I tore them down. I destroyed them. I gave many troubles to them. But now I will watch over them to build them up and make them strong.” This message is from the LORD.

²⁹ “People will not use this saying anymore:

‘The parents ate the sour grapes,
but the children got the sour taste.’[‡]

³⁰ No, people will die for their own sins. Those who eat sour grapes will get the sour taste.”

The New Agreement

³¹ This is what the LORD said, “The time is coming when I will make a new agreement with the family of Israel and with the family of Judah. ³² It will not be like the agreement I made with their ancestors. I made that agreement when I took them by the hand and brought them out of Egypt. I was their master, but they broke that agreement.” This message is from the LORD.

³³ “In the future I will make this agreement with the people of Israel.” This message is from the LORD. “I will put my teachings in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ People will not have to teach their neighbors and relatives to know the LORD, because all people, from the least important to the most important, will know me.” This message is from the LORD. “I will forgive them for the evil things they did. I will not remember their sins.”

The Lord Will Never Leave Israel

[‡] 31:29 The parents ... sour taste This means the children were suffering for things their parents did.

35 He makes the sun shine in the day,
and he makes the moon and the stars shine at night.
He stirs up the sea so that its waves crash on the shore.
The LORD All-Powerful is his name.

This is what the LORD says:

36 “The descendants of Israel will never stop being a nation.
That would happen only if I lost control of the sun,
moon, stars, and sea.”

37 The LORD says, “I will never reject the descendants of Israel.
That would happen only if people could measure the sky above,
and learn all the secrets of the earth below.
Only then would I reject them for the bad things they have done.”
This message is from the LORD.

The New Jerusalem

38 This message is from the LORD, “The days are coming when the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt for the LORD. The whole city will be rebuilt—from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. 39 The measuring line[§] will stretch from the Corner Gate straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to the place named Gorah. 40 The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown and all the terraces down to the bottom of Kidron Valley all the way to the corner of Horse Gate will be holy to the LORD. The city of Jerusalem will never again be torn down or destroyed.”

§ 31:39 measuring line A rope or chain for measuring property lines.

32

Jeremiah Buys a Field

¹ This is the message from the LORD that came to Jeremiah during the tenth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah.* The tenth year of Zedekiah was the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar. ² At that time the army of the king of Babylon was surrounding the city of Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was under arrest in the courtyard of the guard. This courtyard was at the palace of the king of Judah. ³ King Zedekiah of Judah had put Jeremiah in prison in that place. Zedekiah didn't like the things Jeremiah prophesied. Jeremiah had said, "This is what the LORD says: 'I will soon give the city of Jerusalem to the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar will capture this city. ⁴ King Zedekiah of Judah will not escape from the army of the Babylonians. But he will surely be given to the king of Babylon. And Zedekiah will speak to the king of Babylon face to face. He will see him with his own eyes. ⁵ The king of Babylon will take Zedekiah to Babylon. Zedekiah will stay there until I have punished him.' This message is from the LORD. 'If you fight against the army of the Babylonians, you will not succeed.' "

⁶ While Jeremiah was a prisoner, he said, "This message from the LORD came to me. This was the message: ⁷ 'Jeremiah, your cousin, Hanamel, will come to you soon. He is the son of your uncle Shallum. Hanamel will say to you, "Jeremiah, buy my field near the town of Anathoth. Buy it because you are my nearest relative. It is your right and your responsibility to buy that field.' "

* 32:1 the tenth year ... Judah This was 588–587 B.C. This was the year Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

⁸ “Then it happened just as the LORD said. My cousin Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard. Hanamel said to me, ‘Jeremiah, buy my field near the town of Anathoth, in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. Buy that land for yourself because it is your right to buy it and own it.’ ”

So I knew that this was a message from the LORD. ⁹ I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel. I weighed out 17 shekels[†] of silver for him. ¹⁰ I signed the deed and had a copy of the deed sealed up.[‡] I got some men to witness what I had done, and I weighed out the silver on the scales. ¹¹ Then I took the sealed copy of the deed, which contained the demands and limits of my purchase, and the copy that was not sealed. ¹² I gave the deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah. I did this while my cousin Hanamel and the other witnesses were there. They also signed the deed. There were also many people of Judah sitting in the courtyard who saw me give the deed to Baruch.

¹³ With all the people watching, I said to Baruch, ¹⁴ “This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘Take both copies of the deed—the sealed copy and the copy that was not sealed—and put them in a clay jar. Do this so that these deeds will last a long time.’ ¹⁵ The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says, ‘In the future my people will once again buy houses, fields, and vineyards in the land of Israel.’ ”

¹⁶ After I gave the deed to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD:

[†] 32:9 shekel 2/5 of an ounce (11.5 g). [‡] 32:10 sealed up Important documents were rolled up and tied with a string. Then a piece of clay or wax was put on the string. Then a person’s mark was put in that clay or wax. This way, people could prove nothing in the document was changed.

¹⁷ “Lord GOD, with your great power you made the earth and the sky. There is nothing too hard for you to do. ¹⁸ You are loyal and kind to thousands of people, but you also bring punishment to children for their fathers’ sins. Great and powerful God, your name is the LORD All-Powerful. ¹⁹ You plan and do great things. You see everything that people do. You give a reward to those who do good things, and you punish those who do bad things—you give them what they deserve. ²⁰ You have been doing powerful miracles in the land of Egypt until now, in Israel and elsewhere. You are the one who made yourself as famous as you are today. ²¹ You used powerful miracles and brought your people Israel out of Egypt. You used your own powerful hand to do this. Your power was amazing!

²² “You gave the Israelites this land that you promised to give to their ancestors long ago. It is a very good land filled with many good things. ²³ They came into this land and took it for their own. But they didn’t obey you. They didn’t follow your teachings or do what you commanded. So you made all these terrible things happen to them.

²⁴ “And now the enemy has surrounded the city. They are building ramps so that they can get over the walls of Jerusalem and capture it. Because of war, hunger, and disease, the city of Jerusalem will fall to the Babylonian army. The Babylonians are attacking the city now. You said this would happen, and now you see it is happening.

²⁵ “Lord GOD, all those bad things are happening. But now you are telling me, ‘Jeremiah, buy the field with silver and choose some men to witness the purchase.’ You are telling me this while the Babylonian army is

ready to capture the city. Why should I waste my money like that?"

²⁶ Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah:
²⁷ "Jeremiah, I am the LORD. I am the God of every person on the earth. You know that nothing is impossible for me." ²⁸ The LORD also said, "I will soon give the city of Jerusalem to the Babylonian army and to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The army will capture the city. ²⁹ The Babylonian army is already attacking the city of Jerusalem. They will soon enter the city and start a fire. They will burn down this city. There are houses in this city where the people of Jerusalem made me angry by offering sacrifices to the false god Baal on the housetops. And they poured out drink offerings to other idol gods. The Babylonian army will burn down those houses. ³⁰ I have watched the people of Israel and the people of Judah. Everything they do is evil. They have done evil things since they were young. The people of Israel have made me very angry because they worship idols that they made with their own hands." This message is from the LORD.
³¹ "From the time that Jerusalem was built until now, the people of this city have made me angry. This city has made me very angry, so I must remove it from my sight.
³² I will destroy Jerusalem because of all the evil things the people of Israel and Judah have done. The people, their kings, leaders, their priests and prophets, the people of Judah, and the people of Jerusalem have all made me angry.

³³ "They should have come to me for help, but they turned their backs to me. I tried to teach them again and again, but they would not listen to me. I tried to correct them, but they would not listen. ³⁴ They have

made their idols, and I hate those idols. They put their idols in the Temple that is called by my name, so they made my Temple ‘dirty.’

³⁵ “In the Valley of Ben Hinnom,[§] they built high places to the false god Baal. They built those worship places so that they could burn their sons and daughters as sacrifices. I never commanded them to do such a terrible thing. I never even thought the people of Judah would do such a terrible thing.

³⁶ “You people are saying, ‘The king of Babylon will capture Jerusalem. He will use war, hunger, and disease to defeat this city.’ But this is what the LORD, the God of the people of Israel, says: ³⁷ ‘I have forced the people of Israel and Judah to leave their land. I was very angry with them, but I will bring them back to this place. I will gather them from the land where I forced them to go. I will bring them back to this place. I will let them live in peace and safety. ³⁸ The people of Israel and Judah will be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them the desire to be one, united people. They will have one goal—to worship me all their lives. They and their children will want to do this.

⁴⁰ “ ‘I will make an agreement with the people of Israel and Judah that will last forever. In this agreement I will never turn away from them. I will always be good to them. I will make them want to respect me. Then they will never turn away from me. ⁴¹ They will make me happy. I will enjoy doing good to them. And I will surely plant them in this land and make them grow. I will do this with all my heart and soul.’ ”

[§] 32:35 Valley of Ben Hinnom This valley is also called “Gehenna.” This name comes from the Hebrew name “Ge Hinnom—Hinnom’s Valley.” This place became an example of how God punishes wicked people.

⁴² This is what the LORD says: “I have brought this great disaster to the people of Israel and Judah. In the same way I will bring good things to them. I promise to do good things for them. ⁴³ You people are saying, ‘This land is an empty desert. There are no people or animals here. The Babylonian army defeated this country.’ But in the future people will once again buy fields in this land. ⁴⁴ They will use their money and buy fields. They will sign and seal their agreements. They will witness the people signing their deeds. They will again buy fields in the land where the tribe of Benjamin lives, in the area around Jerusalem, in the towns of the land of Judah, in the hill country, in the western foothills, and in the area of the southern desert. This will happen because I will bring them back home.” This message is from the LORD.

33

The Promise of God

¹ While Jeremiah was still locked up in the courtyard of the guards, the message from the LORD came to him a second time: ² “The LORD made the earth, and he keeps it safe. The LORD is his name. He says, ³ ‘Judah, pray to me, and I will answer you. I will tell you important secrets. You have never heard these things before.’ ⁴ The LORD is the God of Israel. This is what he says about the houses in Jerusalem and about the palaces of the kings of Judah: ‘The enemy will pull these houses down. They will build ramps up to the top of the city walls. They will use swords and fight the people in these cities.

⁵ “ ‘The people in Jerusalem have done many bad things. I am angry with them. I have turned against them, so I will kill many people there. The Babylonian army will

come to fight against Jerusalem. There will be many dead bodies in the houses in Jerusalem.

⁶ “But then I will heal the people in that city. I will let them enjoy peace and safety. ⁷ I will make good things happen to Judah and Israel again and make them strong as in the past. ⁸ They sinned against me, but I will wash away that sin. They fought against me, but I will forgive them. ⁹ Then Jerusalem will be a wonderful place. The people will be happy. People from other nations will praise it when they hear about the good things happening there. They will hear about the good things I am doing for Jerusalem.’

¹⁰ “This is what the LORD says: ‘You people say that your country is an empty desert. There are no people or animals living there.’ It is now quiet in the streets of Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah. But it will be noisy there soon. ¹¹ There will be sounds of joy and happiness. There will be the happy sounds of a bride and groom. There will be the sounds of people bringing their gifts to the LORD’S Temple. They will say, ‘Praise the LORD All-Powerful! The LORD is good! His faithful love will last forever!’ They will say this because I will again do good things to Judah. It will be as it was in the beginning.” This is what the LORD said.

¹² The LORD All-Powerful says, “This place is empty now. There are no people or animals living here. But there will be people in all the towns of Judah. There will be shepherds, and there will be pastures where they will let their flocks rest. ¹³ Shepherds will count their sheep as the sheep walk in front of them. They will be counting their sheep all around the country—in the hill country, in the western foothills, in the Negev, and in all the other towns of Judah.”

The Good Branch

¹⁴ This message is from the LORD: “I made a special promise to the people of Israel and Judah. The time is coming when I will do what I promised. ¹⁵ At that time I will make a good ‘branch’ grow from David’s family. That branch will do what is good and right for the country. ¹⁶ When he rules, Judah will be saved. The people of Jerusalem will live in safety. This will be his name: ‘The LORD Makes Things Right For Us.’ ”

¹⁷ The LORD says, “Someone from David’s family will always sit on the throne and rule the family of Israel. ¹⁸ And there will always be priests from the family of Levi. They will always stand before me and offer burnt offerings and sacrifice grain offerings and give sacrifices to me.”

¹⁹ This message from the LORD came to Jeremiah. ²⁰ The LORD says, “I have an agreement with day and night. I agreed that they would continue forever. You cannot change that agreement. Day and night will always come at the right time. If you could change that agreement, ²¹ then you could change my agreement with David and Levi. Then descendants from David would not be the kings, and the family of Levi would not be priests. ²² But I will give many descendants to my servant David and to the tribe of Levi. They will be as many as the stars in the sky—no one can count all the stars. And they will be as many as the grains of sand on the seashore—no one can count the grains of sand.”

²³ Jeremiah received this message from the LORD: ²⁴ “Jeremiah, have you heard what the people are saying? They are saying, ‘The LORD turned away from the two families of Israel and Judah. He chose those people, but now he does not even accept them as a nation.’ ”

²⁵ The LORD says, “If my agreement with day and night does not continue, and if I had not made the laws for the sky and earth, maybe I would leave those people. ²⁶ Then maybe I would turn away from Jacob’s descendants. And then maybe I would not let David’s descendants rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But David is my servant, and I will be kind to those people. I will again cause good things to happen to them.”

34

A Warning to Zedekiah

¹ The message from the LORD came to Jeremiah. The message came at the time when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and all the towns around it. Nebuchadnezzar had with him all his army and the armies of all the kingdoms and peoples in the empire he ruled.

² This was the message: “This is what the LORD, the God of the people of Israel, says: Jeremiah, go to King Zedekiah of Judah and give him this message: ‘Zedekiah, this is what the LORD says: I will give the city of Jerusalem to the king of Babylon very soon, and he will burn it down.

³ Zedekiah, you will not escape from the king of Babylon. You will surely be caught and given to him. You will see the king of Babylon with your own eyes. He will talk to you face to face, and you will go to Babylon. ⁴ But listen to the promise of the LORD, King Zedekiah of Judah. This is what the LORD says about you: You will not be killed with a sword. ⁵ You will die in a peaceful way. People made funeral fires to honor your ancestors, the kings who ruled before you became king. In the same way people will make a funeral fire to honor you. They will cry for

you and sadly say, “Oh, my master!” I myself make this promise to you.’” This message is from the LORD.

⁶ So Jeremiah told all this message to Zedekiah in Jerusalem. ⁷ This was while the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem. The army of Babylon was also fighting against the cities of Judah that had not been captured. These cities were Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities left in the land of Judah.

The People Break an Agreement

⁸ King Zedekiah had made an agreement with all the people in Jerusalem to give freedom to all the Hebrew slaves. A message from the LORD came to Jeremiah after Zedekiah had made that agreement. ⁹ Everyone was supposed to free their Hebrew slaves. All male and female Hebrew slaves were to be set free. No one was supposed to keep another person from the tribe of Judah in slavery. ¹⁰ So all the leaders of Judah and all the people accepted this agreement. They would free their male and female slaves so that they would no longer serve them. Everyone agreed, and so all the slaves were set free. ¹¹ But after that,* the people who had slaves changed their minds. So they took the people they had set free and made them slaves again.

¹² Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah: ¹³ “This is what the LORD, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt,

* ^{34:11} after that In the summer of 588 B.C., the Egyptian army came to help the people of Jerusalem. So the Babylonian army had to leave Jerusalem for a short time to fight the Egyptians. The people of Jerusalem thought God had helped them, and things were back to normal, so they didn’t keep their promise. They took the slaves they had set free back into slavery.

where they were slaves. When I did that, I made an agreement with them. ¹⁴ I said to your ancestors, “At the end of every seven years, everyone must set their Hebrew slaves free. If you have fellow Hebrews who have sold themselves to you, you must let them go free after they have served you for six years.” But your ancestors did not listen to me or pay attention to me. ¹⁵ A short time ago you changed your hearts to do what is right. Everyone set free their fellow Hebrews who were slaves. And you even made an agreement before me in the Temple that is called by my name. ¹⁶ But now you have changed your minds. You have shown that you do not honor my name because each of you has taken back the male and female slaves that you had set free. You have forced them to become slaves again.’

¹⁷ “So this is what the LORD says: ‘You people have not obeyed me. You have not given freedom to your fellow Hebrews. So, because you have not given them freedom, I will give a special kind of freedom—freedom to die in war or by disease or by hunger! This message is from the LORD. When the other nations see what I have done to you, they will all be shocked. ¹⁸ I will hand over those who broke my agreement and have not kept the promises they made before me. They cut a calf into two pieces before me and walked between the two pieces.† ¹⁹ These are the people who walked between the two pieces of the calf when they made the agreement before me: the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the important officials of the court,

† 34:18 They ... two pieces This is part of a ceremony people used when they made an important agreement. An animal was cut into two pieces. Those who were making the agreement would walk between the pieces. Then they would say something like, “May this same thing happen to me if I don’t keep the agreement.” See Genesis 15.

the priests, and the people of the land. ²⁰ So I will give them to their enemies and to everyone who wants to kill them. Their bodies will become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth. ²¹ I will give King Zedekiah of Judah and his leaders to their enemies and to everyone who wants to kill them. I will give Zedekiah and his people to the army of the king of Babylon, even though that army has left Jerusalem.[‡] ²² But I will give the order,' says the LORD, 'to bring the Babylonian army back to Jerusalem. That army will fight against Jerusalem. They will capture it, set it on fire, and burn it down. And I will destroy the towns in the land of Judah. They will become empty deserts. No one will live there.' ”

35

The Recabite Family's Good Example

¹ During the time when Jehoiakim, son of King Josiah, was king of Judah, the LORD spoke this message to Jeremiah: ² “Go to the Recabite family* and invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the LORD’S Temple. Offer them wine to drink.”

³ So I went to get Jaazaniah[†] son of Jeremiah,[‡] who was the son of Habazziniah. And I got all of Jaazaniah’s brothers and sons and the whole family of the Recabites

[‡] 34:21 left Jerusalem In the summer of 588 B.C., the Egyptian army came to help the people of Jerusalem. So the Babylonian army had to leave Jerusalem for a short time to fight the Egyptians. See Jeremiah 37:5. See also the footnote to Jeremiah 34:11. ^{*} 35:2 Recabite family A group of people descended from Jonadab son of Recab. The family was very loyal to the Lord.

See 2 Kings 10:15-28 for the story of Jonadab. Also in verses 6, 18. [†] 35:3 Jaazaniah He was the head of the Recabite family at that time. [‡] 35:3 Jeremiah This is not the prophet Jeremiah, but a different man with the same name.

together. ⁴ Then I brought them into the Temple of the LORD. We went into the room of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah. Hanan was a man of God.[§] The room was next to the room where the princes of Judah stay. It was over the room of Maaseiah son of Shallum. Maaseiah was the doorkeeper in the Temple. ⁵ Then I put some bowls full of wine and some cups in front of the Recabite family. And I said to them, “Drink some wine.”

⁶ But the Recabite family answered, “We never drink wine. We never drink it because our ancestor Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: ‘You and your descendants must never drink wine. ⁷ Also you must never build houses, plant seeds, or plant vineyards. You must never do any of those things. You must live only in tents. If you do that, you will live a long time in the land where you move from place to place.’ ⁸ So we have obeyed everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. None of us ever drinks wine, and neither do our wives, sons, or daughters. ⁹ We never build houses to live in, we never own vineyards or fields, and we never plant crops. ¹⁰ We have lived in tents and have obeyed everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. ¹¹ But when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked the country of Judah, we did go into Jerusalem. We said to each other, ‘Come, we must enter the city of Jerusalem so that we can escape the Babylonian army and the Aramean army.’ So we have stayed in Jerusalem.”

¹² Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah:
¹³ “The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says to go to the people of Judah and Jerusalem and tell them this message: ‘You should learn a lesson and obey my

§ 35:4 man of God This is usually an honorable title for a prophet. We know nothing else about Hanan.

message.’ This message is from the LORD. ¹⁴ ‘Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine, and that command has been obeyed. To this day the descendants of Jonadab have obeyed their ancestor’s command. They do not drink wine. But I have given commands to you people of Judah again and again, and you have not obeyed me. ¹⁵ Time after time I have sent my servants the prophets to you. They said, “You must each stop doing evil things and do what is right. Don’t follow other gods. Don’t worship or serve them. If you obey me, you will live in the land I have given to you and your ancestors.” But you have not paid attention to my message. ¹⁶ The descendants of Jonadab obeyed the commands that their ancestor gave them, but the people of Judah have not obeyed me.’

¹⁷ “So this is what the LORD God All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘I said that many bad things would happen to Judah and Jerusalem. I will soon make all those bad things happen. I spoke to the people, but they refused to listen. I called out to them, but they didn’t answer me.’ ”

¹⁸ Then Jeremiah said to the Recabite family, “This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘You have obeyed the commands of your ancestor Jonadab. You have followed all of his teachings. You have done everything he commanded.’ ¹⁹ So the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘There will always be a descendant of Jonadab son of Recab to serve me.’ ”

36

¹ The message from the LORD came to Jeremiah. This was during the fourth year that Jehoiakim* son of Josiah was king of Judah. This was the message from the Lord: ² “Jeremiah, get a scroll and write on it all the messages I have spoken to you. I have spoken to you about the nations of Israel and Judah and all the other nations. Write all the words that I have spoken to you from the time that Josiah was king, until now. ³ Maybe the people of Judah will hear what I am planning to do to them and will stop doing bad things. If they will do that, I will forgive them for the terrible sins they have committed.”

⁴ So Jeremiah called a man named Baruch son of Neriah. Jeremiah spoke the messages the LORD had given him. While he spoke, Baruch wrote the messages on the scroll. ⁵ Then Jeremiah said to Baruch, “I cannot go to the LORD’S Temple. I am not allowed to go there. ⁶ So I want you to go to the Temple of the LORD. Go there on a day of fasting and read to the people from the scroll. Read to the people the messages from the LORD that you wrote on the scroll as I spoke them to you. Read them to all the people of Judah who come into Jerusalem from the towns where they live. ⁷ Perhaps they will ask the LORD to help them. Perhaps each person will stop doing bad things. The LORD has announced that he is very angry with them.” ⁸ So Baruch son of Neriah did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him to do. Baruch read aloud the scroll that had the LORD’S messages written on it. He read it in the LORD’S Temple.

⁹ In the ninth month of the fifth year that Jehoiakim was king, a fast was announced. All those who lived in the city of Jerusalem and everyone who had come

* 36:1 the fourth year ... Jehoiakim This was about 605 B.C.

into Jerusalem from the towns of Judah were supposed to fast before the LORD. ¹⁰ At that time Baruch read the scroll that contained Jeremiah's words. He read the scroll in the Temple of the LORD to all the people who were there. Baruch was in the room of Gemariah in the upper courtyard when he read from the scroll. That room was located at the entrance of the New Gate of the Temple. Gemariah was the son of Shaphan. Gemariah was a scribe in the Temple.

¹¹ A man named Micaiah heard all the messages from the LORD that Baruch read from the scroll. Micaiah was the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan. ¹² When Micaiah heard the messages from the scroll, he went down to the secretary's room in the king's palace. All the royal officials were sitting there in the king's palace. These are the names of the officials: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Acbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah; all the other royal officials were there too. ¹³ Micaiah told them everything he had heard Baruch read from the scroll.

¹⁴ Then all the officials sent a man named Jehudi to Baruch. (Jehudi was the son of Nethaniah, son of Shelemiah. Shelemiah was the son of Cush.) Jehudi said to Baruch, "Bring the scroll that you read from and come with me."

Baruch son of Neriah took the scroll and went with Jehudi to the officials.

¹⁵ Then the officials said to Baruch, "Sit down and read the scroll to us."

So Baruch read the scroll to them.

¹⁶ When the royal officials heard all the messages from the scroll, they were afraid and looked at one another. They said to Baruch, "We must tell King Jehoiakim about these messages on the scroll." ¹⁷ Then the officials

asked Baruch, “Tell us, Baruch, where did you get these messages that you wrote on the scroll? Did you write down what Jeremiah said to you?”

¹⁸ “Yes,” Baruch answered. “Jeremiah spoke, and I wrote down all the messages with ink on this scroll.”

¹⁹ Then the royal officials said to Baruch, “You and Jeremiah must go and hide. Don’t tell anyone where you are hiding.”

²⁰ Then the royal officials put the scroll in the room of Elishama the scribe. They went to King Jehoiakim and told him all about the scroll.

²¹ So King Jehoiakim sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought the scroll from the room of Elishama the scribe. Then Jehudi read the scroll to the king and all the servants who stood around the king. ²² The time this happened was in the ninth month,[†] so King Jehoiakim was sitting in the part of the palace used for winter. There was a fire burning in a small fireplace in front of the king. ²³ Jehudi began to read from the scroll. But after he would read two or three columns, King Jehoiakim would grab the scroll. Then he would cut those columns off the scroll with a small knife and throw them into the fireplace. Finally, the whole scroll was burned in the fire. ²⁴ And, when King Jehoiakim and his servants heard the message from the scroll, they were not afraid. They did not tear their clothes to show sorrow for doing wrong.

²⁵ Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah tried to talk King Jehoiakim out of burning the scroll, but he would not listen to them. ²⁶ Instead King Jehoiakim commanded some men to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. These men were Jerahmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel. But

[†] 36:22 ninth month That is, November–December.

they could not find Baruch and Jeremiah, because the LORD had hidden them.

²⁷ King Jehoiakim burned the scroll on which Baruch had written all the words that Jeremiah had spoken to him. Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah:

²⁸ “Get another scroll. Write all the messages on it that were on the first scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah burned. ²⁹ Also tell King Jehoiakim of Judah that this is what the LORD says: ‘Jehoiakim, you burned that scroll. You said, “Why did Jeremiah write that the king of Babylon will surely come and destroy this land and kill all the people and animals in it?” ³⁰ So this is what the LORD says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: Jehoiakim’s descendants will not sit on David’s throne. When Jehoiakim dies, he will not get a king’s funeral, but his body will be thrown out on the ground. His body will be left out in the heat of the day and the cold frost of the night. ³¹ I will punish Jehoiakim and his children, and I will punish his officials. I will do this because they are wicked. I will bring terrible disasters on them and on all those who live in Jerusalem and on the people from Judah. I will bring all these bad things on them, just as I warned them, because they have not listened to me.’ ”

³² Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch son of Neriah, the scribe. As Jeremiah spoke, Baruch wrote on the scroll the same messages that were on the scroll that King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. And many other words like those messages were added to the second scroll.

37

Jeremiah Is Put Into Prison

¹ Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. He appointed Zedekiah son of Josiah to be the king of Judah in the place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim. ² But Zedekiah, his servants, and the people of Judah did not pay attention to the messages the LORD had given to Jeremiah the prophet.

³ King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with a message. This was the message they brought to Jeremiah: “Jeremiah, pray to the LORD our God for us.”

⁴ At that time Jeremiah had not yet been put into prison, so he was free to go anywhere he wanted. ⁵ Also at that time Pharaoh’s army had marched from Egypt toward Judah. The Babylonian army had surrounded the city of Jerusalem in order to defeat it. Then they had heard about the army from Egypt marching toward them. So the army from Babylon left Jerusalem to fight with the army from Egypt.

⁶ This message from the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet: ⁷ “This is what the LORD, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘Jehucal and Zephaniah, I know that King Zedekiah of Judah sent you to me to ask questions. Tell King Zedekiah this: Pharaoh’s army marched out of Egypt to come here to help you against the army of Babylon. But Pharaoh’s army will go back to Egypt. ⁸ After that the army from Babylon will come back here and attack Jerusalem. Then they will capture and burn it.’ ⁹ This is what the LORD says: ‘People of Jerusalem, don’t fool yourselves. Don’t say to yourselves, “The army of Babylon will surely leave us alone.” They will not. ¹⁰ People of Jerusalem, even if you could defeat all the Babylonian army that is attacking you, there would still be a few wounded men left in their tents. Even those few wounded

men would come out of their tents and burn Jerusalem down.’”

¹¹ When the Babylonian army left Jerusalem to fight the army of the Pharaoh of Egypt, ¹² Jeremiah wanted to travel from Jerusalem to the land of Benjamin.* He wanted to be there for a division of some property that belonged to his family. ¹³ But when Jeremiah got to the Benjamin Gate of Jerusalem,† the captain in charge of the guards arrested him. The captain’s name was Irijah son of Shelemiah. Shelemiah was the son of Hananiah. So Irijah the captain arrested Jeremiah and said, “Jeremiah, you are leaving us to join the Babylonian side.”

¹⁴ Jeremiah said to Irijah, “That is not true! I am not leaving to join the Babylonians.” But Irijah refused to listen to Jeremiah. And Irijah arrested Jeremiah and took him to the royal officials of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Those officials were very angry with Jeremiah. They gave an order for Jeremiah to be beaten. Then they put him in a prison. The prison was in the house of Jonathan, a scribe for the king of Judah. His house had been made into a prison. ¹⁶ They put Jeremiah into a cell under the house of Jonathan. The cell was in a dungeon under the ground. Jeremiah was there for a long time.

¹⁷ Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and had him brought to the palace. Zedekiah talked to Jeremiah in private. He asked Jeremiah, “Is there any message from the LORD?”

Jeremiah answered, “Yes, he said that you will be given to the king of Babylon.” ¹⁸ Then Jeremiah said to King

* 37:12 the land of Benjamin Jeremiah was going to his hometown, Anathoth, which was in the land of Benjamin. † 37:13 Benjamin Gate of Jerusalem This gate led out of Jerusalem to the road which went north to the land of Benjamin.

Zedekiah, “What have I done wrong? What crime have I done against you or your officials or the people of Jerusalem? Why have you thrown me into prison? ¹⁹ King Zedekiah, where are your prophets now? They told you a false message. They said, ‘The king of Babylon will not attack you or this land of Judah.’ ²⁰ But now, my lord, king of Judah, please listen to me. Please let me bring my request to you. This is what I ask: Don’t send me back to the house of Jonathan the scribe. If you send me back, I will die there.”

²¹ So King Zedekiah gave orders for Jeremiah to be put under guard in the courtyard. And he ordered that Jeremiah should be given bread from the street bakers. He was given bread until there was no more bread in the city. So Jeremiah stayed under guard in the courtyard.

38

Jeremiah Is Thrown Into a Cistern

¹ Some of the royal officials heard what Jeremiah was saying. They were Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah. Jeremiah was telling all the people this message: ² “This is what the LORD says: ‘Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, hunger, or disease. But everyone who surrenders to the army of Babylon will live and escape with their lives.’ ³ And this is what the LORD says: ‘This city of Jerusalem will surely be given to the army of the king of Babylon. He will capture this city.’”

⁴ Then the royal officials who heard what Jeremiah was telling the people went to King Zedekiah. They said to the king, “Jeremiah should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are still in the city and everyone else by

what he is saying. He is not looking for peace; he is just trying to cause trouble.”

⁵ So King Zedekiah said to the officials, “Jeremiah is in your control. I cannot do anything to stop you.”

⁶ So the officials took Jeremiah and put him into Malkijah’s cistern. Malkijah was the king’s son. The cistern was in the Temple yard where the king’s guard stayed. They used ropes to lower Jeremiah into the cistern. The cistern didn’t have any water in it, only mud. And Jeremiah sank down into the mud.

⁷ But a man named Ebed Melech heard that the officials had put Jeremiah into the cistern. Ebed Melech was from Ethiopia, and he was a eunuch in the king’s palace. King Zedekiah was sitting at the Benjamin Gate, so Ebed Melech left the king’s palace and went to talk to the king at the gate. ⁸⁻⁹ Ebed Melech said, “My lord and king, these officials have done evil. They have treated Jeremiah the prophet badly. They have thrown him into a cistern and left him there to die.”*

¹⁰ Then King Zedekiah gave a command to Ebed Melech, the Ethiopian. This was the command: “Ebed Melech, take three[†] men from the palace with you, and go get Jeremiah out of the cistern before he dies.”

¹¹ So Ebed Melech took the men with him. But first he went to a room under the storeroom in the king’s palace. He took some old rags and worn-out clothes from that room. Then he let the rags down with some ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern. ¹² Ebed Melech, the Ethiopian, said to Jeremiah, “Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms. When we pull you out, these rags will

* 38:8-9 left him there to die Literally, “he will starve to death because there is no more bread in the city.” † 38:10 three This is found in one ancient Hebrew copy. Most Hebrew copies have “30.”

pad your underarms. Then the ropes will not hurt you.” So Jeremiah did as Ebed Melech said. ¹³ The men pulled Jeremiah up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah stayed under guard in the Temple yard.

Zedekiah Asks Jeremiah

Some Questions

¹⁴ Then King Zedekiah sent someone to get Jeremiah the prophet. He had Jeremiah brought to the third entrance to the Temple of the LORD. Then the king said, “Jeremiah, I am going to ask you something. Don’t hide anything from me, but tell me everything honestly.”

¹⁵ Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I give you an answer, you will probably kill me. And even if I give you advice, you will not listen to me.”

¹⁶ But King Zedekiah secretly swore an oath to Jeremiah. Zedekiah said, “As surely as the LORD lives, who gives us breath and life, I will not kill you, Jeremiah. And I promise not to give you to the officials who want to kill you.”

¹⁷ Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “The LORD God All-Powerful is the God of Israel. This is what he says, ‘If you surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, your life will be saved, and Jerusalem will not be burned down. And you and your family will live. ¹⁸ But if you refuse to surrender, Jerusalem will be given to the Babylonian army. They will burn Jerusalem down, and you will not escape from them.’ ”

¹⁹ But King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “But I am afraid of the men of Judah who have already gone over to the side of the Babylonian army. I am afraid that the soldiers will give me to those men, and they will treat me badly and hurt me.”

²⁰ But Jeremiah answered, “The soldiers will not give you to the men of Judah. King Zedekiah, obey the LORD by doing what I tell you. Then things will go well for you, and your life will be saved. ²¹ But if you refuse to surrender to the army of Babylon, the LORD has shown me what will happen. This is what he has told me: ²² All the women who are left in the house of the king of Judah will be brought out. They will be brought to the important officials of the king of Babylon. Your women will make fun of you with a song. This is what they will say:

‘Your friends were stronger than you,
and they led you the wrong way.
You trusted them,
but now your feet are stuck in the mud,
and your friends have left you.’

²³ “All your wives and children will be brought out. They will be given to the Babylonian army. You yourself will not escape from the army of Babylon. You will be captured by the king of Babylon, and Jerusalem will be burned down.”

²⁴ Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Don’t tell anyone that I have been talking to you. If you do, you might die. ²⁵ If the officials find out that I talked to you, they will come to you and say, ‘Jeremiah, tell us what you said to King Zedekiah and what he said to you. Be honest with us, and tell us everything, or we will kill you.’ ²⁶ If they say this to you, tell them, ‘I was begging the king not to send me back to the cell in the dungeon under Jonathan’s house. If I were to go back there, I would die.’”

²⁷ It happened that the royal officials of the king did come to Jeremiah to question him. So Jeremiah told them

everything the king had ordered him to say. Then they left Jeremiah alone. No one had heard what Jeremiah and the king had talked about.

²⁸ So Jeremiah stayed under guard in the Temple yard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

39

The Fall of Jerusalem

¹ This is how Jerusalem was captured: During the tenth month of the ninth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He surrounded the city to defeat it. ² And on the ninth day of the fourth month in Zedekiah's eleventh year, the wall of Jerusalem was broken through. ³ Then all the royal officials of the king of Babylon came into the city of Jerusalem. They came in and sat down at the Middle Gate. These are the names of the officials: Nergal-Sharezer, the governor of the district of Samgar, a very high official; Nebo Sarsekim, another very high official; and various other important officials were there also.

⁴ King Zedekiah of Judah saw the officials from Babylon, so he and the soldiers with him ran away. They left Jerusalem at night. They went out through the king's garden and out through the gate that was between the two walls. Then they went toward the desert. ⁵ The Babylonian army chased Zedekiah and the soldiers with him. They caught up with Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They captured Zedekiah and took him to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was at the town of Riblah in the land of Hamath. At that place Nebuchadnezzar decided what to do to Zedekiah. ⁶ There at the town of Riblah, the king of Babylon killed Zedekiah's

sons and he killed all the royal officials of Judah while Zedekiah watched. ⁷ Then Nebuchadnezzar tore out Zedekiah's eyes. He put bronze chains on Zedekiah and took him to Babylon.

⁸ The army of Babylon set fire to the king's palace and the houses of the people of Jerusalem. And they broke down the walls of Jerusalem. ⁹ Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king of Babylon's special guards. He took all the people who had surrendered to him and all the people still in Jerusalem and made them captives. He carried them away to Babylon. ¹⁰ But commander Nebuzaradan left behind some of the poor people of Judah who owned nothing. Nebuzaradan gave them vineyards and farmland in Judah.

¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar also gave an order about Jeremiah to commander Nebuzaradan: ¹² "Find Jeremiah and take care of him. Don't hurt him. Give him whatever he asks for."

¹³ So Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king's special guards, Nebushazban, a chief officer in the army of Babylon, Nergal-Sharezer, a high official, and all the other officers of the army of Babylon sent for Jeremiah. ¹⁴ They had Jeremiah taken out of the Temple yard where he had been under the guard of the king of Judah. They turned Jeremiah over to Gedaliah* son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. Gedaliah had orders to take Jeremiah back home. So Jeremiah was taken home, and he stayed among his own people.

The Lord's Message to Ebed Melech

¹⁵ While the guards were watching Jeremiah in the Temple yard, a message from the LORD came to him. This

* 39:14 Gedaliah was the man who Nebuchadnezzar appointed as his governor for the land of Judah.

was the message: ¹⁶ “Jeremiah, go and tell Ebed Melech[†] the Ethiopian this message: ‘This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: Very soon I will make my messages about this city of Jerusalem come true. My messages will come true through disaster, not through something good. You will see everything come true with your own eyes. ¹⁷ But I will save you on that day, Ebed Melech.’ This is the message from the LORD. ‘You will not be given to the people you are afraid of. ¹⁸ I will save you, Ebed Melech. You will not die from a sword, but you will escape and live. That will happen because you have trusted in me.’ ” This message is from the LORD.

40

Jeremiah Is Set Free

¹ The message from the LORD came to Jeremiah after he was set free at the city of Ramah. Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king of Babylon’s special guards, found Jeremiah in Ramah. Jeremiah was bound with chains. He was with all the captives from Jerusalem and Judah. They were being taken away in captivity to Babylon. ² When commander Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah, he spoke to him. He said, “Jeremiah, the LORD, your God, announced that this disaster would come to this place. ³ And now the LORD has done everything just as he said he would do. This disaster happened because you people of Judah sinned against the LORD. You did not obey him. ⁴ But now, Jeremiah, I will set you free. I am taking the chains off your wrists. If you want to, come with me to Babylon, and I will take good care of you. But if you don’t want to come with me, then don’t come. Look, the whole country

[†] 39:16 Ebed Melech See Jeremiah 38:7-13.

is open to you. Go anywhere you want. ⁵ Or go back to Gedaliah* son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. The king of Babylon has chosen Gedaliah to be governor over the towns of Judah. Go and live with Gedaliah among the people. Or you can go anywhere you want.”

Then Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah some food and a present and let him go. ⁶ So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. He stayed with Gedaliah among those who were left behind in the land of Judah.

The Short Rule of Gedaliah

⁷ There were some soldiers from the army of Judah, officers and their men, still out in the open country when Jerusalem was destroyed. They heard that the king of Babylon had put Gedaliah son of Ahikam in charge of those who were left in the land. Those who were left were men, women, and children who were very poor. They were not carried off to Babylon as captives. ⁸ So the soldiers came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. They were Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and his brother Jonathan, sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, sons of Ephai from Netophah, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and the men who were with them.

⁹ Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, made an oath to make the soldiers and their men feel more secure. This is what he said: “You soldiers, don’t be afraid to serve the Babylonian people. Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon. If you do this, things will go well for you. ¹⁰ I myself will live in Mizpah. I will speak for you before the Chaldeans who come here. You leave that work to me. You should harvest the wine, the summer

* 40:5 Or ... Gedaliah Or “Before Gedaliah goes back, return to him”

fruit, and the oil. Put what you harvest in your storage jars. Live in the towns that you control.”

¹¹ All the people of Judah who were in the countries of Moab, Ammon, Edom, and all the other countries heard that the king of Babylon had left some people of Judah in the land. And they heard that the king of Babylon had chosen Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, to be governor over them. ¹² When the people of Judah heard this news, they came back to the land of Judah. They came back to Gedaliah at Mizpah from all the countries where they had been scattered. So they came back and gathered a large harvest of wine and summer fruit.

¹³ Johanan son of Kareah and all the officers of the army of Judah who were still in the open country came to Gedaliah. Gedaliah was at the town of Mizpah. ¹⁴ Johanan and the officers with him said to Gedaliah, “Do you know that Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, wants to kill you? He has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to kill you.” But Gedaliah son of Ahikam didn’t believe them.

¹⁵ Then Johanan son of Kareah spoke to Gedaliah in private at Mizpah. Johanan said to Gedaliah, “Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah. No one will know anything about it. We should not let Ishmael kill you. That would cause all the people of Judah who are gathered around you to be scattered to different countries again. And that would mean that the few survivors of Judah would be lost.”

¹⁶ But Gedaliah son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah, “Don’t kill Ishmael. The things you are saying about Ishmael are not true.”

41

¹ In the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah (the son of Elishama) came to Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael

came with ten of his men. They came to the town of Mizpah. Ishmael was a member of the king's family. He had been one of the officers of the king of Judah. Ishmael and his men ate a meal with Gedaliah. ² While they were eating together, Ishmael and his ten men got up and killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam with a sword. Gedaliah was the man the king of Babylon had chosen to be governor of Judah. ³ Ishmael also killed all the men of Judah who were with Gedaliah at the town of Mizpah. He also killed the Babylonian soldiers who were there with Gedaliah.

⁴⁻⁵ The day after Gedaliah was murdered, 80 men came to Mizpah. They were bringing grain offerings and incense to the LORD'S Temple. They had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes, and cut themselves.* They came from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. None of these men knew that Gedaliah had been murdered. ⁶ Ishmael left Mizpah and went to meet the 80 men. He cried† while he walked out to meet them. Ishmael met them and said, "Come with me to meet with Gedaliah son of Ahikam."⁷⁻⁸ As soon as they were in the city, Ishmael and the men with him began to kill the 80 men and throw them into a deep cistern! But ten of the men said to Ishmael, "Don't kill us! We have hidden some things in a field. We have wheat and barley and oil and honey." So Ishmael stopped and didn't kill them with the others. ⁹ (Ishmael threw the dead bodies into the cistern until it was full, and that cistern was very big! It had been built by a king of Judah named Asa. King Asa had made the cistern so that during

* 41:4-5 shaved ... cut themselves The men did this to show that they were sad about the destruction of the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. † 41:6 He cried Ishmael was acting like he was sad about the destruction of the Temple.

war there would be water in the city.[‡] Asa did this to protect his city from King Baasha of Israel.)

¹⁰ Ishmael captured all the other people in the town of Mizpah and started to cross over to the country of the Ammonites. They included the king's daughters, and all those who were left there. Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king of Babylon's special guards, had chosen Gedaliah to watch over those people.

¹¹ Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers who were with him heard about all the evil things Ishmael had done. ¹² So Johanan and the army officers with him took their men and went to fight Ishmael son of Nethaniah. They caught Ishmael near the big pool of water that is at the town of Gibeon. ¹³ When the captives that Ishmael had taken saw Johanan and the army officers, they were very happy. ¹⁴ Then all the captives who Ishmael had taken from the town of Mizpah ran to Johanan son of Kareah. ¹⁵ But Ishmael and eight of his men escaped from Johanan and ran away to the Ammonites.

¹⁶ So Johanan son of Kareah and all his army officers rescued the captives. Ishmael had murdered Gedaliah and then he had taken those people from Mizpah. Among the survivors were soldiers, women, children, and court officials. Johanan brought them back from the town of Gibeon.

The Escape to Egypt

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Johanan and the other army officers were afraid of the Chaldeans. The king of Babylon had chosen Gedaliah to be governor of Judah. But Ishmael murdered Gedaliah, and Johanan was afraid that the Chaldeans would be

[‡] 41:9 King Asa ... city King Asa lived about 300 years before the time of Gedaliah. See 1 Kings 15:22 for the story about Asa building defenses for Mizpah.

angry. So they decided to run away to Egypt. On the way to Egypt, they stayed at Geruth Kimham, near the town of Bethlehem.

42

¹ While they were at Geruth Kimham, Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiiah went to Jeremiah the prophet. All the army officers went with Johanan and Jezaniah. All the people, from the least important to the most important, went to Jeremiah. ² They said to him, “Jeremiah, please listen to what we ask. Pray to the LORD your God for all those who are survivors from the family of Judah. Jeremiah, you can see that there are not many of us left. At one time there were many of us. ³ Jeremiah, pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do.”

⁴ Then Jeremiah the prophet answered, “I understand what you want me to do. I will pray to the LORD your God, as you asked me to do. I will tell you everything the LORD says. I will not hide anything from you.”

⁵ Then the people said to Jeremiah, “If we don’t do everything the LORD your God tells us, then we hope the LORD will be a true and faithful witness against us. We know he will send you to tell us what to do. ⁶ It doesn’t matter if we like the message or if we don’t like the message. We will obey the LORD our God. We are sending you to the Lord for a message from him. We will obey what he says. Then good things will happen to us. Yes, we will obey the LORD our God.”

⁷ At the end of ten days, the message from the LORD came to Jeremiah. ⁸ Then Jeremiah called together Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers who were with him. He also called all the other people together, from the

least important to the most important. ⁹ Then Jeremiah said to them, “You sent me to the LORD, the God of Israel, and I asked him what you wanted me to ask. This is what he says: ¹⁰ ‘If you will stay in Judah, I will make you strong—I will not destroy you. I will plant you, and I will not pull you up. I will do this because I am sad about the terrible things that I made happen to you. ¹¹ Now you are afraid of the king of Babylon. But don’t be afraid of him. Don’t be afraid of the king of Babylon,’ says the LORD, ‘because I am with you. I will save you. I will rescue you. He will not get his hands on you. ¹² I will be kind to you, and the king of Babylon will also treat you with mercy. He will bring you back to your land.’ ¹³ But you might say, ‘We will not stay in Judah.’ If you say that, you will disobey the LORD your God. ¹⁴ And you might say, ‘No, we will go and live in Egypt. We will not be bothered with war there. We will not hear the trumpets of war, and in Egypt we will not be hungry.’ ¹⁵ If you say that, listen to this message from the LORD, you survivors from Judah. This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘If you decide to go and live in Egypt, this will happen: ¹⁶ You are afraid of the sword of war, but it will defeat you there. And you are worried about hunger, but you will be hungry in Egypt. You will die there. ¹⁷ Everyone who decides to go live in Egypt will die by war, hunger, or disease. Not one person who goes to Egypt will survive. Not one of them will escape the terrible things that I will bring to them.’

¹⁸ “This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘I showed my anger against Jerusalem. I punished the people who lived there. In the same way I will show my anger against everyone who goes to Egypt. People will use you as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to other people. You will become

like a curse word. People will be ashamed of you, and they will insult you. And you will never see Judah again.’

¹⁹ “Survivors of Judah, the LORD told you: ‘Don’t go to Egypt.’ I warn you right now, ²⁰ you are making a mistake that will cause your deaths. You sent me to the LORD your God. You said to me, ‘Pray to the LORD our God for us. Tell us everything the LORD our God says to do. We will obey him.’ ²¹ So today I have told you the message from the Lord. But you have not obeyed the LORD your God. You have not done all that he sent me to tell you to do. ²² So now be sure you understand this: You want to go live in Egypt. But these things will happen to you in Egypt: You will die by a sword, or hunger, or terrible sickness.”

43

¹ So Jeremiah finished telling the people the message from the LORD their God. He told them everything that the LORD their God had sent him to tell them.

² Azariah son of Hoshaiiah, Johanan son of Kareah, and some other men were proud and stubborn. They became angry with Jeremiah. They said to him, “Jeremiah, you are lying! The LORD our God didn’t send you to say to us, ‘You must not go to Egypt to live there.’ ³ Jeremiah, we think that Baruch son of Neriah is encouraging you to be against us. He wants you to give us to the Babylonians. He wants you to do this so they can kill us. Or he wants you to do this so that they can make us captives and take us to Babylon.”

⁴ So Johanan, the army officers, and all the people disobeyed the LORD’S command. The Lord had commanded them to stay in Judah. ⁵ But Johanan, son of Kareah, and the army officers did not obey this command. Instead, they took the survivors from Judah to Egypt. In the past

the enemy had taken the survivors to other countries, but they had come back to Judah. ⁶ Now Johanan and all the army officers took all the men, women, and children and led them to Egypt. Among those people were the king's daughters. (Nebuzaradan had put Gedaliah in charge of those people. Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king of Babylon's special guards.) Johanan also took Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch son of Neriah. ⁷ These people didn't listen to the LORD. So they all went to Egypt to the town of Tahpanhes.*

⁸ In the town of Tahpanhes, Jeremiah received this message from the LORD: ⁹ "Jeremiah, get some large stones. Take them and bury them in the clay and brick sidewalk in front of Pharaoh's official building in Tahpanhes. Do this while the people of Judah are watching you. ¹⁰ Then say to those who are watching you: 'This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: I will send for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to come here. He is my servant, and I will set his throne over these stones I have buried here. Nebuchadnezzar will spread his canopy[†] above these stones. ¹¹ He will come here and attack Egypt. He will bring death to those who are to die. He will bring captivity to those who are to be taken captive. And he will bring the sword to those who are to be killed with a sword. ¹² Nebuchadnezzar will start a fire in the temples of the false gods of Egypt. He will burn the temples and he will take the idols away. Shepherds pick the bugs and thorns off their clothes to make them clean. In the same way Nebuchadnezzar will pick Egypt clean. Then he will safely leave Egypt. ¹³ He will destroy the memorial stones

* 43:7 Tahpanhes A town in northeastern Egypt. † 43:10 canopy A temporary covering used for shade. It is like a tent without sides.

that are in the temple of the Sun God[‡] in Egypt, and he will burn down the temples of the false gods of Egypt.’”

44

The Lord Warns the People of Judah

¹ Jeremiah received a message from the Lord for all the people of Judah living in Egypt. The message was for the people of Judah living in the towns of Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis, and southern Egypt. This was the message: ² “This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘You people saw the disasters that I brought on the city of Jerusalem and on all the towns of Judah. The towns are empty piles of stones today. ³ They were destroyed because the people living in them did evil. They gave sacrifices to other gods, and that made me angry! Your people and your ancestors did not worship those gods in the past. ⁴ I sent my servants, the prophets, to those people again and again. They spoke my message and said to the people, “Don’t do this terrible thing. I hate for you to worship idols.” ⁵ But they didn’t listen to the prophets or pay attention to them. They didn’t stop doing wicked things. They didn’t stop making sacrifices to other gods. ⁶ So I showed my anger against them. I punished the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. My anger made Jerusalem and the towns of Judah the empty piles of stone they are today.’

⁷ “So this is what the LORD God All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘Why are you hurting yourselves by continuing to worship idols? You are separating the men and women, the children and babies from the family of Judah. And so you leave yourselves without anyone left

[‡] 43:13 Sun God This was the most important god in Egypt.

from the family of Judah. ⁸ Why do you people want to make me angry by making idols? Now you are living in Egypt. And now you are making me angry by offering sacrifices to the false gods of Egypt. You will destroy yourselves, and it will be your own fault. The people of all the other nations on the earth will say bad things about you and make fun of you. ⁹ Have you forgotten about the wicked things your ancestors did? And have you forgotten about the wicked things the kings and queens of Judah did? Have you forgotten about the wicked things you and your wives did in Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁰ Even to this day the people of Judah have not made themselves humble. They have not shown any respect for me, and they have not followed my teachings. They have not obeyed the laws I gave you and your ancestors.'

¹¹ "So this is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: 'I have decided to make terrible things happen to you. I will destroy the whole family of Judah. ¹² There were a few survivors from Judah. They came here to Egypt. But I will destroy the few survivors from the family of Judah. They will be killed with swords or die from hunger. The people of other nations will point at them and wish evil for them. People will be shocked and frightened by what has happened to them. The name Judah will become a curse word and an insult. ¹³ I will punish those who have gone to live in Egypt. I will use war, hunger, and disease to punish them. I will punish them just as I punished the city of Jerusalem. ¹⁴ Not one of the few survivors of Judah who have gone to live in Egypt will escape my punishment. None of them will survive to come back to Judah. They want to come back to Judah and live there. But not one of them will go back to Judah,

except a few people who escape.’ ”

¹⁵ There were many people from Judah living in southern Egypt. Many of the women from Judah were meeting together in a large group and making sacrifices to other gods, and their husbands knew what they were doing. Those men said to Jeremiah, ¹⁶ “We will not listen to the message from the LORD that you spoke to us. ¹⁷ We promised to make sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven, and we will do everything we promised. We will offer sacrifices and pour out drink offerings in worship to her. We did that in the past. Our ancestors, our kings, and our officials did that in the past. All of us did those things in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. When we worshiped the Queen of Heaven, we had plenty of food. We were successful. Nothing bad happened to us. ¹⁸ But then we stopped making sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven, and we stopped pouring out drink offerings to her. And we have had problems ever since we stopped worshipping her. Our people have been killed by war and hunger.”

¹⁹ Then the women spoke up* and said to Jeremiah, “Our husbands knew what we were doing. We had their permission to make sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven. We had their permission to pour out drink offerings to her. Our husbands also knew that we were making cakes that looked like her.”

²⁰ Then Jeremiah spoke to all the men and women who told him these things. ²¹ He said, “The LORD remembered that you made sacrifices in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. You and your ancestors, your kings, your officials, and the people of the land did that.

* ^{44:19} Then the women spoke up This is from the ancient Greek version.

He remembered what you had done and thought about it. ²² The LORD hated the terrible things you did, and he could not be patient with you any longer. So he made your country an empty desert. No one lives there now. Other people say bad things about that country. ²³ The reason all those bad things happened to you is that you made sacrifices to other gods. You sinned against the LORD. You didn't obey him or follow his teachings or the laws he gave you. You didn't keep your part of the agreement.[†]"

²⁴ Then Jeremiah spoke to all the men and women. He said, "All you people of Judah who are now in Egypt, listen to this message from the LORD. ²⁵ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: 'You women did what you said you would do. You said, "We will keep the promises we made. We promised to make sacrifices and pour out drink offerings to the Queen of Heaven." So go ahead. Do what you promised you would do. Keep your promises.' ²⁶ But listen to this message from the LORD, all you people of Judah who are living in Egypt: 'I, the LORD, use my own great name to make this promise: None of the people of Judah who are now living in Egypt will ever again use my name to make promises. They will never again say, "As surely as the Lord GOD lives" ²⁷ I am watching over the people of Judah, but I am not watching over them to take care of them. I am watching over them to bring them harm. The people of Judah who live in Egypt will die from hunger or be killed in war until they are completely destroyed. ²⁸ Some people of Judah will escape being killed by the sword. They will come back

† 44:23 agreement This probably means the Law of Moses, the commands and agreement God made with the Israelites.

to Judah from Egypt. But only a few people of Judah will escape. Then the survivors of Judah who came to live in Egypt will know whose word proves to be true. They will know whether it was my word or their word that came true. ²⁹ I will give you people proof,' says the LORD, 'that I will punish you here in Egypt. Then you will know for sure that my promises to harm you will really happen. ³⁰ This will be your proof that I will do what I say.' This is what the LORD says: 'Pharaoh Hophra is the king of Egypt. His enemies want to kill him. I will give Pharaoh Hophra to his enemies. Just as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah to his enemy Nebuchadnezzar, in the same way I will give Pharaoh Hophra to his enemies.' "

45

A Message to Baruch

¹ In the fourth year that Jehoiakim* son of Josiah was king of Judah, Jeremiah the prophet spoke these things to Baruch son of Neriah. Baruch wrote them on a scroll. This is what Jeremiah said to Baruch: ² "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you: ³ 'Baruch, you have said, "It is very bad for me. The LORD has given me sorrow along with my pain. I am very tired. I am worn out because of my suffering. I cannot find rest." ⁴ Jeremiah, tell Baruch that this is what the LORD says: I will tear down what I have built, and I will pull up what I have planted. I will do that everywhere in Judah. ⁵ Baruch, you are looking for great things for yourself. Don't look for them, because I will make terrible things happen to all the people.' This is what the LORD said. 'You will have to go many places. But I will let you escape alive wherever you go.' "

* 45:1 the fourth year ... Jehoiakim This was about 605 B.C.

46

The Lord's Messages About the Nations

¹ These messages about different nations came to Jeremiah the prophet from the LORD.

Messages About Egypt

² This message is about the nation of Egypt. It is about the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt. His army was defeated at the town of Carchemish. Carchemish is on the Euphrates River. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the army of Pharaoh Neco at Carchemish in the fourth year that Jehoiakim* son of Josiah was king of Judah. The Lord said,

³ “Get your large and small shields ready.

March out for battle.

⁴ Get the horses ready.

Soldiers, get on your horses.

Go to your places for battle.

Put your helmets on.

Sharpen your spears.

Put your armor on.

⁵ What do I see?

That army is afraid.

The soldiers are running away.

Their brave soldiers are defeated.

They run away in a hurry.

They don't look back.

There is danger all around.”

This is what the LORD said.

⁶ “Fast men cannot run away.

* 46:2 the fourth year ... Jehoiakim This was about 605 B.C.

Strong soldiers cannot escape.
They will all stumble and fall.

This will happen in the north, by the Euphrates
River.

⁷ Who is coming like the Nile River?

Who is coming like that strong, fast river?

⁸ It is Egypt that comes like the rising Nile River.

It is Egypt that comes like that strong, fast river.

Egypt says, 'I will come and cover the earth.

I will destroy the cities and the people in them.'

⁹ Horse soldiers, charge into battle.

Chariot drivers, drive fast.

March on, brave soldiers.

Soldiers from Cush and Put, carry your shields.

Soldiers from Lydia, use your bows.

¹⁰ "But on that day, the Lord GOD All-Powerful will win.

He will give his enemies the punishment they deserve.

His sword will kill until it is finished,
until it has satisfied its thirst for blood.

Yes, the Lord GOD All-Powerful will kill them as a sacrifice
in the land of the north by the Euphrates River.

¹¹ "Egypt, go to Gilead and get some medicine.

You will make up many medicines, but they will not
help.

You will not be healed.

¹² The nations will hear you crying.

Your cries will be heard all over the earth.

One 'brave soldier' will run into another 'brave soldier.'
And both 'brave soldiers' will fall down together."

¹³ This is the message the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the
prophet about Nebuchadnezzar coming to attack Egypt.

- 14 “Announce this message in Egypt.
Tell it in the city of Migdol.
Tell it in Memphis and Tahpanhes.
‘Get ready for war,
because people all around you are being killed with
swords.’
- 15 Egypt, your strong soldiers will be killed.
They will not be able to stand
because the LORD will push them down.
- 16 They will stumble again and again.
They will fall over each other.
They will say, ‘Get up; let’s go back to our own people.
Let us go back to our homeland.
Our enemy is defeating us.
We must get away.’
- 17 In their homelands, those soldiers will say,
‘Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is only a lot of noise.
His time of glory is over.’”
- 18 This message is from the King.
The King is the LORD All-Powerful.
“I promise, as surely as I live, a powerful leader will come.
He will be like Mount Tabor or Mount Carmel among
smaller mountains.
- 19 People of Egypt, pack your things.
Get ready for captivity,
because Memphis will be a ruined, empty land.
Those cities will be destroyed,
and no one will live there.
- 20 “Egypt is like a beautiful cow.

But a horsefly[†] is coming from the north[‡] to attack her.

²¹ The hired soldiers in Egypt's army are like fat calves.

They will all turn and run away.

They will not stand strong against the attack.

Their time of destruction is coming.

They will soon be punished.

²² Egypt is like a snake hissing

and trying to escape.

The enemy comes closer and closer,

and the Egyptian army is trying to slither away.

The enemy will attack Egypt with axes,

like men cutting down trees.”

²³ This is what the LORD says:

“They will chop down Egypt's forest.

There are many trees in that forest,

but they will all be cut down.

There are more enemy soldiers than locusts.

There are so many soldiers that no one can count them.

²⁴ Egypt will be ashamed.

The enemy from the north will defeat her.”

²⁵ The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says, “Very soon I will punish Amon,[§] the god of Thebes, and I will

[†] 46:20 horsefly A large insect that often flies around cows and horses and bites them. [‡] 46:20 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel. [§] 46:25 Amon For many centuries Amon was the most important god of Egypt. At the time of this prophecy, he was not worshiped as much in northern Egypt. But he was still the most important god in southern Egypt, especially around the old Egyptian capital city of Thebes.

punish Pharaoh, Egypt, and her gods. I will punish the kings of Egypt, and I will punish the people who depend on Pharaoh. ²⁶ I will let all of them be defeated by their enemies—their enemies want to kill them. I will give the people to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his servants.

“Long ago, Egypt lived in peace. And after all these times of trouble, Egypt will live in peace again.” This is what the LORD said.

A Message for Northern Israel

²⁷ “Jacob, my servant, do not be afraid.

Do not be frightened, Israel.

I will save you from those faraway places.

I will save your children from the countries where they are captives.

Jacob will have peace and safety again,
and no one will make him afraid.”

²⁸ This is what the LORD says.

“Jacob, my servant, do not be afraid.

I am with you.

I sent you away to many different places.

But I will not destroy you completely.

But I will destroy all those nations.

You must be punished for the bad things you did.

So I will not let you escape your punishment.

I will discipline you, but I will be fair.”

47

A Message About the Philistine People

¹ This is the message from the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet about the Philistines. This message came before Pharaoh attacked the city of Gaza.

² This is what the LORD says:

“Look, the enemy is gathering in the north* like rising water.

They will come like a river spilling over its banks.

They will cover the whole country like a flood.

They will cover the towns and the people living in them.

Everyone in the country will cry for help.

Everyone will cry out in pain.

³ They will hear the sound of running horses,
the noisy chariots, the rumbling wheels.

Fathers will not be able to protect their children.

They will be too weak to help,

⁴ because the time has come to destroy all the Philistines.

The time has come to destroy Tyre and Sidon’s
remaining helpers.

The LORD will destroy the Philistines,

the survivors from the Island of Crete.†

⁵ The people from Gaza will be sad and shave their heads.

The people from Ashkelon will be silenced.

Survivors from the valley, how long will you cut
yourselves?‡

⁶ “Sword of the LORD, you have not stopped.

How long will you keep fighting?

Go back into your scabbard§!

* 47:2 north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel. † 47:4 Island of Crete Literally, “Island of Caphtor.” Sometimes this means Crete, and sometimes it means Cyprus. The Bible says the Philistines originally came from Caphtor. ‡ 47:5 sad ... cut yourselves

The people did these things to show their sadness. § 47:6 scabbard A holder for a sword.

Stop! Be still!

⁷ But how can the sword of the Lord rest?
The LORD gave it a command.

He commanded it to attack
the city of Ashkelon and the seacoast.”

48

A Message About Moab

¹ This message is about the country of Moab. This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says:*

“It will be bad for Mount Nebo.†
Mount Nebo will be ruined.

The town of Kiriathaim will be humbled.
It will be captured.

The strong place will be humbled.
It will be shattered.

² Moab will not be praised again.

Men in Heshbon will plan Moab’s defeat.

They will say, ‘Come, let us put an end to that nation.’

Madmenah, you will also be silenced.

The sword will chase you.

³ Listen to the cries from Horonaim.

They are cries of much confusion and destruction.

⁴ Moab will be destroyed.

Her little children will cry for help.

⁵ Moab’s people go up the path to Luhith.

They are crying bitterly as they go.

On the road down to the town of Horonaim,

* 48:1 This message ... says See Isaiah 15 for a similar message. † 48:1
Mount Nebo A mountain in Moab, a country east of Israel.

cries of pain and suffering can be heard.

⁶ Run away! Run for your lives!

Run away like a weed[‡] blowing through the desert.

⁷ “You trust in the things you made and in your wealth,
so you will be captured.

The god Chemosh will be taken into captivity,
and his priests and officials will be taken with him.

⁸ The Destroyer will come against every town.

Not one town will escape.

The valley will be ruined.

The high plain will be destroyed.

The LORD said this would happen,
so it will happen.

⁹ Spread salt over the fields in Moab.

The country will be an empty desert.[§]

Moab’s towns will become empty.

No one will live in them.

¹⁰ Bad things will happen to those who

don’t obey the LORD and don’t use their swords to
kill those people.

¹¹ “Moab has never known trouble.

Moab is like wine left to settle.

Moab has never been poured from one jar to another.

He has not been taken into captivity.

So he tastes as he did before,
and his smell has not changed.”

¹² This is what the LORD says:

“But I will soon send men

[‡] 48:6 weed In Hebrew this word is like the name “Aroer,” an important city in Moab. [§] 48:9 The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

to pour you from your jars.*
Then they will empty the jars
and smash them to pieces.”

¹³ Then the people of Moab will be ashamed of their false god, Chemosh. They will be like the people of Israel who trusted that god in Bethel† but were ashamed when he did not help them.

¹⁴ “You cannot say, ‘We are good soldiers.

We are brave men in battle.’

¹⁵ The enemy will attack Moab.

The enemy will enter its towns and destroy them.
Its best young men will be killed in the slaughter.”

This message is from the King.

The King’s name is the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁶ “The end of Moab is near.

Moab will soon be destroyed.

¹⁷ All you who live around Moab should cry for that country.

You know how famous Moab is.

So cry for it.

Say, ‘The ruler’s power is broken.

Moab’s power and glory is gone.’

¹⁸ “You people living in Dibon,‡

come down from your place of honor.

Sit on the ground in the dust,

* 48:12 jars This probably means the cities in Moab. † 48:13 in Bethel This means the temple that King Jeroboam built in the town of Bethel (see 1 Kings 12:28-33). It is not clear if this means the people still worshiped the Lord there, but in a wrong way, or if they worshiped a false god, perhaps the Canaanite god El or Baal. ‡ 48:18 Dibon A city in the country of Moab.

because the Destroyer is coming.
And he will destroy your strong cities.

19 “You people living in Aroer,
stand next to the road and watch.
See the man running away.
See that woman running away.
Ask them what happened.

20 “Moab will be ruined and filled with shame.
Moab will cry and cry.

Announce at the Arnon River[§]
that Moab is destroyed.

21 People on the high plain have been punished.
Judgment has come to the towns of Holon, Jahzah,
and Mephaath.

22 Judgment has come to the towns
of Dibon, Nebo, and Beth Diblathaim.

23 Judgment has come to the towns
of Kiriathaim, Beth Gamul, and Beth Meon.

24 Judgment has come to the towns
of Kerioth and Bozrah.

Judgment has come to all the towns
of Moab, far and near.

25 Moab’s strength has been cut off.
Its arm has been broken.”

This is what the LORD said.

26 “The people of Moab thought they were greater than
the LORD.

So punish them until they act like a drunk,
falling and rolling around in his vomit.

Then people will make fun of them.

§ 48:20 Arnon River An important river in Moab.

- 27 “Moab, you made fun of Israel.
Israel was caught by a gang of thieves.
Every time you spoke about Israel,
you shook your head and acted as if you were better
than Israel.
- 28 People in Moab, leave your towns.
Go live among the rocks;
be like a dove that makes its nest
at the opening of a cave.”
- 29 “We have heard about Moab’s pride.
He was very proud.
He thought he was important.
He was always bragging.
He was very, very proud.”
- 30 The LORD says, “I know Moab gets angry quickly and
brags about himself,
but his boasts are lies.
He cannot do what he says.
- 31 So I cry for Moab.
I cry for everyone in Moab.
I cry for the men from Kir Hareseth.
- 32 I cry with the people of Jazer for Jazer.
Sibmah, in the past your vines spread all the way to
the sea.
They reached as far as the town of Jazer.
But the Destroyer has taken your fruit and grapes.
- 33 Joy and happiness are gone from the large vineyards of
Moab.
I stopped the flow of wine from the winepresses.
There is no singing and dancing from people walking on
the grapes to make wine.
There are no shouts of joy.

³⁴ “The people of the towns of Heshbon and Elealeh are crying. Their cry is heard even as far away as the town of Jahaz. Their cry is heard from the town of Zoar, as far away as the towns of Horonaim and Eglath Shelishiyah. Even the waters of Nimrim are dried up. ³⁵ I will stop Moab from making burnt offerings on the high places. I will stop them from making sacrifices to their gods.” This is what the LORD said.

³⁶ “I am very sad for Moab. My heart cries like the sad sound of a flute playing a funeral song. I am sad for the people from Kir Hareseth. Their money and riches have all been taken away. ³⁷ Everyone has a shaved head. Everyone’s beard is cut off. Everyone’s hands are cut and bleeding.* Everyone is wearing sackcloth around their waists. ³⁸ People are crying for the dead everywhere in Moab—on every housetop and in every public square. There is sadness because I have broken Moab like an empty jar.” This is what the LORD said.

³⁹ “Moab is shattered. The people are crying. Moab surrendered. Now Moab is ashamed. People make fun of Moab, but what happened fills them with fear.”

⁴⁰ The LORD says, “Look! An eagle is diving down from the sky.

It is spreading its wings over Moab.

⁴¹ The towns of Moab will be captured.

The strong hiding places will be defeated.

At that time Moab’s soldiers will be filled with fear,
like a woman giving birth.

⁴² The nation of Moab will be destroyed,

* ^{48:37} Everyone ... cut and bleeding The people did these things to show their sadness for people who had died.

because they thought that they were more important than the LORD.”

⁴³ This is what the LORD says:

“People of Moab, fear, deep holes, and traps[†] wait for you.

⁴⁴ People will be afraid and run away,
and they will fall into the deep holes.

Anyone who climbs out of the deep holes
will be caught in the traps.

I will bring the year of punishment to Moab.”

This is what the LORD said.

⁴⁵ “People have run from the powerful enemy.

They ran to safety in the town of Heshbon.

But a fire started in Heshbon.

That fire started in Sihon’s town,[‡]
and it is destroying the leaders of Moab.

It is destroying those proud people.

⁴⁶ It will be bad for you, Moab.

Chemosh’s people are being destroyed.

Your sons and daughters are being taken away
as prisoners and captives.

⁴⁷ Moab’s people will be taken away as captives.

But in days to come, I will bring them back.”

This message is from the LORD.

This ends the judgment on Moab.

[†] 48:43 fear, deep holes, and traps This is a wordplay in Hebrew. The Hebrew words are “Pahad, Pahat, and Pah.” [‡] 48:45 Sihon’s town This was Heshbon. See Num. 21:25-30.

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A Message About Ammon

¹ This message is about the Ammonites. This is what the LORD says:

“Ammonites, do you think that
 the people of Israel don’t have children?
 Do you think there are no children
 to take the land when the parents die?
 Maybe that is why Milcom took Gad’s* land?”

² The LORD says, “The time will come in Rabbah of Ammon† when people hear the sounds of battle. Rabbah of Ammon will be destroyed. It will be an empty hill covered with ruined buildings, and the towns around it will be burned. Those people forced the people of Israel to leave their own land. But later, Israel will force them to leave.” This is what the LORD said.

³ “People in Heshbon, cry because the town of Ai is destroyed!
 Women in Rabbah of Ammon, cry!
 Put on sackcloth and cry.
 Run to the city for safety,
 because the enemy will take away the god Milcom,
 with his priests and officials.

* 49:1 Gad’s One of the tribes of Israel. Their land was on the east side of the Jordan River, near the country of Ammon. † 49:2 Rabbah of Ammon The capital city of the Ammonites.

⁴ You brag about your strength,
but you are losing your strength.
You trust in your wealth to save you.
You think no one would even think of attacking you.”
⁵ But this is what the Lord GOD All-Powerful says:
“I will bring troubles to you from every side.
You will all run away,
and no one will be able to bring you together again.”

⁶ “The Ammonites will be taken away as captives. But the time will come when I will bring the Ammonites back.” This message is from the LORD.

A Message About Edom

⁷ This message is about Edom. This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“Is there no more wisdom in Teman?
Are the wise men of Edom not able to give good advice?
Have they lost their wisdom?
⁸ You people living in Dedan, run away and hide,
because I will punish Esau for the bad things he did.

⁹ “Workers pick grapes from grapevines,
but they leave a few grapes on the plants.
If thieves come at night,
they don’t take everything.
¹⁰ But I will take everything from Esau.
I will find all his hiding places.
He will not be able to hide from me.
His children, relatives, and neighbors will all die.
¹¹ No one will be left to care for his children.
His wives will have no one to depend on.”

¹² This is what the LORD says: “Some people don’t deserve to be punished, but they suffer. But, Edom, you deserve to be punished, so you will really be punished. You will not escape the punishment you deserve. You will be punished.” ¹³ The LORD says, “By my own power, I make this promise: I promise that the city of Bozrah will be destroyed. It will become a ruined pile of rocks. People will use it as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to other cities. People will insult that city, and all the towns around Bozrah will become ruins forever.”

¹⁴ I heard a message from the LORD:
He sent this messenger to the nations.

This is the message:

“Gather your armies together!

Get ready for battle!

March against the nation of Edom!

¹⁵ Edom, I will make you become unimportant.

Everyone will hate you.

¹⁶ Edom, you made other nations afraid,
so you thought you were important.

But your pride has fooled you.

You live in caves, high on the cliff.

Your home is high in the hills.

But even if you build your home as high as an eagle’s nest,
I will bring you down from there.”

This is what the LORD said.

¹⁷ “Edom will be destroyed.

People will be shocked to see the destroyed cities.

They will whistle from amazement at the destroyed cities.

¹⁸ Edom will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah and the towns around them.
No one will live there.”
This is what the LORD said.

¹⁹ “Sometimes a lion will come from the thick bushes near the Jordan River. And it will go into the fields where people put their sheep and cattle. I am like that lion. I will go to Edom. And I will frighten the people and make them run away. None of their young men will stop me. No one is like me. No one will challenge me. None of their leaders will stand up against me.”

²⁰ So listen to what the LORD has planned to do to the people of Edom.
Listen to what he has decided to do to the people in Teman.
The enemy will drag away the young kids of Edom’s flock.
Edom’s pastures will be empty because of what they did.

²¹ At the sound of Edom’s fall, the earth will shake.
Their cry will be heard all the way to the Red Sea.

²² Just as an eagle flies high to see the animal it will attack,
so the Lord will spread his wings over Bozrah.
And Edom’s soldiers will be filled with fear
like a woman giving birth.

A Message About Damascus

²³ This message is about the city of Damascus:

“The towns of Hamath and Arpad are afraid.
They are afraid because they heard the bad news.
They are discouraged.
They are worried and afraid.

24 The city of Damascus has become weak.
 The people want to run away.
 They are ready to panic.
 They are overcome with fear and pain,
 like a woman giving birth.

25 “Damascus is a happy city.

The people have not left that ‘fun city’ yet.

26 So the young men will die in the public squares of that city.

All her soldiers will be killed at that time.”

This is what the LORD All-Powerful said.

27 “I will set the walls of Damascus on fire.

The fire will completely burn up the strong forts of Ben-Hadad.‡”

A Message About Kedar and Hazor

28 This message is about the tribe of Kedar and the rulers of Hazor. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated them. This is what the LORD says:

“Go and attack the tribe of Kedar.

Destroy the people of the East.

29 Their tents and flocks will be taken away.

Their tents and all their riches will be carried off.

Their enemy will take away the camels.

Men will shout this to them:

‘Terrible things are happening all around us.’

30 Run away quickly!

People in Hazor, find a good place to hide.”

This message is from the LORD.

“Nebuchadnezzar has made plans against you.

He thought of a smart plan to defeat you.

‡ 49:27 Ben-Hadad This was the name of several of the kings of Aram-Damascus.

- 31 “There is a nation that feels so safe and secure
that it does not have gates or fences to protect it.
And no one lives near enough to help them.
So attack that nation!” says the LORD.
- 32 “Their camels are there to be taken in battle.
Their large herds of cattle will be yours.
I will scatter them throughout the earth—those people
who cut their hair short.[§]
I will bring disaster on them from every direction.”
This message is from the LORD.
- 33 “Hazor will become a home for wild dogs, an empty
desert forever.
No one will live there.
No one will stay in that place.”

A Message About Elam

34 Early in the time when Zedekiah was king of Judah,
Jeremiah the prophet received a message from the LORD
about the nation of Elam.*

- 35 The LORD All-Powerful says,
“I will break Elam’s bow very soon.
It is Elam’s strongest weapon.
- 36 I will bring the four winds against Elam.
I will bring them from the four corners of the skies.
I will send the people of Elam to every place on the earth
where the four winds blow.
Elam’s captives will be carried away to every nation.
- 37 I will break Elam to pieces while their enemies are
watching.

§ 49:32 cut their hair short Literally, “cut on the side of their heads,” a custom different from that of Israelite men. * 49:34 Elam A nation east of Babylon.

I will break Elam in front of the people who want to kill them.
 I will bring terrible troubles to them.
 I will show them how angry I am.”
 This message is from the LORD.
 “I will send a sword to chase Elam.
 The sword will chase them until I have killed them all.
³⁸ I will show Elam that I am in control,
 and I will destroy its king and his officials.”
 This message is from the LORD.
³⁹ “But in the future I will make good things happen to Elam.”
 This message is from the LORD.

50

A Message About Babylon

¹ This is the message the LORD spoke through the prophet Jeremiah about Babylon and its people.

² “Announce this to all nations!
 Lift up a flag and announce the message!
 Speak the whole message and say,
 ‘The nation of Babylon will be captured.
 The god Bel will be put to shame.
 The god Marduk will be very afraid.
 Babylon’s idols will be put to shame.
 Her gods will be filled with terror.’
³ A nation from the north will attack Babylon.
 That nation will make Babylon like an empty desert.
 No one will live there.
 Both men and animals will run away.”
⁴ The LORD says, “At that time

the people of Israel and the people of Judah will be together.

They will cry and cry together,
and together, they will go look for the LORD their God.

⁵ They will ask how to go to Zion.

They will start to go in that direction.

They will say, 'Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD.

Let's make an agreement that will last forever.

Let's make an agreement that we will never forget.'

⁶ "My people have been like lost sheep.

Their shepherds led them the wrong way
and caused them to wander away into the mountains and hills.

They forgot where their resting place was.

⁷ They were attacked by all who saw them.

And their attackers said,

'We were not wrong to attack them

because they sinned against the LORD.

They should have stayed close to him, their true resting place.

The LORD is the one their fathers trusted in.'

⁸ "Run away from Babylon.

Leave the land of the Babylonians.

Be like the goats that lead the flock.

⁹ I will bring many nations together from the north.

This group of nations will get ready for war against Babylon.

Babylon will be captured by people from the north.

Those nations will shoot many arrows at Babylon.

Their arrows will be like soldiers

who don't come back from war with their hands empty.

¹⁰ The enemy will take all the wealth from the Chaldeans.
The soldiers will take all they want.”

This is what the LORD said.

¹¹ “Babylon, you are excited and happy.
You took my land.

You dance around like a young cow
that got into the grain.

Your laughter is like the happy sounds
that horses make.

¹² Now your mother will be very ashamed.

The woman who gave you birth will be embarrassed.

Babylon will be the least important of all the nations.

She will be an empty, dry desert.

¹³ The LORD will show his anger,
so no one will live there.

Babylon will be completely empty.

Everyone who passes by Babylon will be afraid.

They will shake their heads when they see how badly
it has been destroyed.

¹⁴ “Prepare for war against Babylon.

All you soldiers with bows, shoot your arrows at
Babylon.

Don't save any of your arrows.

Babylon has sinned against the LORD.

¹⁵ Soldiers around Babylon, shout the cry of victory!

Babylon has surrendered!

Her walls and towers have been pulled down!

The LORD is giving her people the punishment they
deserve.

You nations should give Babylon the punishment she deserves.

Do to her what she has done to other nations.

¹⁶ Don't let the people from Babylon plant their crops.

Don't let them gather the harvest.

The soldiers of Babylon brought many prisoners to their city.

Now the enemy soldiers have come,
so the prisoners are going back home.

They are running back to their own countries.

¹⁷ "Israel is like a flock of sheep that was scattered all over the country.

Israel is like sheep that were chased away by lions.

The first lion to attack was the king of Assyria.

The last lion to crush Israel's bones was King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

¹⁸ So this is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says:

'I will soon punish the king of Babylon and his country
as I punished the king of Assyria.

¹⁹ " 'I will bring Israel back to his own fields.

He will eat food that grows on Mount Carmel and in the land of Bashan.

He will eat and be full.

He will eat on the hills in the lands of Ephraim and Gilead.' "

²⁰ The LORD says, "At that time people will try hard to find Israel's guilt,

but there will be no guilt.

People will try to find Judah's sins,

but no sins will be found.

That is because I am saving a few survivors from Israel
and Judah.

And I am forgiving them for all their sins.”

²¹ The LORD says, “Attack the country of Merathaim!

Attack the people living in Pekod!

Attack them!

Kill them and destroy them completely!

Do everything I commanded you!

²² “The noise of battle can be heard all over the country.

It is the noise of much destruction.

²³ Babylon was called

‘The Hammer of the Whole Earth.’

But now the ‘Hammer’ is shattered.

Babylon is the most ruined of the nations.

²⁴ Babylon, I set a trap for you,

and you were caught before you knew it.

You fought against the LORD,

so you were found and captured.

²⁵ The LORD has opened up his storeroom

and brought out the weapons of his anger.

The Lord GOD All-Powerful brought out those weapons,

because he has work to do in the land of the
Chaldeans.

²⁶ “Come against Babylon from far away.

Break open the storehouses where she keeps her
grain.

Destroy Babylon completely.

Don’t leave anyone alive.

Pile up her dead bodies like big piles of grain.

²⁷ Kill all the young men in Babylon.

Let them be slaughtered like bulls.

How terrible for them that their day of defeat has come!
It is time for them to be punished.

²⁸ People are running out of Babylon.

They are escaping from that country and coming to
Zion.

They are telling everyone the good news about what the
Lord is doing.

The LORD our God is giving Babylon the punishment
it deserves.

The Lord is destroying Babylon, because it destroyed
his Temple!

²⁹ “Call for the archers.

Tell them to attack Babylon.

Tell them to surround the city.

Don't let anyone escape.

Pay her back for the bad things she has done.

Do to her what she has done to other nations.

Babylon did not respect the LORD.

Babylon was very rude to the Holy One of Israel.

So punish Babylon.

³⁰ Babylon's young men will be killed in the streets.

All her soldiers will die on that day.”

This is what the LORD says.

³¹ “Babylon, you are too proud,

and I am against you,”

says the Lord GOD All-Powerful.

“I am against you,

and the time has come for you to be punished.

³² Proud Babylon will stumble and fall,

and no one will help her get up.

I will start a fire in her towns.

That fire will completely burn up everyone around her.”

³³ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“The people of Israel and Judah are slaves.

The enemy took them, and the enemy will not let Israel go.

³⁴ But God will get them back.

His name is the LORD God All-Powerful.

He will defend them very strongly.

He will argue their case so that he can let their land rest.

But there will be no rest for those living in Babylon.”

³⁵ The LORD says,

“Sword, kill the people living in Babylon.

Sword, kill the king’s officials
and the wise men of Babylon.

³⁶ Sword, kill the priests of Babylon.

They will be like fools.

Sword, kill the soldiers of Babylon.

They will be full of fear.

³⁷ Sword, kill the horses and chariots of Babylon.

Sword, kill all the soldiers hired from other countries.

They will be like frightened women.

Sword, destroy the treasures of Babylon.

Those treasures will be taken away.

³⁸ Sword, strike the waters of Babylon.

Those waters will be dried up.

Babylon has many, many idols.

These idols show that the people of Babylon are foolish.

So bad things will happen to them.

³⁹ Babylon will never again be filled with people.
Wild dogs, ostriches, and other desert animals will
live there.

But no one will live there ever again.

⁴⁰ God completely destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah
and the towns around them.

In the same way no one will live in Babylon,
and no one will ever go to live there.”

This is what the LORD says.

⁴¹ “Look! There are people coming from the north.
They come from a powerful nation.

Many kings are coming together from all around the
world.

⁴² Their armies have bows and spears.

The soldiers are cruel.

They have no mercy.

The soldiers come riding on their horses;
the sound is as loud as the roaring sea.

They stand in their places, ready for battle.

They are ready to attack you, city of Babylon.

⁴³ The king of Babylon heard about those armies,
and he is paralyzed with fear.

He is overcome with fear and pain,

like a woman giving birth.

⁴⁴ “Sometimes a lion will come
from the thick bushes near the Jordan River.

It will walk into the fields
where people have their animals.

I will be like that lion;

I will chase Babylon from its land.

Who should I choose to do this?

There is no one like me.

There is no one who can challenge me.
 No shepherd will come to chase me away.
 I will chase away the Babylonians.”

⁴⁵ Listen to what the LORD has planned
 to do to Babylon.
 Listen to what he has decided
 to do to the Babylonians.
 “I promise that an enemy will drag away the young kids
 of Babylon’s flock,
 and Babylon will become an empty pasture.
⁴⁶ Babylon will fall,
 and that fall will shake the earth.
 People in all nations will hear about
 the destruction of Babylon.”

51

¹ The LORD says,
 “I will cause a powerful, destructive
 wind to blow against Babylon and the Babylonians.*
² I will send foreigners to winnow[†] Babylon,
 and they will take everything from the city.
 Armies will surround the city,
 and there will be terrible destruction.
³ The Babylonian soldiers will not get to use their bows
 and arrows.
 They will not even put on their armor.
 Don’t feel sorry for the soldiers of Babylon.
 Destroy her army completely!

* 51:1 Babylonians Literally, “Leb Kammai.” In Hebrew this was a secret way of writing “Chaldeans.” † 51:2 winnow To separate grain from the hulls around it. Farmers threw the grain with the hulls into the air. The wind blew the hulls away and left the good grain.

- 4 Babylon's soldiers will be killed in the land of the Chaldeans.
They will be badly wounded in the streets of Babylon."
- 5 The LORD All-Powerful did not leave Israel and Judah alone, like a widow.
No, they are guilty of leaving the Holy One of Israel.
Their God did not leave them.
They left him!
- 6 Run away from Babylon.
Run to save your lives!
Don't stay and be killed because of Babylon's sins!
It is time for the LORD to punish the Babylonians for the bad things they have done.
Babylon will get the punishment that she should have.
- 7 Babylon was like a golden cup in the LORD'S hand.
Babylon made the whole world drunk.
The nations drank Babylon's wine,
so they went crazy.
- 8 But Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken.
Cry for her!
Get medicine for her pain,
and maybe she can be healed.
- 9 We tried to heal Babylon,
but she cannot be healed.
So let us leave her,
and let each of us go to our own country.
God in heaven will decide Babylon's punishment.
He will decide what will happen to Babylon.
- 10 The LORD got even for us.

Come, let's tell about that in Zion.
Let's tell what the LORD our God has done.

¹¹ Sharpen the arrows!
Get your shields!

The LORD has stirred up the kings of the Medes
because he wants to destroy Babylon.

The army from Babylon destroyed his Temple in
Jerusalem,
so he will give them the punishment they deserve.

¹² Lift up a flag against the walls of Babylon.
Bring more guards.

Put the watchmen in their places.
Get ready for a secret attack.

The LORD will do what he has planned.
He will do what he said he would do against the
people of Babylon.

¹³ Babylon, you live near much water.
You are rich with treasures, but your end as a nation
has come.
It is time for you to be destroyed.

¹⁴ The LORD All-Powerful used his name to make this
promise:
"Babylon, I will fill you with so many enemy soldiers they
will be like a cloud of locusts.
They will win their war against you.
They will stand over you shouting their victory cry."

¹⁵ God used his great power and made the earth.
He used his wisdom to build the world
and his understanding to stretch out the skies.

¹⁶ When he thunders, the waters in the skies roar.
He sends clouds all over the earth.
He sends lightning with the rain.

He brings out the wind from his storehouses.

¹⁷ But people are so stupid.

They don't understand what God has done.

Skilled workers make statues of false gods.

Those statues are only false gods.

They show how foolish those workers are.

Those statues are not alive.

¹⁸ Those idols are worthless.

People made them, and they are nothing but a joke.

Their time of judgment will come,

and those idols will be destroyed.

¹⁹ But God, who is Jacob's Portion, is not like those worthless statues.

People didn't make God;

God made his people.

He made everything.

His name is the LORD All-Powerful.

²⁰ The Lord says, "Babylon, you are my club.

I used you to smash nations.

I used you to destroy kingdoms.

²¹ I used you to smash horse and rider.

I used you to smash chariot and driver.

²² I used you to smash men and women.

I used you to smash men, old and young.

I used you to smash young men and young women.

²³ I used you to smash shepherds and flocks.

I used you to smash farmers and oxen.

I used you to smash governors and important officials.

²⁴ But I will repay Babylonia and all the Babylonians for all the evil things they did to Zion.

I will pay them back so that you can see it, Judah."

This is what the LORD said.

²⁵ The LORD says,

“Babylon, you are like a volcano
that destroys the whole country.

But I have turned against you,
and I will turn you into a burned-out mountain.

²⁶ People will not take stones from Babylon to use as the
foundation of a building.

That is because they will not find any stones big
enough for cornerstones.

Your city will be a pile of broken rocks forever.”

This is what the LORD said.

²⁷ “Lift up the war flag in the land!

Blow the trumpet in all the nations!

Prepare the nations for war against Babylon.

Call these kingdoms to come fight against Babylon:
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz.

Choose a commander to lead the army against her.

Send so many horses that they are like a swarm of
locusts.

²⁸ Get the nations ready for battle against her.

Get the kings of the Medes ready.

Get their governors and all their important officials ready.

Get all the countries they rule ready for battle
against Babylon.

²⁹ The land shakes and moves as if it is in pain.

It will shake when the LORD does to Babylon what he
plans—

to make the land of Babylon an empty desert,
a place where no one will live.

³⁰ Babylon’s soldiers have stopped fighting.

They stay in their forts.

Their strength is gone.

They have become like frightened women.
Babylon's houses are burning.

The bars of her gates are broken.

³¹ One messenger follows another.

Messenger follows messenger.

They announce to the king of Babylon

that his whole city has been captured.

³² The places where people cross the rivers have been
captured.

The swamplands are burning.

All of Babylon's soldiers are afraid.”

³³ This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of the
people of Israel, says:

“Babylon is like a threshing floor,

where people beat the grain at harvest time.

And the time to beat Babylon is coming soon.

³⁴ “King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed us in the
past.

In the past he hurt us.

In the past he took our people away,

and we became like an empty jar.

He took the best we had.

He was like a giant monster that ate everything until
it was full.

He took the best we had

and then threw us away.

³⁵ Babylon did terrible things to hurt us.

Now I want those things to happen to Babylon.”

The people living in Zion said,

“The people of Babylon are guilty of killing our people.

Now they are being punished for the bad things they did.”

The city of Jerusalem said those things.

³⁶ So this is what the LORD says:

“I will defend you, Judah.

I will make sure that Babylon is punished.

I will dry up Babylon’s sea.

And I will make her water springs become dry.

³⁷ Babylon will become a pile of ruined buildings,
a place fit only for wild dogs.

People will be shocked and shake their heads at what is left there.

It will be a place where no one lives.

³⁸ “The people of Babylon are like roaring young lions.

They growl like baby lions.

³⁹ They are acting like powerful lions.

I will give a party for them.

I will make them drunk.

They will laugh and have a good time,
and then they will sleep forever.

They will never wake up.”

This is what the LORD said.

⁴⁰ “Babylon will be like sheep, rams, and goats waiting to be killed.

I will lead them to the slaughter.

⁴¹ “Sheshach[‡] will be defeated.

The best and proudest country of the whole earth
will be taken captive.

People from other nations will look at Babylon,

[‡] 51:41 Sheshach Jeremiah used a special code to create this secret name for Babylon.

and what they see will make them afraid.

⁴² The sea will rise over Babylon.

Its roaring waves will cover her.

⁴³ Babylon will be like a dry, desert land.

Its cities will be empty ruins.

No one will live in those cities.

No one will even travel through them.

⁴⁴ I will punish the false god Bel in Babylon.

I will make him vomit out the people he swallowed.

The wall around Babylon will fall,

and other nations will stop coming to Babylon.

⁴⁵ Come out of the city of Babylon, my people.

Run to save your lives.

Run from the LORD'S great anger.

⁴⁶ "Don't be sad, my people.

Rumors will spread, but don't be afraid.

One rumor comes this year.

Another rumor will come next year.

There will be rumors about terrible fighting in the country.

There will be rumors about rulers fighting against other rulers.

⁴⁷ The time will surely come when I will punish the false gods of Babylon,

and the whole land of Babylon will be put to shame.

There will be many dead people,

lying in the streets of that city.

⁴⁸ Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout with joy about Babylon.

They will shout because an army came from the north and fought against Babylon."

This is what the LORD said.

- 49 “Babylon killed people from Israel.
Babylon killed people from every place on earth.
So Babylon must fall!
- 50 You people escaped the swords.
You must hurry and leave Babylon.
Don’t wait!
You are in a faraway land,
but remember the LORD where you are and remember Jerusalem.”
- 51 “We people of Judah are ashamed.
We have been insulted,
because strangers have gone into
the holy places of the LORD’S Temple.”
- 52 The LORD says, “The time is coming,
when I will punish the idols of Babylon.
At that time wounded people will cry
with pain everywhere in that country.
- 53 Babylon might grow until she touches the sky.
Babylon might make her forts strong,
but I will send people to fight against that city.
And they will destroy her.”
This is what the LORD said.
- 54 “We can hear people crying in Babylon.
We hear the sound of people destroying things in the
land of Babylon.
- 55 The LORD will destroy Babylon very soon.
He will stop the loud noises in that city.
Enemies will come roaring in like ocean waves.
People all around will hear that roar.
- 56 The army will come and destroy Babylon.

Its soldiers will be captured, and their bows will be broken,
This will happen because the LORD punishes people for the bad things they do.

He gives them the full punishment they deserve.

⁵⁷ I will make Babylon's wise men and important officials drunk.

I will make the governors, officers, and soldiers drunk too.

Then they will sleep forever.

They will never wake up."

This is what the King said.

His name is the LORD All-Powerful.

⁵⁸ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

"Babylon's thick, strong wall will be pulled down.

Her high gates will be burned.

The people of Babylon will work hard, but it will not help.

They will get very tired trying to save the city.

But they will only be fuel for the flames."

Jeremiah Sends a Message to Babylon

⁵⁹ This is the message that Jeremiah gave to the officer Seraiah[§] son of Neriah. Neriah was the son of Mahseiah. Seraiah went to Babylon with King Zedekiah of Judah. This happened in the fourth year that Zedekiah* was king of Judah. At that time Jeremiah gave this message to Seraiah, the officer. ⁶⁰ Jeremiah had written on a scroll all the terrible things that would happen to Babylon. He had written all these things about Babylon.

§ 51:59 Seraiah Seraiah was a brother of Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary.

* 51:59 the fourth year ... Zedekiah That is, 594–593 B.C.

⁶¹ Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “Seraiah, go to Babylon. Be sure to read this message so that all the people can hear you. ⁶² Then say, ‘LORD, you have said that you will destroy this place, Babylon. You will destroy it so that no people or animals will live in it. This place will be an empty ruin forever.’ ⁶³ After you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates River. ⁶⁴ Then say, ‘In the same way Babylon will sink. Babylon will rise no more. It will sink because of the terrible things that I will make happen here.’”

The words of Jeremiah end here.

52

The Fall of Jerusalem

¹ Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother’s name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah.* Hamutal’s family was from the town of Libnah. ² Zedekiah did evil things, just as King Jehoiakim had done. The LORD did not like Zedekiah doing those evil things. ³ Terrible things happened to the people of Jerusalem and Judah because the LORD was angry with them. Finally, he threw them out of his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ⁴ So in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s rule, on the tenth day of the tenth month,† King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. The army of Babylon set up their camp outside of Jerusalem. Then they built ramps all around the city walls so that they could get over the walls. ⁵ The city of Jerusalem was

* 52:1 Jeremiah This is not the prophet Jeremiah, but a different man with the same name. † 52:4 ninth year ... tenth month That is, January of 588 B.C.

surrounded by the army of Babylon until the eleventh year that Zedekiah[‡] was king. ⁶ By the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, the hunger in the city was very bad. There was no food left for the people in the city to eat. ⁷ On that day the army of Babylon broke into Jerusalem. The soldiers of Jerusalem ran away. They left the city at night. They went through the gate between the two walls. That gate was near the king's garden. Even though the army of Babylon had surrounded the city, the soldiers of Jerusalem still ran away toward the desert.

⁸ But the Babylonian army chased King Zedekiah and caught him on the plains of Jericho. All of Zedekiah's soldiers ran away. ⁹ The army of Babylon captured King Zedekiah and took him to the king of Babylon who was at the city of Riblah, in the land of Hamath. At Riblah the king of Babylon announced his judgment on King Zedekiah. ¹⁰ There at the town of Riblah, the king of Babylon killed Zedekiah's sons while Zedekiah watched. The king of Babylon also killed all the royal officials of Judah. ¹¹ Then the king of Babylon tore out Zedekiah's eyes. He put bronze chains on him and took him to Babylon. In Babylon he put Zedekiah into prison. He stayed in prison until the day he died.

¹² Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king of Babylon's special guard. He was one of the king's most important officials while at Jerusalem. He came to Jerusalem on the tenth day of the fifth month, in the 19th year that Nebuchadnezzar[§] was king. ¹³ Nebuzaradan burned the LORD'S Temple, the king's palace, and every important building in Jerusalem, as well as all the houses. ¹⁴ All

[‡] 52:5 the eleventh year ... Zedekiah That is, 587 B.C. [§] 52:12 the 19th year ... Nebuchadnezzar That is, 587 B.C.

the Babylonian soldiers that were with the commander broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Commander Nebuzaradan took the people who were still in Jerusalem* and those who had surrendered earlier and made them captives. He took them and the skilled craftsmen who were left in Jerusalem as captives to Babylon. ¹⁶ But Nebuzaradan left some of the poorest people behind in the land. He left them to work in the vineyards and the fields.

¹⁷ The Babylonian army broke up the bronze columns of the LORD'S Temple. They also broke up the stands and the bronze tank† that were in the LORD'S Temple. They carried all that bronze to Babylon. ¹⁸ The army of Babylon also took these things from the Temple: pots, shovels, lamp snuffers, large bowls, pans, and all the bronze things that were used in the Temple service. ¹⁹ The commander of the king's special guards took these things away: basins, firepans, large bowls, pots, lampstands, pans, and bowls used for drink offerings. He took everything that was made of gold or silver. ²⁰ The two pillars, the Sea and the twelve bronze bulls under it, and the moveable stands were very heavy. King Solomon had made those things for the LORD'S Temple. The bronze that those things were made of was so heavy it could not be weighed.

²¹ Each of the bronze pillars was 31 feet‡ tall. Each pillar was almost 21 feet§ around. Each pillar was hollow.

* 52:15 the people ... Jerusalem This is from the ancient Greek version. The phrase, "some of the poorest people," which appears in the standard Hebrew text, seems to have been accidentally copied from the next verse. † 52:17 bronze columns ... tank These verses list the things that the Babylonian army took away from the Lord's Temple. For a description of the Temple furniture, see 1 Kings 7:13-26. ‡ 52:21 31 feet Literally, "18 cubits" (9.33 m). § 52:21 21 feet Literally, "12 cubits" (6.22 m).

The wall of each pillar was 3 inches* thick. ²² The bronze capital on top of the first pillar was over 5 feet† tall. It was decorated with a net design and bronze pomegranates all around it. The other pillar had pomegranates too. It was like the first pillar. ²³ There were 96 pomegranates on the sides of the pillars. All together, there were 100 pomegranates above the net design that went around the pillars.

²⁴ The commander of the king's special guards took Seraiah the high priest and Zephaniah the next highest priest as prisoners. The three doorkeepers were also taken as prisoners. ²⁵ The commander of the king's special guards also took the officer in charge of the fighting men. He also took seven of the king's advisors as prisoners. They were still there in Jerusalem. He also took the scribe who was in charge of putting people in the army. And he took 60 of the ordinary people who were there in the city. ²⁶⁻²⁷ Nebuzaradan, the commander, took all these officials and brought them to the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon was at the city of Riblah. Riblah is in the country of Hamath. There at the city of Riblah, the king ordered all of them to be killed.

So the people of Judah were taken from their country. ²⁸ This is how many people Nebuchadnezzar carried into captivity:

In Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year‡ as king of Babylon, 3023 people were taken from Judah.

* 52:21 3 inches Literally, "4 fingers" (7.4 cm). † 52:22 5 feet Or "1.63 m." Literally, "5 cubits" which would be 8' 6" (2.6 m), but see 2 Kings 25:17.

‡ 52:28 Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year That is, from the middle of 598 B.C. to the middle of 597 B.C.

- ²⁹ In Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year[§] as king of Babylon, 832 people were taken from Jerusalem.
- ³⁰ In Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year* as king, Nebuzaradan took 745 people of Judah into captivity. Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king's special guards.

In all, 4600 people were taken captive.

Jehoiachin Is Set Free

³¹ King Jehoiachin of Judah was in prison in Babylon for 37 years. In the 37th year of his imprisonment,[†] King Evil Merodach of Babylon was very kind to Jehoiachin. He let Jehoiachin out of prison in that year. This was the same year that Evil Merodach became king of Babylon. He set Jehoiachin free from prison on the 25th day of the 12th month. ³² Evil Merodach spoke kindly to Jehoiachin. He gave Jehoiachin a place of honor higher than the other kings who were with him in Babylon. ³³ So Jehoiachin took his prison clothes off. For the rest of his life, he ate regularly at the king's table. ³⁴ Every day the king of Babylon paid Jehoiachin enough to take care of his needs until the day Jehoiachin died.

[§] 52:29 Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year That is, from the middle of 588 B.C. to the middle of 587 B.C. * 52:30 Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year That is, from the middle of 582 B.C. to the middle of 581 B.C. † 52:31 37th year of his imprisonment That is, 561 B.C.

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Language: English

Dialect: American

Translation by: World Bible Translation Center

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2018-08-30

PDF generated using Haiola and XeLaTeX on 28 Jul 2020 from source files dated 30 Aug 2018

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