

JEREMIAH 40-52

JEREMIAH 40-51 EVENTS AFTER FALL OF JERUSALEM

Jer 40:1-41:18 Gedaliah appointed and assassinated

- **What choice was given to Jeremiah? What was his decision? (40:1-6)**

Nebuzaradan knew of Jeremiah and his prophecies. He knew that this was the judgment of Yahweh against His people because they sinned against the LORD. The Babylonian Nebuzaradan believed the word of God more than Yahweh's covenant people did.

Nebuzaradan probably did this out of both respect for Jeremiah's steadfast courage, and what could be interpreted as Jeremiah's favorable message regarding the Babylonians (that Jerusalem should surrender to their invading army).

Perhaps Jeremiah had a difficult time making up his mind, or at least it appeared so to Nebuzaradan. Sensing that Jeremiah really wanted to stay, Nebuzaradan voiced what seemed to be his choice – to stay in the land. The Babylonian captain of the guard made provision that Jeremiah would stay in the care of Gedaliah, who was appointed by the king of Babylon as governor over the cities of Judah.

- **Who was Gedaliah? Why did he not take the warning about the plot? (40:7-16)**

Gedaliah who was the new governor of the Babylonian province of Judah. Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. Shaphan the grandfather was Josiah's secretary and carried the newly found scroll to the king (2 Kings 22:3-13). One son, Ahikam, was part of the delegation Josiah sent to the prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:12-14). Ahikam offered protection to Jeremiah after he had preached the Temple Sermon (Jeremiah 26:24).

In appointing Gedaliah it was apparent that Nebuchadnezzar no longer trusted the men of the House of David. He chose a man who had administrative experience, but was not of the royal line.

This shows God's remarkable care for Jeremiah, even from the hands of a pagan authority. In some ways Jeremiah received better treatment from Nebuzaradan than from his fellow Jews.

Jeremiah lived under the care of the Judean man who was the Babylonian-appointed governor, and he lived among the poorest and most wretched of the land, those not sent to Babylon.

Some of the remaining officers of the land warned Gedaliah of an assassination plot by Baalis the king of the Ammonites and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah (Jeremiah 41:1) was of royal heritage (cf. 2 Kings 25:23). An enthusiastic member of the anti-Babylonian party, he was both jealous of and filled with hatred for Gedaliah. He might have been slighted in being passed over for the responsible office of governor.

An excavation in Jordan has uncovered the Siran Bottle (dated in the period of 667-580 B.C.), which bears the name of a "King Ba'lay," who has been identified with the Baalis of Jeremiah 40:13-14.

Gedaliah did not believe this report, though the events of Jeremiah 41 show that it was true. Perhaps Gedaliah was foolish; perhaps Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had won his trust in some way.

One of the leaders who brought the report of a murder plot to Gedaliah pressed him further, speaking to him secretly. He offered to eliminate the man accused of plotting the murder. Gedaliah still did not believe the warning, even though Johanan the son of Kareah pressed it upon him. Gedaliah continued to trust what he knew of Ishmael and regarded the warning as a false report.

- **Chapter 41 related how the plot was carried out and its aftermath.**

Gathered together at the same place where the remaining officers of Judah's army warned him, Gedaliah the governor of the Judah met with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and his associates. The coming treachery was even worse because it violated the hospitality and protection of the shared table (ate bread together).

Ishmael and his ten men murdered the governor appointed by the king of Babylon, as well as all the Jews who were with him and the Babylonian men of war there to protect the governor. Ishmael did this because Baalis, the king of the Ammonites hired him to do it (Jeremiah 40:14).

A large group of men came from the north to bring offerings and sacrifices to the temple. Since the Babylonians destroyed the temple (2 Kings 25:9), they came in respectful mourning to bring grain offerings and incense to the ruins of the temple.

Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went along. This shows how wicked and heartless Ishmael was. He knew how to put on a show and seem harmless to the approaching group of men. Ishmael and his gang then murdered as many as they could from this group of worshippers, and cruelly threw their bodies into a cistern.

Among the eighty men who came to Mizpah from the north, ten were able to persuade Ishmael to spare their lives in exchange for all the good things they brought to sacrifice and offer unto the LORD. The brutal and cunning Ishmael took the survivors and slaves and servants to the Ammonites – likely to sell them as slaves to the foreign king.

This must have been especially tragic news to Johanan who warned Gedaliah earlier of the murder plot Ishmael had planned against him (Jeremiah 40:15). Heroically, Johanan would not let this crime go unpunished. He and his men pursued and met Ishmael's party in battle. Apparently both Ishmael's captives and his captains were happy to see Johanan, and immediately went to his side. Ishmael was so violent and wicked that he frightened his own men. Johanan and his men took the survivors from the Mizpah massacre and brought them to Chimham, which is near Bethlehem, until they eventually

went to Egypt.

This terrible account is included to show how chaotic and unsafe conditions were in Judah and the region after the fall of the Kingdom of Judah. Many felt they were safer in Egypt than remaining in that lawless land.

Jer 42:1-43:13 The flight to Egypt

- **Why did the remnant seek Jeremiah? (42:1-6)**

After the brutal massacre at Mizpah (Jeremiah 41), the leaders and citizens of those left in the land were anxious and asked Jeremiah for a word from the Lord. Rightly concerned over the dangers surrounding them, they asked Jeremiah for guidance from God, with the idea that if they did what God wanted them to do they would enjoy His protection. By all appearance this was a humble, wise, and proper request.

Jeremiah was happy to bring them a word from God, but he had to seek God and pray for it. Jeremiah promised to faithfully deliver whatever word God gave him for the leaders and commoners of those remaining in the land after the Babylonian exile.

With a holy and solemn oath, the remnant promised to do whatever God told them to do through the Prophet Jeremiah, whether it is pleasing or displeasing.

- **What was the Lord's answer? (42:7-22)**

The prophetic word took time to come to Jeremiah. It was not an immediate thing to be called upon whenever he pleased. It had to come in God's timing. Jeremiah delivered God's message to the leaders and common people, that if they stayed in the land God would protect and establish them. Speaking in God's voice, Jeremiah assured them that God would relent concerning the disaster God had brought upon them. The days of terrible judgment were over.

God asked the leaders and common people to trust Him that the season of judgment had now been replaced by a season of mercy. Before the final Babylonian conquest, the message was, surrender to exile. Now in the season of mercy the message was, trust Me and remain in the land. If they did, God would bless them with protection and goodness in your own land.

God gave them a great promise if they trusted Him and stayed in the land. If they refused to trust Him and instead went to the land of Egypt for security and provision, they would be disobeying the voice of the LORD your God.

If unbelief drove them to Egypt, what they feared would come upon them in Judea would come upon them in Egypt. The price paid for their unbelief would be to certainly die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in Egypt.

God spoke to them about their pretended sincerity in seeking a word from Jeremiah the Prophet. When they said, "so declare to us and we will do it," they did not speak truthfully. Their insincere seeking only added to their guilt. They would go to Egypt as they had already decided to do, and the judgment God promised was certain to come upon them.

They acted as if they sought the LORD in sincerity and submission, but it was not true. Many still seek God with pretended sincerity, already determined to do what they want to do, and only hoping that God will affirm them in so doing. This teaches the importance of seeking God with a truly submitted heart that will do whatever He tells us to do.

- **Why did they reject the message? (43:1-7)**

There were many proud men among the leaders of those remaining in the land. They did not like being confronted with their hypocrisy as Jeremiah had done in Jeremiah 42:20. It is remarkable that these men who lived through the tragic accuracy of every word of Jeremiah regarding the sin and judgment of Judah would now say he was a false prophet.

They accused Jeremiah of not bringing a word from Yahweh, but from the Babylonians. They said it was all planned to bring about either their death or captivity in Babylon.

- **What happened to Jeremiah?**

They promised to do whatever God told them to do (Jeremiah 42:5-6), and God told them to trust Him and remain in the land. Johanan, the other leaders and all of the people did not keep their promise and decided to go to Egypt for protection and provision.

It was not enough for Johanan and the people to disobey God. They also took by force everyone else, forcing them to come with them to Egypt. There is a sense in which they took Jeremiah and his associate Baruch as hostages against God. Since the LORD promised judgment against all who went to Egypt (Jeremiah 42:17), they virtually dared God to judge His faithful prophet who went to Egypt, even if it was against his will. Jeremiah was no longer in the Promised Land, and God commanded His people who remained after the Babylonian exile to remain in that land. By force, Jeremiah was taken to Egypt – yet, the word of the LORD still came to him. He was still God’s prophet, and God did not count him as disobedient because of the unique and strange circumstances of his presence in Egypt.

- **What consequences would they face? (43:8-13)**

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God promised that He would bring Nebuchadnezzar to conquer and judge Egypt, just as He had done to Judah. Nebuchadnezzar would set his throne above these stones, in the very courtyard of the Pharaoh’s palace.

God promised that the judgment coming to Egypt would be comprehensive. Through the Babylonians would come death, captivity, and the sword. They would also destroy and

loot Egyptian temples. The message was clear: If they went to Egypt to escape the wrath and power of the Babylonians, it would follow them there. It was better to stay in Judea and trust God to protect and provide.

The ESV, following some other translations, renders the line in Jeremiah 43:12 as, he shall clean the land of Egypt as a shepherd cleans his cloak of vermin. It is well understood by those who have travelled in some parts of the Middle East. The picking of lice from one's clothing is used to describe Nebuchadnezzar's plundering activities when he finally invaded Egypt.

Jer 44:1-30 Prophecy against those in Egypt

- **What were they warned against? (44:1-6)**

God began this word to these displaced Jews by declaring two names. He remained the LORD of hosts, the God of powerful armies. He remained the God of Israel, even though at that time Israel did not even exist as its own kingdom. These things that did not appear to be were nevertheless real before God and in His plan.

God reminded His people, now in Egypt, why judgment came upon Judah. It came from God Himself, because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke Me to anger, especially their wickedness in idolatry.

God sent His prophets to instruct and warn His people, but they did not listen. Their sin (especially idolatry) was bad enough; their refusal to be corrected was fatal. Therefore, they are wasted and desolate from God's judgment.

- **How were they rebuked? (44:7-14)**

There is also a sense of wonder in the self-destructive nature of their sin. It was true that they sinned against God, but they also terribly sinned against themselves.

It was bad enough that Nebuchadnezzar took almost all the people of God out of the land of Judah in the exile to Babylon. In some ways it was worse that the remaining people of God were all removed from the promised land, either by choice or by force going to Egypt.

Those who went to Egypt quickly began to worship the gods of Egypt. The same heart of idolatry that led them to sin in Judah with the Canaanite idols now led them to go after the Egyptian idols. This reveals one of the reasons God commanded them to not go to Egypt, but to trust His protection and provision in Judah.

God promised that He would bless and restore the exiles that went to Babylon. He promised only judgment for those who went by choice to Egypt, promising they would become a curse and a reproach.

They had forgotten the wickedness of their fathers, their kings, their wives, and especially their own wickedness. They would suffer greatly for forgetting all this.

Just as God before promised that He would be against Judah and not for them against the invading Babylonians, so He would be against those who by choice exiled themselves

to Egypt. God promised the judgment of an untimely death to those who chose Egypt over trusting God in the Promised Land.

- **What was the remnant's response in 44:15-19?**

Jeremiah delivered this word from God to a large audience, making up most or all of those who had come to Pathros, Egypt from Judah by choice or force. The group included men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods.

The people knew that Jeremiah spoke to them in the name of the LORD, yet they did not care. They rejected the prophet and they rejected his word and they rejected the God who gave him that word. Their honesty was remarkable, but their sin was great.

The men were straightforward and honest. They promised to do whatever they wanted to do. They would not let God's command or God's judgment get in the way of what they wanted to say and do.

They spoke of the days before the fall of Jerusalem and the conquest of Judah, when they worshipped the Babylonian idol the queen of heaven with various rituals. They did this, their fathers did this, and their kings and princes did this, all over Judah and Jerusalem.

The reference is probably to the Assyro-Babylonian Ishtar who was the goddess of war and love. She represented the female principle of fertility. Her counterpart in the NT is Artemis (Acts 19). The worship of this goddess was widespread in the ancient Near East. They remembered the days when they all worshipped the queen of heaven as the good old days. They claimed that when they stopped doing all those things, they lacked everything and were consumed by the sword and by famine.

The women admitted that they played an important part in the worship of the Babylonian queen of heaven and other idols, and without their husbands' permission. They tried to make their husbands responsible for their sin, in the sense that they could have stopped them if they wanted to. In the first sin, Adam blamed Eve for his sin. Here the women of Judah in Egypt returned the favour.

Numbers 30:3-12 indicates that a woman's vows were only binding if her husband approved them. Since their husbands approved, why then should Jeremiah complain about the women's actions?

- **What was the reason for judgement? (44:20-30)**

God solemnly declared that He rejected those who rejected Him and chose to go to Egypt, those who trusted idols more than Him. He would not allow them to speak His name.

God had commanded them to stay in the land of Judah and trust Him that He would watch over them, to protect and provide for them. In rejecting God and His promise, they would still have God watch over them, but it would be for adversity and not for good. This was a terrifying promise, knowing that God is the best friend by the worst enemy anyone could have.

God promised that Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon would come against Egypt (Jeremiah 43:10-13). Just as it had happened to Zedekiah, so it would happen to Pharaoh. God's judgments would be proven true. Here Jeremiah gave a more specific prophecy of that assured event.

"Hophra was actually overthrown by Amasis, one of his officers, who revolted against him and then shared rule with him (Herodotus 2:161-163, 169). Amasis rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar in 570 B.C. and was defeated in 568 B.C. So sixteen years after the fall of Jerusalem, Hophra was dethroned and strangled by some of his subjects. Again Jeremiah was vindicated." (Charles L. Feinberg)

Chronologically speaking, these were the last prophetic words of Jeremiah recorded.

"Scripture is silent on what happened to Jeremiah after the events of this chapter, though tradition has been overly active. There are many legends concerning his death. One states that he was killed at Daphne. Another claims he carried away the tabernacle, hiding it in the mountains where Moses died (2 Maccabees 2:4-8). Yet another indicates he was alive with Enoch and Elijah, expected to return as a forerunner of the Messiah." (Feinberg)

Jer 45:1-5 Message to Baruch

- **What is the purpose of this message?**

Chronological order was not important to the one who arranged the Book of Jeremiah. The previous chapters in this section dealt with the time after the fall of Jerusalem and Judah. This chapter deals with a time many years before that catastrophe, something like a flashback in a film or novel.

Baruch was the long-time, trusted associate of Jeremiah. The name 'Baruch' means 'blessed' in Hebrew. He was the penman to the prophet, having written these words in a book at the instruction of Jeremiah. Later Jeremiah and Baruch were both taken to Egypt against their will (Jeremiah 43:6).

Baruch was used to writing out what God spoke to Jeremiah for others, not for himself. God had a word for His discouraged, exhausted servant.

"Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up—that is, the whole land." God spoke to Baruch about His great power, and His great power expressed in judgment. This reminded Baruch of the power and authority of God to do as He pleased, and it also put some of Baruch's perceived problems into perspective. He was discouraged and exhausted; much worse was coming upon the whole land.

Apparently, some of Baruch's discouragement and exhaustion came from seeking great things for himself. Baruch was an educated man, qualified as a secretary, whose brother (Jeremiah 51:59) was an officer of high rank under Zedekiah. He may have entertained hopes of some distinction in the nation. But whatever 'great things' he sought for himself were forfeited by his loyal support of Jeremiah. He expected to be at a better,

different place in his life than where he found himself at the time. The disappointment of great things sought and unfulfilled weighed heavily on him.

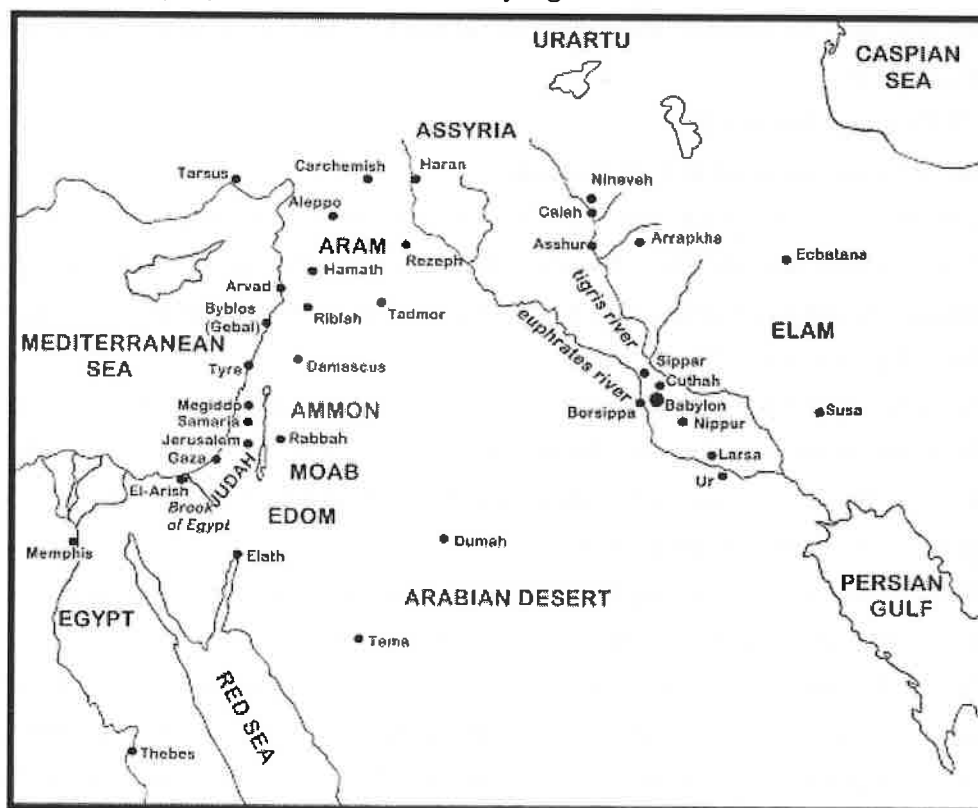
God turned Baruch away from the path of self-exaltation. God wanted Baruch to have the right mindset – not obsessed or overly-concerned about his own advancement and perceived success.

God reminded Baruch that one day He would bring judgment on all flesh. Worldly power, popularity, and prestige will be swept away. This should make us less concerned about great things like fame and popularity. We have eternity to deal with.

God's assurance to Baruch was strong. He would take care of him. Even when he was later taken to Egypt with Jeremiah, this promise was sure to care for Baruch wherever he may go.

Jer 46:1-51:64 Judgement against the nations

- The nations are mentioned in a general order from west to east. Which nations are named? The main purpose is to describe the judgement.



Map: Generationword.com

| Nations | Reasons for Judgement | Destiny |
|---|--|--|
| Jer 46 Egypt | Idolatry and trusting in Pharaoh (46:26) | Nebuchadnezzar will invade Egypt (46:11, 26) |
| Jer 47 Philistines (Modern – Palestinians) | | Destructive floods (47:2) |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Jer 48 Moab (Modern – Jordan) | Trusting in their works and treasures (48:7); arrogance (48:29, 42) | Destruction (48:5, 42) Exile (48:7) No more a people (48:42) |
| Jer 49:1-6 Ammon (Modern – Jordan) | Arrogance and faithlessness (49:4) | Destroyed with fire (49:2) Exile (49:3) Restoration (49:6) |
| Jer 49:7-22 Edom (Modern – Jordan) | | Wasteland (49:13) Battle weary (49:14) |
| Jer 49:23-27 Damascus | | War casualties and fire (49:26-27) |
| Jer 49:28-33 Kedar & Habor (Modern – Jordan) | | Invaded and plundered by Nebuchadnezzar (49:28,30) Wasteland (49:33) |
| Jer 49:34-39 Elam (Modern - Iran) | | Invasion and exile (49:36) Restoration (49:39) |
| Jer 50-51 Babylon (Modern – Iraq) | For preying on Israel and oppressing her (50:17-19,33; 51:5,35) Arrogance (50:31-32) Idolatry (50:38; 51:47,52) | Conquest by a northern kingdom (50:3,9,41) Drought (50:38; 51:43) Desolation (50:39; 51:64) |

- **Note the references to the remnant of Israel:**

- **46:27-28**

After the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and Judah, the small remnant remaining in the land was afraid of the continued Babylonian presence and they felt they would be safer in Egypt (Jeremiah 42-43). God wanted them to not fear or be dismayed and trust Him in the land. God also promised to end the captivity of His people in Babylon, allowing them to return to their land.

- **50:4-7**

Jeremiah connected the coming judgment upon Babylon to the restoration of Israel and Judah. They would return to God with repentance (continual weeping) and they would seek the LORD their God.

The restoration of the people of Israel is clearly an aspect of God's plan for the last days (Matthew 23:39, Romans 11:26). Judgment upon Babylon is also an aspect of the last days (Revelation 17-18). Both the judgment of Babylon and the restoration of Israel here prophesied had a near fulfillment and will have an ultimate fulfillment in the very last days.

Part of the restoration would be the gathering of Israel and Judah back to the land promised to them as the covenant descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They would come back to God on His terms, the terms of His covenant. These are promises associated with the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34 and 23:3-8, Ezekiel 11:16-20 and 36:24-28).

○ **50:17-20**

God promised that just as the Assyrian empire was gone, so too would the mighty Babylonian empire one day be punished. In contrast to the passing empires of Assyria and Babylon, God would restore Israel to her land. They would once again feed on Carmel and Bashan and be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead.

The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none. This wonderful promise is another in the great promises of the new covenant, an aspect of which is the restoration and salvation of Israel. God promised to both pardon and preserve Israel.

○ **50:33-34**

When the empires of Assyria and Babylon took Israel and Judah captive, they did not let them go. It was only under those who conquered Babylon – the Medes and Persians – that the Jewish people were given permission to return to the Promised Land. Assyria and Babylon held Israel and Judah, but their strong Redeemer would thoroughly plead their case. Though God would disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon, He would give rest to the land.

○ **51:34-40**

Earlier God likened the work of judgment to winnowing (Jeremiah 51:1-2). The threshing floor is another agricultural image – the place where grain is crushed under a stone or the hoofs of an ox. Babylon would be crushed by the coming judgment, and the result would be good like a harvest unto God and His people.

Nebuchadnezzar treated the inhabitant of Zion as his own threshing floor, bringing a crushing judgment to them. Therefore, Zion and Jerusalem take satisfaction in the same violence done unto Babylon.

Yahweh pledged to take up the cause of Judah and Jerusalem, bringing Babylon to judgment and desolation.

JEREMIAH 52 FALL OF JERUSALEM

This is similar to chapter 39. Note the following details:

- the temple objects 52:17-23;
- the leaders taken captive 24-25;
- the three deportations 28-30;
- the note of hope 31-34.

Source: The Enduring Word Bible Commentary, David Guzik