EDIFIED EDITION

Jeremiah

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

52	1,364	Old	24
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

Jeremiah 1 introduces Jeremiah, a priest's son from Anathoth, who prophesied from the reign of Josiah to the fall of Jerusalem. The LORD tells him that He knew him before he was formed and appointed him a prophet to the nations. When Jeremiah protests that he is too young, the LORD touches his mouth, puts His words in it and sets him over nations to uproot and to build. Two visions follow: an almond branch, for the LORD is watching over His word, and a boiling pot tilting from the north, for disaster will come from the north on Judah for its idolatry. Jeremiah is to stand firm like a fortified city, for the LORD is with him.

1 These are the words of Jeremiah, Hilkiah's son, from the priestly families living at Anathoth in Benjamin's territory.

2 In the thirteenth year that Josiah son of Amon reigned as king of Judah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah,[1]

3 and also in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile in the fifth month.[2]

4 The word of the LORD came to me:

5 "I knew you before I shaped you in the womb; before you came out of the womb I consecrated you; I made you a prophet to the nations."

6 "Ah, Lord GOD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a youth."

7 But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth.' You will go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.

8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to rescue you, declares the LORD."

9 Then the LORD reached out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "See, I have put My words in your mouth.

10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms, to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

11 The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see a branch of an almond tree," I replied.

12 The LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to carry it out."[3]

13 The word of the LORD came to me a second time: "What do you see?" "I see a boiling pot," I replied, "tilting away from the north."

14 The LORD said to me, "From the north disaster will be let loose on all who live in the land.

15 For I am about to summon all the clans of the kingdoms of the north, declares the LORD. They will come, and each will set up his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the towns of Judah.

16 I will pronounce My judgements against them for all their wickedness in forsaking Me, burning incense to other gods and bowing down to the works of their own hands.

17 As for you, get ready. Stand up and tell them everything I command you. Do not be terrified of them, or I will terrify you before them.

18 Look, this day I have turned you into a fortified town, a pillar of iron, walls of bronze, to stand against the whole land: against Judah's kings and officials, against its priests and against the people of the land.

19 They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue you, declares the LORD."

1 About 627 BC.

2 In 586 BC; see chapter 52.

3 In Hebrew 'almond' and 'watching' sound alike.

Chapter 2

Jeremiah 2 recalls Israel's early devotion, when she followed the LORD in the wilderness like a bride. But her fathers turned to worthless idols, and her priests, rulers and prophets forgot Him. No nation has ever changed its gods, yet Israel has exchanged its Glory for what does not profit: they have abandoned the spring of living water for cracked cisterns. Planted as a choice vine, Israel has become wild, chasing the Baals like a camel in heat and saying to wood and stone, "You are my father." Their many gods cannot save them, and the LORD will put to shame their trust in Egypt as in Assyria.

1 The word of the LORD came to me:

2 Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: This is what the LORD says: I remember the loyal kindness of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.

3 Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of His harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty; disaster came upon them, declares the LORD.

4 House of Jacob, every clan of the house of Israel, listen to what the LORD says.

5 This is what the LORD says: What fault did your fathers find in Me that they went so far from Me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.[1]

6 They never asked, "Where is the LORD who led us up out of Egypt, who guided us through the wilderness, across a country of desert and ravine, of drought and deathly darkness, a country no one crosses and where no one settles?"

7 I brought you into a fruitful land to eat its fruit and its good things, but you came and defiled My land and made My inheritance detestable.

8 The priests did not ask, "Where is the LORD?" Those who handle the law did not know Me; the rulers rebelled against Me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and followed things that do not profit.

9 Therefore I will still bring charges against you, declares the LORD, and against your children's children.

10 Cross over to the coasts of Cyprus and look; send to Kedar and consider carefully; see whether there has ever been anything like this.

11 Has a nation ever exchanged its gods, though they are not gods? Yet My people have exchanged their Glory for what does not profit.

12 Be appalled at this, you heavens; shudder with great horror, declares the LORD.

13 My people have done two wrongs: they have abandoned Me, the spring of living water, and they have hewn out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that hold no water.

14 Is Israel a slave? Was he born into slavery? Why then has he become plunder?

15 The young lions have roared at him; they have raised their voices. They have made his land a waste; his cities are burned and without inhabitant.

16 The men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head.

17 Have you not brought this on yourself by forsaking the LORD your God when He led you in the way?

18 Now why go to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? Why go to Assyria to drink the waters of the River?

19 Your own wickedness will discipline you, and your backsliding will rebuke you. Know then and see how evil and bitter it is to forsake the LORD your God and to have no fear of Me, declares the Lord GOD of Armies.

20 For long ago you broke your yoke and tore off your bonds, and you said, "I will not serve!" On every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down like a prostitute.

21 Yet I planted you as a choice vine, from entirely true seed. How then have you turned against Me into a degenerate, wild vine?

22 Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before Me, declares the Lord GOD.

23 How can you say, "I am not defiled; I have not gone after the Baals"? Look at your conduct in the valley; consider what you have done. You are a swift young camel running here and there,

24 a wild donkey used to the wilderness, sniffing the wind in her craving; who can restrain her lust? None who seek her need weary themselves; in her mating season they will find her.

25 Keep your feet from going bare and your throat from thirst. But you said, "It is hopeless! No, for I

love foreign gods, and I will go after them.”

26 As a thief is ashamed when he is caught, so the house of Israel is ashamed, they, their kings, their officials, their priests and their prophets,

27 who say to a tree, “You are my father,” and to a stone, “You gave me birth.” For they have turned their backs to Me, not their faces; yet in the time of their trouble they say, “Rise up and save us!”

28 Then where are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them get up and rescue you when trouble comes, if they are able. For your gods, Judah, are as many as your towns.

29 Why do you bring charges against Me? You have all rebelled against Me, declares the LORD.

30 In vain have I struck your children; they accepted no discipline. Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a ravening lion.

31 You of this generation, consider the word of the LORD: Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of deep darkness? Why do My people say, “We are free to roam; we will come to You no more”?

32 Can a young woman forget her jewellery, or a bride her sash? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.

33 How skilfully you pursue love! Even wicked women have learned your ways.

34 On your skirts is found the lifeblood of the innocent poor, though you did not catch them breaking in. Yet in spite of all this

35 you say, “I am innocent; surely His anger has turned away from me.” See, I will bring you to judgement because you say, “I have not sinned.”

36 Why do you go about so much, changing your course? You will be put to shame by Egypt as you were by Assyria.

37 From there too you will come away with your hands on your head, for the LORD has rejected those you trust, and you will not prosper through them.

1 ‘Worthless’ is the word translated ‘fleeting’ in Ecclesiastes: a breath, a nothing.

Chapter 3

Jeremiah 3 asks whether a divorced wife who has married another can return to her first husband, yet Judah has played the prostitute with many lovers and still expects the LORD to take her back. In Josiah’s days the LORD shows Jeremiah that faithless Judah saw Israel sent away for her adultery and did not fear, returning to Him only in pretence; so faithless Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. Jeremiah is to call Israel in the north to return, for the LORD is merciful. He will give them shepherds after His own heart; the ark will no longer be missed, for Jerusalem will be called the throne of the LORD, and Judah and Israel will come home together. The chapter ends with the people’s confession of shame.

1 If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and becomes another man’s wife, will he go back to her again? Would that land not be utterly defiled? But you have played the prostitute with many lovers, and would you return to Me? declares the LORD.[1]

2 Lift your eyes to the bare heights and look: where have you not been lain with? By the roadsides you sat waiting for lovers, like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and your wickedness.

3 So the showers have been held back, and the spring rain has not come. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush.

4 Have you not just now called to Me, “My Father, You were the friend of my youth.

5 Will He be angry for ever? Will He keep it up to the end?” That is how you have spoken, yet you have done all the evil you could.

6 In the days of King Josiah the LORD said to me, “Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She went up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and played the prostitute there.[2]

7 I thought, ‘After she has done all this, she will come back to Me,’ but she did not come back, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

8 I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel I had sent her away and given her a certificate of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah had no fear; she too went and played the prostitute.

9 Because she took her prostitution so lightly, she defiled the land, committing adultery with stone and wood.

10 Even after all this her treacherous sister Judah did not turn back to Me with her whole heart, but

only in pretence, declares the LORD.”

11 The LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel has
proved herself more righteous than treacherous
Judah.

12 Go and proclaim these words towards the north:
‘Come back, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I
will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful,
declares the LORD; I will not stay angry for ever.

13 Only acknowledge your guilt, that you have
rebelled against the LORD your God and scattered
your favours among strangers under every
spreading tree, and have not obeyed My voice,
declares the LORD.

14 Come back, faithless children, declares the
LORD, for I am your husband. I will take you, one
from a town and two from a clan, and bring you to
Zion.[3]

15 And I will give you shepherds who are after My
own heart, and they will tend you with knowledge
and good sense.

16 When you have multiplied and become fruitful in
the land in those days, declares the LORD, people
will no longer speak of the ark of the covenant of
the LORD. It will not come to mind; they will not
remember it or miss it, and another will not be
made.

17 At that time Jerusalem will be called the throne
of the LORD, and all the nations will gather to it,
to the name of the LORD at Jerusalem. They will
no longer follow the stubbornness of their evil
hearts.

18 In those days the house of Judah will join the
house of Israel, and side by side they will come
out of the northern land into the land I handed
down to your fathers.’

19 I Myself said, ‘How gladly I would set you
among My children and give you a pleasant land,
the most beautiful inheritance among the nations.’
I thought you would call Me ‘My Father’ and
would not turn away from following Me.

20 But as a wife betrays her husband, so you have
betrayed Me, house of Israel, declares the LORD.”

21 A cry is heard on the bare heights, the weeping
and pleading of the people of Israel, because they
have twisted their ways and forgotten the LORD
their God.

22 “Come back, faithless children; I will heal your
faithlessness.” “Here we are; we come to You, for
You are the LORD our God.

23 The hills and the clamour on the mountains are
surely a deception; surely in the LORD our God is
the salvation of Israel.

24 From our youth the shameful thing has
devoured all that our fathers worked for, their
flocks and herds, their sons and daughters.[4]

25 Let us lie down in our disgrace and be wrapped
in our dishonour, for we have sinned against the
LORD our God, both we and our fathers, from our
youth to this very day; we have not listened to the
voice of the LORD our God.”

1 See Deuteronomy 24:1–4.

2 ‘Faithless’ and ‘return’ come from the same Hebrew root; the chapter plays on turning away and turning back.

3 ‘I am your husband’, or ‘I am your master’; the Hebrew word is related to ‘Baal’.

4 ‘The shameful thing’ is a scornful name for Baal.

Chapter 4

Jeremiah 4 promises that if Israel truly returns, the nations will be blessed in the LORD. Judah is to break up its fallow ground and circumcise its hearts, or His wrath will burn like fire. Then the alarm is sounded: a lion has come up from his thicket, a destroyer of nations from the north, swift as eagles, and Jerusalem must wash her heart from evil. Jeremiah cries out in anguish at the sound of the trumpet. He sees the earth “without form and empty”, the mountains quaking, no one left and the fruitful land a wilderness. Daughter Zion, dressing herself up for lovers who seek her life, gasps like a woman in labour before her killers.

1 If you will return, Israel, declares the LORD,
return to Me. If you will put your detestable idols
out of My sight and no longer wander,

2 and if you swear, “As the LORD lives,” in truth, in
justice and in righteousness, then the nations will
bless themselves in Him, and in Him they will
glory.

3 For this is what the LORD says to the people of
Judah and Jerusalem: Plough up your untilled
ground, and do not sow among thorns.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskins of your hearts, people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or My fury will break out like fire and burn with no one to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.

5 Announce it in Judah and proclaim it in Jerusalem, and say, “Blow the ram’s horn throughout the land!” Shout aloud and say, “Gather together, and let us go into the fortified cities!”

6 Raise a signal towards Zion; flee for safety, do not stand still, for I am bringing disaster from the north, a great destruction.

7 A lion has come up from his thicket; a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to make your land a desolation; your towns will lie in ruins without inhabitant.

8 So put on sackcloth, lament and wail, for the fierce anger of the LORD has not turned back from us.

9 On that day, declares the LORD, the courage of the king and of the officials will fail; the priests will be appalled and the prophets astounded.

10 Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD, surely You have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, ‘You will have peace,’ when the sword is at their throats.”

11 At that time this people and Jerusalem will be told: A burning wind off the bare desert heights blows towards the daughter of My people, not to winnow and not to sift clean;

12 a wind too strong for that comes at My bidding. Now I Myself will pronounce judgements against them.

13 Look, he advances like the clouds, his chariots like a whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined!

14 Wash your heart clean of evil, Jerusalem, so that you may be saved. How long will your wicked schemes lodge within you?

15 Listen! A messenger is crying out from Dan, announcing trouble from the hill country of Ephraim.

16 Warn the nations; announce it against Jerusalem: Besiegers are coming from a distant land, raising their battle cry against the towns of Judah.

17 They surround her like men guarding a field, because she has rebelled against Me, declares the LORD.

18 Your own ways and deeds have brought this on you. This is your punishment, and how bitter it is! How it pierces to your heart!

19 My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! The walls of my heart! My heart pounds within me; I cannot keep silent, for I have heard the sound of the ram’s horn, the shout of battle.

20 Disaster follows disaster; the whole land is laid waste. Suddenly my tents are destroyed, my curtains in a moment.

21 How long must I see the battle standard and hear the sound of the ram’s horn?

22 For My people are foolish; they do not know Me. They are senseless children with no understanding. They are skilled at doing evil, but how to do good they do not know.

23 I looked at the earth, and it was without form and empty; at the heavens, and their light was gone.[1]

24 I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking; all the hills were swaying.

25 I looked, and there was no one left; every bird of the sky had fled.

26 I looked, and the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its towns were torn down before the LORD, before His fierce anger.

27 For this is what the LORD says: The whole land will be a desolation, yet I will not make a complete end.

28 For this the earth will mourn and the heavens above grow dark, because I have spoken, I have purposed, and I will not relent or turn back from it.

29 At the noise of horsemen and archers every town takes flight. They go into the thickets and climb among the rocks. Every town is abandoned; no one lives in them.

30 And you, devastated one, what are you doing? Why do you dress in scarlet, adorn yourself with gold jewellery and enlarge your eyes with paint? You beautify yourself in vain. Your lovers despise you; they are after your life.

31 For I hear a cry like a woman in labour, the anguish of one bearing her first child, the cry of Daughter Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands: “Woe is me! My life is fainting before murderers!”

1 ‘Without form and empty’ are the words of Genesis 1:2; the land is pictured as undone, back before creation.

Chapter 5

Jeremiah 5 sends the prophet through Jerusalem’s streets to find one person who acts justly and seeks the truth, so that the LORD may pardon the city. Jeremiah finds none among the poor or the great: all have broken the yoke. They swear by gods that are no gods, lust like well-fed stallions and deny that disaster will come. So the LORD will make His words in Jeremiah’s mouth a fire, and bring a distant nation whose language they do not know to devour their harvest, though He will not make a full end. A foolish people who have eyes but do not see do not fear the One who set the sand as the sea’s boundary and gives the rains in season. Their houses are full of deceit like cages full of birds, and prophets and priests lie while “My people love it so.”

1 Roam through the streets of Jerusalem; look around and take note; search her squares. If you can find one person, one who acts justly and seeks the truth, then I will pardon her.

2 Even when they say, “As the LORD lives,” they are still swearing falsely.

3 LORD, do Your eyes not look for faithfulness? You struck them, but they felt no pain; You crushed them, but they refused correction. They made their faces harder than rock; they refused to turn back.

4 I thought, “These are only the poor; they act foolishly, for they do not know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God.

5 I will go to the great and speak to them, for surely they know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God.” But they too, all of them, had broken the yoke and snapped the cords.

6 So a lion from the forest will strike them down, a wolf from the desert will ravage them, a leopard will lie in wait by their towns, and whoever goes out of them will be torn to pieces, for their rebellions are many and their acts of unfaithfulness numerous.

7 Why should I pardon you? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by gods that are no gods. I fed them to the full, yet they committed adultery and thronged to the houses of prostitutes.

8 They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbour’s wife.

9 Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD. Shall I not avenge Myself on a nation like this?

10 Go up through her vineyard rows and destroy, but do not make a complete end. Strip away her branches, for they do not belong to the LORD.

11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to Me, declares the LORD.

12 They have lied about the LORD and said, “He will do nothing. No harm will come to us; we will see neither sword nor famine.

13 The prophets are nothing but wind, and the word is not in them. So let it be done to them!”

14 Therefore this is what the LORD God of Armies says: Because they have spoken this word, I am making My words in your mouth a fire and this people the wood, and it will consume them.

15 I am bringing against you a nation from far away, house of Israel, declares the LORD. It is an enduring nation, an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, whose speech you cannot understand.

16 Their quiver is like an open grave; all of them are mighty warriors.

17 They will devour your harvest and your bread; they will devour your sons and your daughters; they will devour your flocks and your herds; they will devour your vines and your fig trees. With the sword they will shatter the fortified cities you trust in.

18 Yet even in those days, declares the LORD, I will not make a complete end of you.

19 And when they ask, “Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?” you are to tell them, “As you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your own land, so you will serve strangers in a land that is not yours.”

20 Make this known to the house of Jacob; announce it throughout Judah:

21 Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear.

22 Do you not fear Me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before Me? I set the sand as a boundary for the sea, a lasting limit it cannot pass.

Its waves may toss, but they cannot prevail; they may roar, but they cannot cross it.

23 But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away.

24 They do not say in their hearts, “Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the autumn and spring rains in their season, who keeps for us the appointed weeks of harvest.”

25 Your iniquities have turned these away; your sins have kept good things from you.

26 For among My people are wicked men who lie in wait like fowlers crouching down; they set a trap; they catch people.

27 Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; that is how they have grown great and rich.

28 They have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds know no limit; they do not plead the cause of the orphan so that it may succeed, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

29 Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD. Shall I not avenge Myself on a nation like this?

30 Something appalling and horrible has happened in the land:

31 the prophets prophesy falsely, the priests rule at their own direction, and My people love it so. But what will you do when the end comes?[1]

1 ‘At their own direction’, literally ‘at their hands’; or ‘by the prophets’ authority’.

Chapter 6

Jeremiah 6 calls the people of Benjamin to flee Jerusalem, for disaster looms from the north and shepherds with their flocks are camped around Daughter Zion. The LORD of Armies orders siege ramps against the city, which keeps its wickedness fresh as a well keeps its water. Jeremiah is full of the LORD’s wrath, because everyone from the least to the greatest is greedy, and prophets and priests treat the wound of the people lightly, saying “All is well” when nothing is well. They refuse to walk in the ancient paths or listen to the watchmen, and their sacrifices do not please Him. A cruel people from the north is coming, and Jeremiah is made an assayer of his people, who prove to be rejected silver.

1 Flee for safety, people of Benjamin, out of the middle of Jerusalem! Blow the ram’s horn in Tekoa and raise a signal over Beth-hakkerem, for disaster looms out of the north, a great destruction.[1]

2 Daughter Zion, so lovely and delicate, I will destroy.

3 Shepherds with their flocks will come against her; they will pitch their tents all around her, each grazing his own patch.

4 “Prepare for war against her! Up, let us attack at noon! Alas for us, the day is fading and the evening shadows lengthen.

5 Up, let us attack by night and destroy her fortresses!”

6 For this is what the LORD of Armies says: Cut down her trees and build a siege ramp against Jerusalem. This is the city that must be punished; it is full of oppression within.

7 As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps her wickedness fresh. Violence and destruction are heard in her; sickness and wounds are always before Me.

8 Take warning, Jerusalem, or I will turn away from you in disgust and make you a desolation, a land where no one lives.

9 This is what the LORD of Armies says: They will glean the remnant of Israel as thoroughly as a vine. Pass your hand over its branches again, like one gathering grapes.

10 To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen? Their ears are uncircumcised; they cannot pay attention. The word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; they take no pleasure in it.

11 But the LORD’s fury fills me, and I am worn out with keeping it in. Pour it on the children playing in the street and on the gatherings of young men, for every husband and wife will be caught, the old together with those weighed down by years.

12 Their houses will be handed over to others, their fields and their wives together, when I stretch out My hand against those who live in the land, declares the LORD.

13 For from the least to the greatest, all of them are greedy for unjust gain; prophet and priest

alike, all of them practise deceit.

14 They dress the wound of My people as though it
were nothing, saying, “All is well, all is well,”
when nothing is well.

15 Were they ashamed when they committed
abominations? No, they felt no shame at all; they
did not even know how to blush. So they will fall
among the fallen; when I punish them they will be
brought down, says the LORD.

16 This is what the LORD says: Stand where the
roads meet and look; enquire after the paths of
old, which one is the good road, then take it, and
you will find rest for your souls. But they
answered, “We refuse to take it.”[2]

17 I set watchmen over you and said, “Listen to the
sound of the ram’s horn!” But they said, “We will
not listen.”

18 So hear, you nations; take note, you assembly, of
what will happen to them.

19 Hear, earth: I am bringing disaster on this
people, the fruit of their own schemes, because
they have not listened to My words and have
rejected My law.

20 What use to Me is frankincense from Sheba or
fragrant cane from a distant land? Your burnt
offerings are not acceptable, and your sacrifices
do not please Me.

21 Therefore this is what the LORD says: I am
putting obstacles before this people. Fathers and
sons alike will stumble over them; neighbour and
friend will perish.

22 This is what the LORD says: A people is coming
from the land of the north; a great nation is being
stirred up from the far ends of the earth.

23 They grip bow and javelin; they are cruel and
show no mercy. Their voice roars like the sea as
they ride on horses, drawn up like a warrior for
battle against you, Daughter Zion.

24 We have heard the report of them, and our
hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped us, pain
like a woman in labour.

25 Do not go out into the fields or walk on the
roads, for the enemy has a sword; terror is on
every side.

26 Daughter of my people, put on sackcloth and roll
in ashes. Mourn as for an only son, with bitter
wailing, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon
us.

27 I have made you an assayer among My people, a
refiner, so that you may know and test their ways.

28 They are all hardened rebels, going about
slandering. They are bronze and iron; all of them
act corruptly.

29 The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is consumed
by the fire. The refining goes on in vain, for the
wicked are not purged out.

30 They are called rejected silver, because the
LORD has rejected them.

1 ‘Blow’ and ‘Tekoa’ sound alike in Hebrew.

2 Jesus echoes these words in Matthew 11:29.

Chapter 7

Jeremiah 7 is the prophet’s sermon at the gate of the LORD’s house. The people trust in lies that say, “The LORD’s temple,” while they steal, murder, commit adultery and follow other gods, then stand in His house as if they were safe. Has this house become “a den of robbers” in their eyes? Let them remember what the LORD did to Shiloh. Jeremiah is not to pray for them, for whole families make cakes for the Queen of Heaven. The LORD did not command sacrifices so much as obedience, but they have gone backwards. Because they burn their children in the fire at Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, it will be called the Valley of Slaughter, and the voices of bridegroom and bride will fall silent.

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the
LORD:

2 Stand in the gate of the LORD’s house and
proclaim this word there: Hear the word of the
LORD, all you people of Judah who come in
through these gates to worship the LORD.

3 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says: Change your ways and your deeds for
the better, and I will let you live in this place.

4 Do not put your confidence in lies that say, “The
LORD’s temple, the LORD’s temple, this is the
LORD’s temple!”

5 For if you truly mend your ways and your deeds,
if you truly deal justly with one another,

6 if you do not oppress the foreigner, the orphan or
the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, or
follow other gods to your own harm,

7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I
gave your fathers for ever and ever.

8 But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that
are worthless.

9 You steal, you kill, you commit adultery, you take
false oaths, you offer incense to Baal and chase
after other gods you never knew,

10 and then come and stand before Me in this
house, which bears My name, and say, “We are
safe!” only to go on doing all these abominations?

11 Has this house, which bears My name, become a
den of robbers in your eyes? I Myself have seen it,
declares the LORD.[1]

12 Go now to My place at Shiloh, where I first made
My name dwell, and see what I did to it because of
the wickedness of My people Israel.[2]

13 And now, because you have done all these
things, declares the LORD, and though I spoke to
you again and again you did not listen, and though
I called you you did not answer,

14 I will do to the house that bears My name, the
house you trust in, and to the place I gave to you
and your fathers, what I did to Shiloh.

15 I will throw you out of My sight, as I threw out
all your brothers, all the descendants of Ephraim.

16 As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up
a cry or a prayer for them, or plead with Me, for I
will not listen to you.

17 Do you not see what they are doing in the towns
of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

18 The children gather wood, the fathers light the
fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes
for the Queen of Heaven; and they pour out drink
offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger.[3]

19 But is it Me they provoke? declares the LORD. Is
it not themselves, to their own shame?

20 Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: My
anger and My fury will be poured out on this
place, on people and animals, on the trees of the
field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and
not be quenched.

21 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says: Go on, pile your burnt offerings on
top of your other sacrifices and eat the meat!

22 For when I brought your fathers out of the land
of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command
them about burnt offerings and sacrifices.

23 This is what I commanded them: Obey My voice,
and I will be your God and you will be My people.
Walk in all the way I command you, so that it may
go well with you.

24 But they did not listen or pay attention; they
followed the counsels of their own stubborn and
evil hearts, and went backwards and not forwards.

25 From the day your fathers came out of the land
of Egypt until today, I have sent you all My
servants the prophets, sending them day after day,
again and again.

26 Yet they did not listen to Me or pay attention.
They stiffened their necks and did more evil than
their fathers.

27 When you tell them all this, they will not listen;
when you call to them, they will give you no
answer.

28 So say to them: This is the nation that has not
obeyed the voice of the LORD its God or accepted
correction. Truth has perished; it has been cut off
from their lips.

29 Cut off your hair and throw it away; raise a
lament on the bare heights, for the LORD has
rejected and forsaken the generation that
provokes His wrath.

30 For the people of Judah have done what is evil in
My sight, declares the LORD. They have set up
their detestable things in the house that bears My
name and defiled it.

31 They have built the high places of Topheth in the
Valley of Ben-hinnom to burn their sons and
daughters in the fire, something I did not
command, nor did it ever enter My mind.[4]

32 So the days are coming, declares the LORD,
when it will no longer be called Topheth or the
Valley of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter,
for they will bury in Topheth until there is no more
room.

33 The dead bodies of this people will feed the
birds of the air and the wild animals, with no one
to drive them off.

34 In the towns of Judah and the streets of
Jerusalem I will put an end to the sounds of joy
and celebration, the voices of bridegroom and
bride, for the land will lie in ruins.

1 Jesus quotes these words in Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17 and Luke 19:46.

2 Shiloh held the tabernacle in the days of Eli; see 1 Samuel 1–4 and Psalm 78:60.

3 The Queen of Heaven was probably the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar; see 44:15–19.

4 Topheth was the place of child sacrifice in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, south of Jerusalem; see 2 Kings 23:10.

Chapter 8

Jeremiah 8 foretells that the bones of Judah's kings, priests, prophets and people will be dug up and spread out before the sun and moon they worshipped, and the survivors will prefer death to life. When people fall, do they not get up again? Yet this people keeps on turning away, like a horse charging into battle. Even the stork knows its seasons, but My people do not know the LORD's requirements, and the scribes' pen has turned the law into a lie. Again prophets and priests say "All is well" when nothing is well. The invader's horses snort from Dan, and Jeremiah mourns: "Harvest time has gone, summer is over, and still we have not been saved." He asks, "Is there no balm in Gilead?"

1 At that time, declares the LORD, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be brought out of their graves.

2 They will be spread out before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they loved and served and followed, which they sought and worshipped. They will not be gathered up or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground.

3 Death will be preferred to life by all the remnant left of this evil family, in all the places where I have driven them, declares the LORD of Armies.

4 Say to them: This is what the LORD says: When people fall down, do they not get up? When someone turns away, does he not come back?

5 Why then has this people, Jerusalem, turned away in endless backsliding? They cling to deceit; they refuse to come back.

6 I have listened attentively, but they do not speak what is right. No one repents of his wickedness, saying, "What have I done?" Each one turns to his own course like a horse charging into battle.

7 Even the stork in the sky knows her seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush keep the time of their migration, but My people do not know the requirements of the LORD.

8 How can you say, "We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us"? In fact, the lying pen of the scribes has turned it into a lie.

9 The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and caught. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what wisdom do they have?

10 So I will give their wives to others and their fields to new owners, for from the least to the greatest, all of them are greedy for unjust gain; prophet and priest alike, all of them practise deceit.

11 They dress the wound of the daughter of My people as though it were nothing, saying, "All is well, all is well," when nothing is well.

12 Were they ashamed when they committed abominations? No, they felt no shame at all; they did not know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; when they are punished they will be brought down, says the LORD.

13 I will gather them and sweep them away, declares the LORD. There will be no grapes on the vine, no figs on the fig tree, and even the leaves will wither. What I gave them will pass away from them.

14 Why are we sitting still? Gather together! Let us go into the fortified cities and perish there, for the LORD our God has doomed us to perish and given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

15 We hoped for peace, but no good has come; for a time of healing, but there is only terror.

16 The snorting of his horses is heard from Dan; at the neighing of his stallions the whole land trembles. They come and devour the land and everything in it, the city and those who live there.

17 For I am sending snakes among you, vipers that cannot be charmed, and they will bite you, declares the LORD.

18 My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me.[1]

19 Listen! The cry of the daughter of my people from a land far and wide: "Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?" "Why have they

provoked Me to anger with their carved images, with worthless foreign idols?”

20 “Harvest time has gone, summer is over, and still we have not been saved.”

21 For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken; I mourn, and horror has seized me.

22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is no doctor to be found there? Then why has the daughter of my people not been made well?[2]

1 The Hebrew of the first line is uncertain.

2 Gilead, east of the Jordan, was famous for its healing resin.

Chapter 9

Jeremiah 9 opens with the prophet’s wish that his head were a spring of water so that he could weep day and night for his slain people, and that he had a lodging in the desert to escape their adultery and lies. Every brother deceives and every neighbour slanders, so the LORD will refine and test them. Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins because they forsook His law, and the wailing women are called to teach their daughters a lament, for death has climbed in through the windows. Let no one boast of wisdom, strength or riches, but only that he understands and knows the LORD, who delights in steadfast love, justice and righteousness. The LORD will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh, for Israel is uncircumcised in heart.

1 If only my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I could weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people![1]

2 If only I had a travellers’ lodging in the desert, so that I could leave my people and get away from them! For they are all adulterers, a crowd of traitors.

3 They bend their tongues like a bow; it is falsehood and not faithfulness that prevails in the land. They go from one evil to another, and they do not know Me, declares the LORD.

4 Be on guard against your neighbour, and do not trust any brother, for every brother is a deceiver and every neighbour goes about slandering.[2]

5 Each one cheats his neighbour, and no one speaks the truth. They have trained their tongues to lie; they wear themselves out doing wrong.

6 You live in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me, declares the LORD.

7 Therefore this is what the LORD of Armies says: I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do because of the daughter of My people?

8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceit. With his mouth each speaks peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he sets an ambush for him.

9 Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD. Shall I not avenge Myself on a nation like this?

10 I will weep and wail for the mountains and raise a lament for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are scorched so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard. The birds of the sky and the animals have fled and are gone.

11 I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, and I will make the towns of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.

12 Who is wise enough to understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, so that he may explain it? Why has the land perished and been scorched like a desert that no one crosses?

13 The LORD answered: It is because they turned their backs on the law I laid before them; they did not listen to My voice or live by it,

14 but have followed the stubbornness of their own hearts and gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them,

15 therefore this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I will feed this people with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.

16 I will disperse them among peoples unknown to them and to their fathers, and I will send the sword chasing after them until they are wiped out.

17 This is what the LORD of Armies says: Consider, and call for the mourning women to come; send for the most skilful of them to come.

18 Let them come quickly and raise a lament over us, so that our eyes may run with tears and our eyelids flow with water.

19 For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion: “How we are ruined! How deeply we are shamed! For

we have had to leave the land, because they have torn down our homes."

20 Now hear the word of the LORD, you women; let your ears receive the word of His mouth. Teach your daughters to wail; teach one another a lament.

21 For death has climbed in through our windows and entered our fortresses, to cut off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares.

22 Speak: This is what the LORD declares: The corpses of men will fall like dung on the open field, like sheaves behind the reaper, with no one to gather them.

23 This is what the LORD says: Let not the wise boast of their wisdom, nor the strong boast of their strength, nor the rich boast of their riches.

24 But let the one who boasts, boast in this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, who acts with steadfast love, justice and righteousness on the earth, for in these I delight, declares the LORD.[3]

25 The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh:

26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab and all who clip the hair at their temples and live in the desert. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.

1 In Hebrew this verse is 8:23, and 9:2–26 are numbered 9:1–25.

2 'Deceiver' plays on the name Jacob; see Genesis 27:36.

3 Paul sums up this verse in 1 Corinthians 1:31 and 2 Corinthians 10:17: "Let the one who boasts, boast in the LORD."

Chapter 10

Jeremiah 10 warns Israel not to learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the heavens. Their idols are a tree cut from the forest, decorated with silver and gold and fastened with nails; like scarecrows in a cucumber field they cannot speak or walk and can do neither harm nor good. There is no one like the LORD, the true God, the living God and everlasting King, who made the earth by His power and stretched out the heavens by His understanding. Judah must pack up for exile, and Jeremiah laments the wound of the land, its tent torn down and its shepherds senseless. He prays that the LORD will correct him with justice and not in anger, and pour out His fury on the nations that do not know Him.

1 Hear the word the LORD speaks to you, house of Israel.

2 This is what the LORD says: Do not learn the way of the nations or be terrified by signs in the heavens, though the nations are terrified by them.

3 For the customs of the peoples are worthless. A tree is cut from the forest and worked with a chisel by a craftsman's hands.

4 They decorate it with silver and gold and fasten it with hammer and nails so that it will not totter.

5 Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they can do no harm, and neither can they do any good.

6 LORD, none can compare with You. Great are You, and great in might is Your name.

7 Who would not fear You, King of the nations? It is Your due. For among all the wise of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is no one like You.

8 They are all senseless and foolish; the instruction of idols is nothing but wood.

9 Hammered silver is brought from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz, the work of the craftsman and the goldsmith's hands. Their clothing is blue and purple, all of it the work of skilled men.

10 But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation.

11 Tell them this: "These gods, who never made heaven or earth, will vanish from the earth and from beneath the sky."[1]

12 It was He whose power formed the earth, whose wisdom set the world in place, whose understanding spread out the skies.

13 When He thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; He makes the clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and brings out the wind from His storehouses.

14 Everyone is senseless and without knowledge;
every goldsmith is shamed by his idol, for his cast
images are a lie, and there is no breath in them.
15 They are worthless, a work of mockery; when
their time of punishment comes they will perish.
16 He who is Jacob's Portion is nothing like them,
for He shaped everything that exists, and Israel is
the tribe He claims as His own. The LORD of
Armies is His name.
17 Gather up your belongings from the ground, you
who live under siege.
18 For this is what the LORD says: This time I am
going to sling out those who live in the land, and I
will bring distress on them so that they may feel
it.
19 Alas for me and my injury! My wound cannot be
healed. But I told myself, "This sickness is mine,
and I will have to endure it."
20 My tent is destroyed, and all my ropes are
snapped. My children have gone from me and are
no more; there is no one left to pitch my tent
again or set up my curtains.
21 For the shepherds have become senseless and
have not sought the LORD; so they have not
prospered, and all their flock is scattered.
22 Listen! The news is coming, a great commotion
from the land of the north, to make the towns of
Judah a desolation, a haunt of jackals.
23 I know, LORD, that a person's way is not in his
own power; it is not for one who walks to direct
his own steps.
24 Correct me, LORD, but with justice, not in Your
anger, or You will bring me to nothing.
25 Pour out Your fury on the nations that do not
know You, on the families that do not call on Your
name. For they have devoured Jacob; they have
devoured him and consumed him, and laid waste
his home.[2]

1 This verse is written in Aramaic, the international language of the day, as a message the exiles could repeat to their neighbours.

2 Compare Psalm 79:6–7.

Chapter 11

> *Jeremiah 11 recalls the covenant the LORD made when He brought Israel out of the iron furnace of Egypt: "Obey My voice," so that they would be His people. Jeremiah answers, "Amen, LORD." But Judah and Jerusalem have conspired to break the covenant and returned to the sins of their forefathers, burning incense to Baal on as many altars as Jerusalem has streets. The LORD will bring disaster they cannot escape, and Jeremiah must not pray for them. The LORD then reveals to Jeremiah a plot against his life by the men of his own town, Anathoth: he had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. He commits his cause to the righteous Judge, and the LORD promises to punish Anathoth.*

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the
LORD:
2 Hear the terms of this covenant and tell them to
the people of Judah and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem.
3 Say to them: This is what the LORD, the God of
Israel, says: Cursed is the man who does not obey
the terms of this covenant,
4 which I commanded your fathers when I brought
them out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron
furnace. I said, "Obey My voice and do everything
I command you, and you will be My people and I
will be your God,"
5 I did this to fulfil My sworn promise to your
fathers, that I would give them a land flowing with
milk and honey, the land you hold today. "Amen,
LORD," I replied.
6 Then the LORD told me: Announce all this
through the towns of Judah and the streets of
Jerusalem: Listen to the terms of this covenant
and carry them out.
7 For from the day I brought your fathers up from
the land of Egypt until today I warned them
solemnly, warning them again and again: Obey My
voice.
8 Yet they did not listen or pay attention; each
followed the stubbornness of his evil heart. So I
brought on them all the curses of this covenant,
which I had commanded them to keep and they
did not keep.

9 Then the LORD said to me: A conspiracy has
been found among the people of Judah and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem.
10 They have turned back to the sins of their
earliest ancestors, who would not listen to what I
said; they too have gone after other gods and
served them. Israel and Judah alike have broken
the covenant I made with their forefathers.
11 Therefore this is what the LORD says: I am
bringing on them a disaster they cannot escape.
They will cry out to Me, but I will not listen to
them.
12 Then the towns of Judah and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods they
burn incense to, but these will not save them at all
in the time of their disaster.
13 For your gods have become as many as your
towns, Judah, and you have set up as many altars
to the shameful thing as there are streets in
Jerusalem, altars to burn incense to Baal.
14 As for you, do not pray for this people or lift up a
cry or a prayer for them, for I will not listen when
they call to Me in the time of their disaster.
15 What right has My beloved in My house, when
she has done so many vile deeds? Can
consecrated meat take away your wickedness, so
that you can rejoice?[1]
16 The LORD once called you a flourishing olive
tree, beautiful with fine fruit. But with the roar of
a great storm He will set fire to it, and its
branches will be consumed.
17 The LORD of Armies, who planted you, has
pronounced disaster against you because of the
evil the house of Israel and the house of Judah
have done, provoking Me to anger by burning
incense to Baal.
18 The LORD made it known to me, and I knew it;
then You showed me what they were doing.
19 I had been like a gentle lamb led to the
slaughter. I did not know it was against me that
they had made their plans: “Let us destroy the
tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land
of the living, so that his name is remembered no
more.”
20 But You, LORD of Armies, who judge righteously
and test the heart and mind, let me see Your
vengeance on them, for to You I have committed
my cause.
21 Therefore this is what the LORD says about the
men of Anathoth who seek your life and say, “Do
not prophesy in the name of the LORD, or you will
die at our hands”:
22 This is what the LORD of Armies says: I am
going to punish them. Their young men will die by
the sword, and their sons and daughters by
famine.
23 Not one of them will be left, for I will bring
disaster on the men of Anathoth in the year of
their punishment.

1 The Hebrew of this verse is difficult.

Chapter 12

> *Jeremiah 12 brings the prophet’s complaint to the righteous LORD: why do the wicked succeed, while the land mourns? The LORD answers that if running with men on foot has tired him, he cannot keep up with horses, for even his own family has betrayed him. Then the LORD laments that He has forsaken His house and given His beloved into the hands of her enemies, because His inheritance roared against Him like a lion. Many shepherds have ruined His vineyard. Yet He promises that after uprooting Judah’s wicked neighbours He will have compassion and bring each nation home, and if they learn the ways of His people they will be built up among them.*

1 You are always in the right, LORD, whenever I
bring a complaint to You. Yet let me put my case
about justice to You: Why do the wicked succeed
in what they do? Why are all the faithless so
untroubled?
2 You planted them, and they have taken root; they
grow and bear fruit. You are near on their lips but
far from their hearts.
3 But You, LORD, know me; You see me and test
my heart towards You. Drag them away like sheep
to be slaughtered; set them apart for the day of
killing.
4 How long will the land mourn and the grass of
every field wither? Because of the wickedness of
those who live in it, animals and birds are swept

away, for the people have said, “He will not see what becomes of us.”

5 If you have run with runners on foot and they have tired you out, how can you keep up with horses? If you stumble in a peaceful land, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?

6 For even your brothers and your father’s household have betrayed you; even they have raised a loud cry after you. Do not trust them, though they speak kindly to you.

7 I have forsaken My house; I have abandoned My inheritance. I have given the beloved of My soul into the hands of her enemies.

8 My inheritance has become to Me like a lion in the forest; she has roared against Me, so I hate her.

9 Has My inheritance become to Me like a speckled bird of prey, with other birds of prey circling against her? Go, gather all the wild animals; bring them to devour.

10 Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard and trampled My portion; they have turned My pleasant portion into a desolate wilderness.

11 They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns before Me. The whole land is made desolate, because no one takes it to heart.

12 Over all the bare heights in the wilderness the destroyers have come, for the sword of the LORD devours from one end of the land to the other; no one has peace.

13 They sowed wheat but reaped thorns; they wore themselves out but gained nothing. Be ashamed of your harvests because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

14 This is what the LORD says about all My wicked neighbours who touch the inheritance I gave My people Israel: I am going to uproot them from their land, and I will uproot the house of Judah from among them.[1]

15 But after I have uprooted them, I will again have compassion on them and bring each of them back to his own inheritance and his own land.

16 And if they will carefully learn the ways of My people and swear by My name, “As the LORD lives,” just as they once taught My people to swear by Baal, then they will be built up among My people.

17 But if any nation will not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it, declares the LORD.

1 ‘Uproot’ is the word of Jeremiah’s call in 1:10; it occurs five times in 12:14–17.

Chapter 13

Jeremiah 13 begins with an acted parable. The LORD tells Jeremiah to buy a linen belt, wear it, then hide it in a crack in the rocks at Perath; when he digs it up many days later it is ruined and good for nothing. So the LORD will ruin the pride of Judah, which He had bound to Himself like a belt but which would not listen. Every jar will be filled with wine, and the people will be filled with drunkenness and smashed against one another. Jeremiah pleads with them to give glory to the LORD before darkness falls, and warns the king and queen mother that their crowns will fall. Can a Cushite change his skin or a leopard its spots? No more can those used to evil do good.

1 This is what the LORD said to me: “Go and buy yourself a linen belt and put it round your waist, but do not let it touch water.”[1]

2 So I bought a belt as the LORD had told me and put it round my waist.

3 Then the word of the LORD came to me a second time:

4 “Take the belt you bought, the one round your waist, and go now to Perath and hide it there in a crack in the rock.”[2]

5 So I went and hid it at Perath, as the LORD had commanded me.

6 After many days the LORD said to me, “Go now to Perath and take from there the belt I commanded you to hide.”

7 So I went off to Perath and dug the belt out of the spot where I had hidden it, and found it rotted and no use for anything.

8 Then the word of the LORD came to me:

9 “This is what the LORD says: In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.

10 This evil people, who refuse to listen to My words, who follow the stubbornness of their own

hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them, will be like this belt, good for nothing.

11 For as a belt clings to a man's waist, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to Me, declares the LORD, to be My people, for My renown, praise and glory. But they would not listen.

12 Say to them this word: 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Every jar is to be filled with wine.' And when they say to you, 'Do we not know very well that every jar is to be filled with wine?'

13 then say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: I am going to fill all who live in this land with drunkenness, the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets and all the people of Jerusalem.

14 I will smash them against one another, fathers and sons together, declares the LORD. I will show no pity, no mercy and no compassion to keep Me from destroying them.'"

15 Listen and pay attention; do not be proud, for the LORD has spoken.

16 Give glory to the LORD your God before He brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains. You will hope for light, but He will turn it into deep darkness and make it thick gloom.

17 But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and overflow with tears, because the LORD's flock has been taken captive.

18 Say to the king and to the queen mother, "Come down from your thrones, for your glorious crowns have fallen from your heads."[3]

19 The towns of the Negev are shut up, and there is no one to open them. All Judah is carried into exile, carried away completely.

20 Look up and see who is coming down from the north! Where now is the flock placed in your care, the sheep you were so proud of?

21 What will you say when He sets over you those you yourself trained as your close allies? Will pains not seize you like a woman in labour?

22 And if you ask in your heart, "Why have these things happened to me?" it is because of your many sins that your skirts have been torn off and your body shamefully exposed.

23 Can a Cushite change the colour of his skin, or a leopard its spots? Then you also can do good, you who are schooled in evil.

24 I will scatter you like chaff blown away by the desert wind.

25 This is your lot, the portion I have measured out to you, declares the LORD, because you have forgotten Me and trusted in lies.

26 I Myself will pull your skirts up over your face, so that your shame will be seen,

27 your adulteries and your lustful neighing, your shameless prostitution on the hills in the countryside. I have seen your detestable acts. Woe to you, Jerusalem! How long will you remain unclean?

1 A 'belt' here is a loincloth or waistcloth, the garment worn closest to the body.

2 'Perath' is the Hebrew name of the Euphrates. It may also refer to Parah, a few miles north-east of Anathoth (Joshua 18:23).

3 Probably King Jehoiachin and his mother Nehushta; see 2 Kings 24:8–15.

Chapter 14

Jeremiah 14 is the word of the LORD to Jeremiah about the drought. Judah mourns, nobles send their servants for water and they come back with empty jars, the farmers cover their heads, and even the doe abandons her newborn fawn. The people confess their sin and plead with the LORD, the Hope of Israel, not to act like a stranger in the land. The LORD tells Jeremiah not to pray for their welfare, for He will not accept their fasts and offerings. When Jeremiah blames the prophets who promise peace, the LORD says they prophesy lies He never sent, and they will perish by sword and famine. Jeremiah weeps day and night, and the people plead again: none of the nations' idols can bring rain; only the LORD can.

1 This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:

2 Judah mourns; her gates languish. Her people sit in black on the ground, and the cry of Jerusalem goes up.

3 The nobles send their servants for water. They
come to the cisterns but find no water; they return
with their jars empty. They are ashamed and
dismayed, and they cover their heads.
4 Because the ground is cracked, for there has
been no rain in the land, the farmers are ashamed
and cover their heads.
5 Even the doe in the field abandons her newborn
fawn, because there is no grass.
6 Wild donkeys stand on the bare heights and pant
for air like jackals; their eyes fail for lack of
pasture.
7 Though our iniquities testify against us, LORD,
act for the sake of Your name. Our backslidings
are many; we have sinned against You.
8 Hope of Israel, its Saviour in time of trouble, why
are You like a stranger in the land, like a traveller
who stops only for the night?
9 Why are You like a man taken by surprise, like a
warrior who cannot save? Yet You are among us,
LORD, and we are called by Your name. Do not
forsake us!
10 This is what the LORD says about this people:
They love to wander; they do not restrain their
feet. So the LORD does not accept them; He will
now remember their iniquity and punish their
sins.
11 Then the LORD said to me: Do not pray for the
welfare of this people.
12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; when
they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I
will not accept them. Instead I will finish them off
by the sword, famine and plague.
13 But I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! The prophets keep
telling them, ‘You will not see the sword or suffer
famine; I will give you lasting peace in this
place.’”
14 Then the LORD said to me: The prophets are
prophesying lies in My name. I did not send them
or command them or speak to them. They are
prophesying to you a false vision, worthless
divination and the delusions of their own minds.
15 Therefore this is what the LORD says about the
prophets who prophesy in My name though I did
not send them, and who say, “No sword or famine
will touch this land”: By sword and famine those
prophets will meet their end.
16 And the people they prophesy to will be thrown
out into the streets of Jerusalem because of
famine and sword, with no one to bury them,
them, their wives, their sons and their daughters.
I will pour out on them their own wickedness.
17 Say this word to them: Let my eyes overflow
with tears night and day and not cease, for the
virgin daughter of my people has been struck with
a crushing blow, a grievous wound.
18 If I go out into the countryside, I see those slain
by the sword; if I go into the city, I see the ravages
of famine. Both prophet and priest have gone to a
land they do not know.
19 Have You utterly rejected Judah? Do You loathe
Zion? Why have You struck us so that there is no
healing for us? We hoped for peace, but no good
has come; for a time of healing, but there is only
terror.
20 LORD, we admit our wrongdoing and the guilt of
our forefathers; truly we have sinned against You.
21 For the sake of Your name do not spurn us; do
not dishonour Your glorious throne. Remember
Your covenant with us and do not break it.
22 Can any of the worthless idols of the nations
bring rain? Can the skies of themselves send
showers? Is it not You, LORD our God? So we
hope in You, for You are the One who does all
these things.[1]

1 ‘Worthless idols’: the word for a breath or vapour, as in 2:5.

Chapter 15

Jeremiah 15 declares that even if Moses and Samuel stood before the LORD, He would not turn towards this people: those destined for death will go to death, those for the sword to the sword. Because of what Manasseh did in Jerusalem, no one will pity the city, and widows will be more numerous than the sand of the seas. Jeremiah laments that his mother bore him to be a man of strife whom everyone curses. He reminds the LORD that when His words came he fed on them and they became his joy, yet his pain is unending and the LORD has been to him like a deceptive brook. The LORD answers that if he returns and speaks what is precious, not what is worthless, he will be His spokesman, and He will make him a fortified wall of bronze.

1 Then the LORD said to me: Even if Moses and
Samuel stood before Me, My heart would not go
out to this people. Send them away from My
presence, and let them go!

2 And if they ask you, “Where should we go?” tell
them: This is what the LORD says: Those destined
for death, to death; those for the sword, to the
sword; those for famine, to famine; and those for
captivity, to captivity.

3 I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers,
declares the LORD: the sword to kill, the dogs to
drag away, and the birds of the sky and the beasts
of the earth to devour and destroy.

4 I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of
the earth because of what Manasseh son of
Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem.[1]

5 Who will have pity on you, Jerusalem? Who will
grieve for you? Who will turn aside to ask how you
are?

6 You have turned your back on Me, declares the
LORD; you keep walking away. So I have raised
My hand against you to destroy you; I am tired of
holding back.

7 I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork at
the gates of the land. I have bereaved My people
of children and destroyed them, yet they have not
turned from their ways.

8 I have made their widows more numerous than
the sand of the seas. At noon I brought a destroyer
against the mothers of young men; I suddenly
brought anguish and terror upon them.

9 The mother of seven grows faint and breathes
her last. Her sun has set while it is still day; she is
shamed and disgraced. And the rest of them I will
hand over to the sword before their enemies,
declares the LORD.

10 Woe is me, my mother, that you gave birth to
me, a man of strife and conflict with the whole
land! I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet
everyone curses me.

11 The LORD said: Surely I will set you free for
good; surely I will make the enemy plead with you
in the time of disaster and distress.[2]

12 Can anyone break iron, iron from the north, or
bronze?

13 Your wealth and your treasures I will give as
plunder, free of charge, because of all your sins
throughout your territory.

14 I will make you serve your enemies in a land you
do not know, for My anger has kindled a fire that
will burn against you.

15 You know, LORD. Remember me and take care
of me; avenge me on my persecutors. In Your
patience do not take me away; know that I suffer
reproach for Your sake.

16 When Your words came, I took them in and fed
on them; Your word became my joy and the
delight of my heart, for I bear Your name, LORD
God of Armies.

17 I did not sit in the company of revellers or
celebrate with them; I sat alone because Your
hand was on me, for You had filled me with
indignation.

18 Why is my pain unending and my wound
incurable, refusing to be healed? Will You be to
me like a deceptive brook, like waters that fail?

19 Therefore this is what the LORD says: If you
return, I will restore you, and you will stand
before Me. If you speak what is precious and not
what is worthless, you will be My mouthpiece. Let
them turn to you, but you must not turn to them.

20 I will make you to this people a fortified wall of
bronze. They will fight against you, but they will
not overcome you, for I am with you to save you
and rescue you, declares the LORD.

21 I will rescue you from the hand of the wicked
and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

1 See 2 Kings 21:1–16 and 23:26.

2 The Hebrew of this verse is uncertain.

Chapter 16

Jeremiah 16 forbids the prophet to marry or have children in this place, for its sons and daughters will die of deadly diseases and lie unburied like dung. He must not enter a house of mourning or a house of feasting, for the LORD has withdrawn His peace and will silence the voices of joy, of bride and bridegroom. When the people ask what their sin is, he must tell them they and their fathers forsook the LORD, so He will hurl them into a land they do not know. Yet days are coming when people will swear by the LORD who brought Israel back from the land of the north. The LORD will send for fishermen and hunters to catch the guilty, and the nations will come from the ends of the earth confessing that their fathers inherited only lies.

1 Then the word of the LORD came to me:

2 You must not take a wife or have sons or daughters in this place.

3 For this is what the LORD says about the sons and daughters born in this place, and about the mothers who bear them and the fathers who father them in this land:

4 They will die of deadly diseases. They will not be mourned or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground. They will perish by sword and famine, and their corpses will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

5 For this is what the LORD says: Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy for them, for I have withdrawn My peace from this people, declares the LORD, My steadfast love and My compassion.[1]

6 Great and small will die in this land. They will not be buried or mourned; no one will gash himself or shave his head for them.

7 No one will break bread for the mourner to comfort him for the dead, or give him the cup of consolation to drink for his father or his mother.

8 And do not enter a house where there is feasting, to sit with them to eat and drink.

9 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Before your eyes and in your days I will silence in this place the sound of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

10 When you tell this people all these things and they ask you, “Why has the LORD pronounced all this great disaster against us? What is our iniquity? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?”

11 then say to them: It is because your fathers forsook Me, declares the LORD, and followed other gods and served and worshipped them. They forsook Me and did not keep My law.

12 And you have done even worse than your fathers. Each of you is following the stubbornness of his evil heart, refusing to listen to Me.

13 So I will fling you out of this land into a country unknown to you and to your fathers. There you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no mercy.

14 Therefore the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it will no longer be said, “As the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt,”

15 but, “As the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where He had banished them.” For I will bring them back to the land I gave their fathers.

16 But now I am sending for many fishermen, declares the LORD, and they will fish for them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks.

17 For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from Me, nor is their iniquity concealed from My sight.

18 First I will repay them double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land with the carcasses of their detestable idols and filled My inheritance with their abominations.

19 LORD, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, to You the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, “Our fathers inherited nothing but lies, worthless things that did them no good.

20 Can people make gods for themselves? Such things are not gods!”

21 Therefore I will teach them, this time I will teach them My power and My might, and they will know that My name is the LORD.

1 The Hebrew word (marzeach) means a ritual meal or feast, here held in mourning.

Chapter 17

Jeremiah 17 says that Judah's sin is engraved with an iron pen on the tablet of their hearts and on the horns of their altars. Cursed is the one who trusts in mere mortals; he is like a shrub in the desert. Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD; he is like a tree planted by water that keeps bearing fruit in drought. The heart is more devious than anything, but the LORD searches it and repays each according to his deeds. Jeremiah prays, "LORD, heal me, and I shall be whole," and asks to be vindicated against those who mock his message. He is then sent to the city gates to command the people to keep the Sabbath holy: if they do, David's line will endure; if not, fire will consume Jerusalem's fortresses.

1 The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen,
engraved with a diamond point on the tablet of their hearts and on the horns of their altars,
2 while their children remember their altars and their Asherah poles beside the spreading trees on the high hills.
3 My mountain in the countryside, your wealth and all your treasures I will give away as plunder, together with your high places, because of sin throughout your territory.
4 Through your own fault you will lose the inheritance I gave you. I will make you serve your enemies in a land you do not know, for you have kindled a fire in My anger that will burn for ever.
5 This is what the LORD says: Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind, who makes mere flesh his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD.
6 He will be like a juniper in the desert; he will not see when good comes. He will live in the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land where no one lives.
7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is the LORD.
8 He will be like a tree planted by water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves stay green. In a year of drought it has no worries, and it never fails to bear fruit.[1]
9 The heart is more devious than anything else, and sick beyond cure. Who can fathom it?
10 I, the LORD, search the heart and test the mind, to give to each according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.
11 Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the one who gains riches unjustly. In the middle of his life they will leave him, and at his end he will prove a fool.
12 From the first our holy place has been a throne of glory, raised up on high.
13 LORD, the Hope of Israel, all who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away from You will be written in the dust, because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.
14 LORD, heal me, and I shall be whole; rescue me, and I shall be safe, for You are the One I praise.
15 Look, they keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it come now!"
16 But I have not run away from being a shepherd who follows You, nor have I longed for the day of disaster. You know what came from my lips; it was spoken before You.
17 Do not be a terror to me; You are my refuge in the day of disaster.
18 Let my persecutors be put to shame, but do not let me be put to shame; let them be terrified, but do not let me be terrified. Bring on them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction.
19 This is what the LORD said to me: Go and stand in the People's Gate, through which the kings of Judah go in and out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem.
20 Say to them: Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah, all Judah and all the people of Jerusalem who come in through these gates.
21 This is what the LORD says: Be careful, for your lives' sake, not to carry any load on the Sabbath day or bring it in through the gates of Jerusalem.
22 Do not carry a load out of your houses on the Sabbath day or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers.
23 Yet they did not listen or pay attention; they stiffened their necks so as not to hear or accept correction.
24 But if you listen carefully to Me, declares the LORD, and bring no load in through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy by doing no work on it,
25 then kings and princes who sit on David's throne will come in through the gates of this city, riding

in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited for ever.

26 People will come from the towns of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, the lowlands, the hill country and the Negev, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the LORD.

27 But if you do not listen to Me and keep the Sabbath day holy, and if you carry loads as you come in through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in its gates that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem.

1 Compare Psalm 1:3.

Chapter 18

Jeremiah 18 sends the prophet to the potter's house. When the vessel the potter is shaping is spoiled, he reworks it into another vessel as he sees fit. The LORD says, "Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel." If He announces disaster on a nation and it repents, He relents; if He promises good and it does evil, He relents of the good. But the people reply that they will follow their own plans. Israel has done a horrible thing: has the snow of Lebanon ever left its rocky slopes? Yet My people have forgotten Me. The people plot against Jeremiah, and he asks the LORD to repay those who have dug a pit for him though he once pleaded for their good.

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

2 "Get up and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear My words."

3 So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, working at the wheel.[1]

4 But the vessel he was making from the clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, so he made it into another vessel, shaping it as seemed best to him.

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me:

6 "House of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does? declares the LORD. Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel.

7 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed,

8 and that nation I warned turns from its evil, then I will relent of the disaster I had planned to bring on it.

9 And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted,

10 and it does evil in My sight and does not obey My voice, then I will relent of the good I had intended to do for it.

11 So now say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 'This is what the LORD says: I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Turn back, each of you, from your evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.'

12 But they will say, 'It is no use! We will follow our own plans; each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'"

13 Therefore this is what the LORD says: Ask among the nations: Who has ever heard anything like this? The virgin Israel has done a most horrible thing.

14 Does the snow of Lebanon ever vanish from its rocky slopes? Do the cold streams flowing from distant sources ever run dry?[2]

15 Yet My people have forgotten Me; they burn incense to worthless idols, which made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, to walk in side paths, on a road not built up.

16 Their land will become a desolation, an object of lasting scorn; everyone who passes by will be appalled and shake his head.

17 Like the east wind I will scatter them before the enemy. I will show them My back and not My face in the day of their disaster.

18 Then they said, "Come, let us hatch a scheme against Jeremiah. We will still have priests to teach the law, wise men to give advice and prophets to bring the word. Come, let us bring charges against him and ignore whatever he says."

19 Pay attention to me, LORD, and listen to what my accusers are saying.

20 Should evil be repaid for good? Yet they have dug a pit for my life. Remember how I stood before You to speak good on their behalf, to turn Your wrath away from them.

21 So hand their children over to famine, and give them over to the power of the sword. Let their wives be childless and widowed; let their men be put to death and their young men struck down by the sword in battle.

22 Let screams ring out from their homes as You bring raiding bands on them without warning, for they have dug a pit to trap me and laid hidden snares for my feet.

23 Yet You, LORD, know every scheme they have made to put me to death. Do not pardon their guilt or wipe their sin from Your sight. Let them be brought down before You; act against them when Your anger comes.

1 'Wheel', literally 'the two stones': a potter's wheel was made of two stone discs, one turning on the other.
2 The Hebrew of this verse is uncertain.

Chapter 19

Jeremiah 19 sends the prophet to buy a clay jar and take some of the elders and senior priests to the Valley of Ben-hinnom by the Potsherd Gate. There he announces a disaster that will make every ear tingle, because the people have filled this place with innocent blood and built high places to burn their sons as offerings to Baal. The valley will be called the Valley of Slaughter, and the siege will be so severe that people will eat their own children. Jeremiah is to smash the jar before them as a sign that the LORD will smash this people and city beyond repair. Returning from Topheth, he stands in the court of the LORD's house and repeats that the city will suffer every disaster announced against it.

1 This is what the LORD says: Go and buy a potter's clay jar. Take with you some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests,

2 and go out to the Valley of Ben-hinnom, near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. Proclaim there the words I tell you.

3 Say: Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I am about to bring such a disaster on this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle.

4 For they have forsaken Me and made this a place of foreign gods. They have burned incense in it to other gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.

5 They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, something I did not command or speak of, nor did it ever enter My mind.

6 So the days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.

7 Here I will drain away all that Judah and Jerusalem have planned. I will have them cut down by the sword in front of their enemies, at the hands of those who want them dead, and I will leave their bodies for the birds and the wild animals to eat.[1]

8 I will make this city a desolation and an object of scorn; everyone who passes by will be appalled and hiss at all its wounds.

9 I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and the distress inflicted on them by their enemies and those who seek their lives.

10 Then smash the jar while the men who came with you look on,

11 and say to them: This is what the LORD of Armies says: I will break this people and this city as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be mended again. They will bury in Topheth until there is no more room to bury.

12 This is what I will do to this place and to its inhabitants, declares the LORD: I will make this city like Topheth.

13 The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place of Topheth, all the houses on whose roofs they burned incense to all the host of heaven and poured out drink offerings to other gods.

14 Jeremiah then returned from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to deliver this prophecy. Standing in the courtyard of the LORD's house, he told all the people,

15 “This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I am about to bring on this city and all its towns every disaster I have pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their necks and refused to listen to My words.”

1 ‘Empty out’ (baqqoti) plays on the Hebrew word for the jar (baqbuq) in 19:1.

Chapter 20

Jeremiah 20 tells how Pashhur the priest, chief officer in the LORD’s house, had Jeremiah beaten and put in the stocks. When he is released, Jeremiah gives Pashhur a new name, “Terror on Every Side”, and foretells that he and all Judah will go into exile in Babylon. Then Jeremiah pours out his heart: the LORD has overpowered him, and he has become a laughing-stock. When he tries to keep silent, His word burns in his heart like a fire locked in his bones. Yet the LORD is with him like a mighty warrior, and he sings His praise. The chapter ends with Jeremiah cursing the day he was born.

1 Now Pashhur son of Immer, the priest in charge of the LORD’s house, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.

2 he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin in the house of the LORD.

3 The next day, when Pashhur released him from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, “The LORD does not call your name Pashhur, but Terror on Every Side.[1]

4 For this is what the LORD says: I will make you a terror to yourself and to all who love you; you will see them cut down by their enemies’ swords. I will give the whole of Judah into the power of Babylon’s king, who will deport some to Babylon and put others to the sword.

5 I will hand over to their enemies all the wealth of this city, all its gains, all its valuables and all the treasures of the kings of Judah. They will plunder them, seize them and carry them off to Babylon.

6 And you, Pashhur, and everyone who lives in your house will go into captivity. You will go to Babylon, and there you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.”

7 You enticed me, LORD, and I let myself be enticed; You were too strong for me, and You prevailed. I have become a laughing-stock all day long; everyone mocks me.

8 For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, “Violence and destruction!” So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and derision all day long.

9 But if I say, “I will not speak of Him or say anything more in His name,” His word burns in my heart like a fire locked inside my bones. I grow weary of holding it back; I cannot do it.

10 For I hear many whispering, “Terror on every side! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!” All my trusted friends watch for my fall: “Perhaps he can be lured, so that we may overpower him and take our revenge on him.”

11 But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed because they have not succeeded; their disgrace will be everlasting and never forgotten.

12 LORD of Armies, You test the righteous and see the heart and mind. Let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I have committed my cause.

13 Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD! For He has rescued the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

14 Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me never be blessed!

15 Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, saying, “A child is born to you, a son!” and made him very glad.

16 May that man be like the towns the LORD overthrew without pity. May he hear a cry in the morning and a battle shout at noon,

17 because he did not kill me in the womb, so that my mother would have been my grave, her womb pregnant for ever.

18 Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and end my days in shame?

1 Hebrew ‘Magor-missabib’, a phrase Jeremiah uses often (6:25; 20:10; 46:5; 49:29).

Chapter 21

Jeremiah 21 records King Zedekiah's request, sent through Pashhur son of Malkijah and Zephaniah the priest, that Jeremiah ask the LORD whether He will do a wonder and make Nebuchadnezzar withdraw. Jeremiah answers that the LORD Himself will fight against Jerusalem with an outstretched hand and great wrath; plague will strike the city, and Zedekiah and the survivors will be handed over to the king of Babylon. The LORD sets before the people the way of life and the way of death: whoever stays in the city will die, but whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians will live. The royal house is told to administer justice every morning, or His wrath will burn like fire.

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the
LORD when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur
son of Malkijah and Zephaniah the priest, son of
Maaseiah, to say,[1]

2 "Please enquire of the LORD for us, because
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is making war
against us. Perhaps the LORD will act on our
behalf with one of His wonderful deeds, so that he
will withdraw from us."[2]

3 But Jeremiah said to them, "Tell Zedekiah this:

4 This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I
am about to turn back the weapons of war in your
hands, which you are using to fight the king of
Babylon and the Chaldeans who are besieging you
outside the wall, and I will gather them into the
middle of this city.

5 It is I who will make war on you, with hand
stretched out and mighty arm, in anger and rage
and fierce indignation.

6 I will strike down those who live in this city, both
people and animals; they will die of a terrible
plague.

7 After that, declares the LORD, I will hand over
Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the
people in this city who survive the plague, the
sword and the famine, to Nebuchadnezzar king of
Babylon, to their enemies and to those who seek
their lives. He will put them to the sword; he will
show them no pity, mercy or compassion.

8 And say to this people: This is what the LORD
says: I am setting before you the way of life and
the way of death.

9 Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword,
famine or plague. But whoever goes out and
surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging
you will live; he will escape with his life as his only
spoil.

10 For I have set My face against this city for harm
and not for good, declares the LORD. It will be
handed over to the king of Babylon, and he will
burn it with fire."

11 To the royal house of Judah: Hear the word of
the LORD,

12 house of David. This is what the LORD says:
Administer justice every morning; rescue from the
hand of the oppressor the one who has been
robbed, or My fury will break out like fire and
burn with no one to quench it, because of the evil
of your deeds.

13 I am against you, you who live above the valley,
on the rocky plateau, declares the LORD, you who
say, "Who can come down against us? Who can
enter our homes?"

14 I will punish you as your deeds deserve,
declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in her
forest, and it will consume everything around her.

1 About 588 BC, during the Babylonian siege. This Pashhur is not the Pashhur of chapter 20.

2 Jeremiah usually spells the name 'Nebuchadrezzar', closer to the Babylonian Nabu-kudurri-usur; this translation uses the familiar spelling throughout.

Chapter 22

Jeremiah 22 sends the prophet down to the palace to tell the king of Judah to do justice and righteousness and protect the foreigner, the orphan and the widow; if he does, kings will continue to ride through its gates, but if not, the palace will become a ruin. Do not weep for the dead king Josiah, but weep for Shallum, who has gone into exile and will never return. Woe to Jehoiakim, who builds his palace by injustice and makes his neighbours work for nothing; his father did justice and it went well with him, for that is what it means to know the LORD. Jehoiakim will have the burial of a donkey. Even if Coniah were the signet ring on the LORD's right hand, He would pull him off; he will be recorded as childless, for none of his descendants will sit on David's throne.

1 This is what the LORD says: Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this word there.

2 Say: Hear the word of the LORD, king of Judah, you who sit on David's throne, you, your officials and your people who come in through these gates.

3 This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do not wrong or mistreat the foreigner, the orphan or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

4 For if you are careful to do this, then kings who sit on David's throne will come in through the gates of this palace, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials and their people.

5 But if you do not obey these words, I swear by Myself, declares the LORD, that this palace will become a ruin.

6 For this is what the LORD says about the palace of the king of Judah: You are like Gilead to Me, like the summit of Lebanon, yet I will surely make you a wilderness, towns without inhabitants.

7 I will appoint destroyers against you, each with his weapons, and they will cut down your choicest cedars and throw them into the fire.

8 People from many nations will pass by this city and ask one another, "Why has the LORD done such a thing to this great city?"

9 And they will answer, "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God and worshipped and served other gods."

10 Do not weep for the dead or mourn his loss; rather, weep bitterly for the one who goes away, for he will never return to see his native land.

11 For this is what the LORD says about Shallum son of Josiah, king of Judah, who succeeded his father Josiah as king and has gone from this place: He will never return here.[1]

12 He will die in the place where they have taken him captive; he will not see this land again.

13 Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbour work for nothing and does not pay him his wages,

14 who says, "I will build myself a spacious house with roomy upper rooms." He cuts out windows for it, panels it with cedar and paints it red.

15 Does it make you a king to compete in cedar? Did your father not eat and drink, and do what was just and right? Then it went well with him.

16 He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and then it went well. Is that not what it means to know Me? declares the LORD.

17 But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion.

18 Therefore this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah: They will not mourn for him, "Alas, my brother! Alas, my sister!" They will not mourn for him, "Alas, master! Alas, his majesty!"

19 He will be buried like a donkey, dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

20 Go up to Lebanon and cry out; raise your voice in Bashan; cry out from Abarim, for all your lovers are crushed.

21 I spoke to you when you felt secure, but you said, "I will not listen." This has been your way from your youth: you have not obeyed My voice.

22 The wind will shepherd all your shepherds away, and your lovers will go into exile. Then you will be ashamed and humiliated because of all your wickedness.

23 You who live in Lebanon, nesting among the cedars, how you will groan when pangs come upon you, pain like a woman in labour!

24 As surely as I live, declares the LORD, even if
you, Coniah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were
the signet ring on My right hand, I would still pull
you off.[2]

25 I will hand you over to those who seek your life,
to those you dread, to Nebuchadnezzar king of
Babylon and to the Chaldeans.

26 I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into
another country, where neither of you was born,
and there you will both die.

27 They will never come back to the land they long
to return to.

28 Is this man Coniah a despised, broken pot, a
vessel no one wants? Why have he and his
children been hurled out and cast into a land they
do not know?

29 O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD!

30 This is what the LORD says: Record this man as
childless, a man who will not prosper in his
lifetime, for none of his descendants will prosper
or sit on the throne of David or rule again in
Judah.

1 Shallum is King Jehoahaz, taken to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco in 609 BC; see 2 Kings 23:30–34.

2 Coniah is a short form of Jeconiah, that is, King Jehoiachin; see 2 Kings 24:8–17.

Chapter 23

Jeremiah 23 pronounces woe on the shepherds who scatter the LORD's flock; He Himself will gather the remnant and raise up shepherds who will care for them. The days are coming when He will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will act wisely and do justice, and His name will be "The LORD Our Righteousness." The rest of the chapter concerns the prophets. Jeremiah's heart is broken because prophets and priests are godless, and the prophets of Jerusalem are worse than those of Samaria, like Sodom and Gomorrah. They speak visions from their own minds and promise peace to those who despise the LORD, though they have never stood in His council. His word is like fire, like a hammer that smashes rock to pieces. The people are no longer to speak of "the burden of the LORD."

1 Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and
scattering the sheep of My pasture! declares the
LORD.

2 Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of
Israel, says about the shepherds who tend My
people: You have scattered My flock and driven
them away, and you have not attended to them. So
I will attend to you for the evil of your deeds,
declares the LORD.[1]

3 Then I will bring together what is left of My flock
from every country I have scattered them to, and
lead them home to their own grazing land, where
they will bear young and increase in number.

4 I will raise up shepherds over them who will tend
them, and they will no longer be afraid or
terrified, and none will be missing, declares the
LORD.

5 The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I
will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King
who will reign wisely and do what is just and right
in the land.[2]

6 In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will
live in safety. This is the name by which He will be
called: "The LORD Our Righteousness."[3]

7 So the days are coming, declares the LORD,
when people will no longer say, "As the LORD
lives, who brought the people of Israel up out of
the land of Egypt,"

8 but, "As the LORD lives, who brought up and led
the descendants of the house of Israel out of the
land of the north and out of all the countries
where He had driven them." Then they will live in
their own land.

9 Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken
within me; all my bones tremble. I am like a
drunken man, like a man overcome by wine,
because of the LORD and His holy words.

10 The land is crowded with adulterers. Under the
curse the country lies in mourning and the
wilderness pastures are parched. They race to do
evil and use their strength for wrong.

11 Both prophet and priest are godless; even in My
house I have found their wickedness, declares the
LORD.

12 So their path will become slippery ground in the
darkness; they will be driven on and fall there. For
I will bring disaster on them in the year of their
punishment, declares the LORD.

13 Among the prophets of Samaria I saw something offensive: they prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray.

14 And in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a shocking thing: adultery and a life of lies. They encourage those who do wrong, so that none of them turns back from his evil. They have all become like Sodom to Me, and the city's people like Gomorrah.

15 Therefore this is what the LORD of Armies says about the prophets: I will feed them with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem godlessness has spread throughout the land.

16 This is what the LORD of Armies says: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.

17 They keep saying to those who despise Me, "The LORD says: You will have peace," and to everyone who follows the stubbornness of his heart they say, "No harm will come to you."

18 But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and hear His word? Who has listened to His word and heard it?

19 Look, the storm of the LORD has burst out in fury, a whirling storm swirling down on the heads of the wicked.

20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has fully carried out the purposes of His heart. In the last days you will understand it clearly.

21 I did not send these prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in My council, they would have proclaimed My words to My people and turned them from their evil way and their evil deeds.

23 Am I a God only near at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away?

24 Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.

25 I have heard the prophets who prophesy falsely in My name. "I dreamed something!" they say. "I dreamed something!"

26 How long will this go on in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy lies, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds?

27 They think the dreams they tell one another will make My people forget My name, just as their fathers forgot My name through Baal.

28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has My word speak My word faithfully. What has straw to do with grain? declares the LORD.

29 Is My word not like fire, declares the LORD, like a hammer that smashes rock to pieces?

30 Therefore I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who steal My words from one another.

31 I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who wag their own tongues and say, "He declares."

32 I am against those who prophesy false dreams, declares the LORD, who tell them and lead My people astray with their lies and their recklessness. I did not send them or command them, and they do this people no good at all, declares the LORD.

33 When this people, or a prophet or a priest, asks you, "What is the burden of the LORD?" say to them, "What burden? I will cast you off, declares the LORD."[4]

34 If a prophet or a priest or anyone else says, "The burden of the LORD," I will punish that man and his household.

35 This is what each of you is to say to his neighbour and his brother: "What has the LORD answered?" or "What has the LORD spoken?"

36 But you must not mention "the burden of the LORD" again, for each man's own word becomes his burden, and so you distort the words of the living God, the LORD of Armies, our God.

37 This is what you are to say to the prophet: "What has the LORD answered you?" or "What has the LORD spoken?"

38 But if you say, "The burden of the LORD," then this is what the LORD says: Because you have used these words, "The burden of the LORD," though I sent to tell you not to say, "The burden of the LORD,"

39 I will surely lift you up and cast you away from My presence, you and the city I gave to you and your fathers.

40 I will bring on you everlasting disgrace and everlasting shame that will not be forgotten.

1 'Attend to' and 'punish' are the same Hebrew verb; the shepherds who did not attend to the flock will be attended to.

2 The Branch is the promised King from David's line; see Isaiah 11:1, Jeremiah 33:15 and Zechariah 3:8; 6:12.

3 Hebrew 'YHWH Tsidqenu', a play on the name of King Zedekiah, 'The LORD is my righteousness'.

4 'Burden' (massa) also means 'oracle'. The people ask for an oracle; the LORD answers that they are the burden He will throw off.

Chapter 24

Jeremiah 24 records a vision after Nebuchadnezzar had taken King Jeconiah, the officials, craftsmen and smiths into exile in Babylon. The LORD shows Jeremiah two baskets of figs in front of the temple: one of very good figs, like early figs, and one of very bad figs, too bad to eat. The good figs are the exiles, whom the LORD will watch over for good and bring back; He will give them a heart to know Him, and they will be His people. The bad figs are Zedekiah, his officials, the survivors left in Jerusalem and those living in Egypt, who will become a horror and a curse among the nations until they are wiped out.

1 After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with the officials of Judah, the craftsmen and the smiths, and brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs set in front of the temple of the LORD.[1]

2 One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen first; the other basket had very bad figs, so bad they could not be eaten.

3 Then the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "Figs," I answered. "The good figs are very good, but the bad ones are very bad, so bad they cannot be eaten."

4 Then the word of the LORD came to me:

5 "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans.

6 I will keep My eyes on them for their good and bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them.

7 I will give them a heart that knows Me as the LORD. They will be My own people, and I will be their God, because they will come back to Me wholeheartedly.

8 But like the bad figs, which are so bad they cannot be eaten, says the LORD, so I will treat Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors of Jerusalem, both those who remain in this land and those who live in the land of Egypt.

9 I will make them a horror and an evil thing to all the kingdoms of the earth, a disgrace and a byword, an object of ridicule and a curse, in all the places where I drive them.

10 I will send the sword, famine and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their fathers."

1 In 597 BC; see 2 Kings 24:10–16.

Chapter 25

Jeremiah 25 is dated to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the first year of Nebuchadnezzar. For twenty-three years Jeremiah has spoken the LORD's word, and the LORD has sent His servants the prophets again and again, but the people would not listen. So He will bring Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, against Judah and the surrounding nations, and they will serve the king of Babylon seventy years; after that Babylon itself will be punished. Jeremiah is then given the cup of the wine of the LORD's wrath to make all the nations drink, beginning with Jerusalem and ending with the king of Sheshach. The LORD roars from on high; He has a case against the nations, and the shepherds wail because He is destroying their pasture.

1 In Jehoiakim's fourth year as king of Judah (he was the son of Josiah), which was Nebuchadnezzar's first year as king of Babylon, a word came to Jeremiah about the whole people of Judah.[1]

2 Jeremiah the prophet declared it to everyone in Judah and to all who lived in Jerusalem:

3 For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, until today, the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.

4 And the LORD has sent you all His servants the prophets, again and again, but you have not listened or even inclined your ear to hear.

5 They said, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil way and your evil deeds, and you will stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever.

6 Do not go after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. Do not stir up My anger with idols your own hands have made, and I will not harm you.”

7 But you did not listen to Me, declares the LORD, and so you provoked Me to anger with the work of your hands, to your own harm.

8 Therefore this is what the LORD of Armies says: Because you have not obeyed My words,

9 I am going to send for all the clans of the north, declares the LORD, and for My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bring them against this land and its inhabitants and all the surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction and make them an object of horror and scorn, an everlasting ruin.

10 I will banish from them the sound of joy and gladness, the voices of bridegroom and bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

11 This whole land will become a ruin and a desolation, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.[2]

12 But when the seventy years are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, and make it a desolation for ever.

13 I will bring on that land all the words I have spoken against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations.

14 For many nations and great kings will enslave them too, and I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.

15 This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: Take from My hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

16 They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword I am sending among them.

17 So I took the cup from the LORD’s hand and made all the nations drink it to whom the LORD sent me:

18 Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and its officials, to make them a ruin, an object of horror, scorn and cursing, as they are today;

19 Pharaoh, Egypt’s king, with his attendants, his officials and his whole nation;

20 all the foreign people there; all the kings of the land of Uz; all the kings of the land of the Philistines, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and what is left of Ashdod;

21 Edom, Moab and the Ammonites;

22 every king of Tyre and every king of Sidon, and the kings of the islands beyond the sea;

23 Dedan, Tema, Buz and all who clip the hair at their temples;

24 all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed peoples who live in the desert;

25 every king of Zimri, of Elam and of the Medes;

26 all the kings of the north, near and far, one after another; and all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. And after them the king of Sheshach will drink.[3]

27 Then say to them: This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Drink, get drunk and vomit; fall and rise no more because of the sword I am sending among you.

28 And if they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, say to them: This is what the LORD of Armies says: You must drink it!

29 For I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears My name; will you then go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for I am calling down a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the LORD of Armies.

30 Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: The LORD roars from on high; from His holy dwelling He thunders. He roars mightily against His pasture; He shouts like those who tread grapes, against all who live on the earth.

31 The tumult resounds to the ends of the earth, for the LORD has a case against the nations; He brings judgement on all flesh and hands the wicked over to the sword, declares the LORD.

32 This is what the LORD of Armies says: Look, disaster is spreading from nation to nation; a

great storm is rising from the far ends of the earth.

33 On that day those slain by the LORD will lie from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned, gathered up or buried; they will be like dung on the ground.

34 Wail, you shepherds, and cry out; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock! For your time for slaughter has come; you will fall and be shattered like a precious vessel.

35 The shepherds will have nowhere to flee, and the leaders of the flock no escape.

36 Listen to the cry of the shepherds, the wailing of the leaders of the flock, for the LORD is destroying their pasture.

37 The peaceful meadows are laid waste because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

38 Like a lion He has left His lair, for their land has become a desolation because of the oppressor's sword and because of His fierce anger.

1 605 BC, the year Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt at Carchemish (46:2) and came to the throne.

2 See 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:21; Daniel 9:2.

3 'Sheshach' is a code name for Babylon, formed by replacing each letter with its opposite in the Hebrew alphabet (b-b-l becomes sh-sh-k); see 51:41.

Chapter 26

Jeremiah 26 tells how, early in Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah stood in the temple court and warned that if the people would not listen, the LORD would make this house like Shiloh. The priests, prophets and people seized him, saying, "You must die!" The officials of Judah came and sat at the New Gate to hear the case. Jeremiah told them that the LORD had sent him and that they would bring innocent blood on themselves if they killed him. The officials and people ruled that he did not deserve death, and some elders recalled how Hezekiah had listened when Micah prophesied that Zion would be ploughed like a field. But the prophet Uriah, who said the same things, was brought back from Egypt and killed by Jehoiakim. Ahikam son of Shaphan protected Jeremiah.

1 Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD:[1]

2 "This is what the LORD says: Stand in the court of the LORD's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the LORD's house. Tell them everything I command you; do not leave out a word.

3 Perhaps they will listen and each turn from his evil way. Then I will relent of the disaster I am planning to bring on them because of their evil deeds.

4 Say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: If you will not listen to Me and walk in My law, which I have set before you,

5 and listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again, though you have not listened,

6 then I will make this house what Shiloh became, and I will make this city a byword for cursing among every nation on earth.'"

7 Jeremiah said all this in the LORD's house, and the priests and prophets and all the people heard him.

8 As soon as Jeremiah had finished saying everything the LORD had commanded him to tell all the people, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!

9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant?" And all the people crowded round Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

10 When the officials of Judah heard about this, they went up from the king's palace to the house of the LORD and took their seats at the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD's house.

11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, "This man deserves the death sentence, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears."

12 Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people, "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard.

13 Now reform your ways and your deeds and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD

will relent of the disaster He has pronounced against you.

14 As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever seems good and right to you.

15 But be in no doubt: if you kill me, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves, on this city and on all who live here, because it really was the LORD who sent me to you to say every word you have heard."

16 Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve the death sentence, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God."

17 Some of the elders of the land stood up and said to the whole assembly of the people,

18 "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. He told all the people of Judah, 'This is what the LORD of Armies says: Zion will be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, and the temple mount a wooded height.'[2]

19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah or anyone in Judah put him to death? Did Hezekiah not fear the LORD and seek His favour, so that the LORD relented of the disaster He had pronounced against them? We are about to bring a great disaster on ourselves!"

20 There was another man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city and this land just as Jeremiah did.

21 When King Jehoiakim, all his warriors and all the officials heard his words, the king sought to put him to death. But Uriah heard of it and was afraid, and he fled to Egypt.

22 Then King Jehoiakim sent men to Egypt: Elnathan son of Achbor and some others with him.

23 They brought Uriah out of Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim, who had him struck down with the sword and his body thrown into the burial place of the common people.

24 But Ahikam son of Shaphan protected Jeremiah, so that he was not handed over to the people to be put to death.[3]

1 About 609 BC. The temple sermon of chapter 7 was probably given on this occasion.

2 Micah 3:12.

3 Ahikam was one of Josiah's officials (2 Kings 22:12) and the father of Gedaliah (40:5).

Chapter 27

Jeremiah 27 tells how, early in Zedekiah's reign, the LORD told Jeremiah to make a yoke of straps and bars and wear it on his neck. He sent word by the envoys who had come to Zedekiah to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon: the LORD, who made the earth, has given all these lands to His servant Nebuchadnezzar, and any nation that will not bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon will be punished with sword, famine and plague. They must not listen to their prophets, diviners and sorcerers who say otherwise. Jeremiah told Zedekiah and the priests the same: serve the king of Babylon and live. The temple vessels that are left will also be taken to Babylon until the day the LORD brings them back.

1 Early in the reign of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD.[1]

2 This is what the LORD said to me: Make yourself a yoke of straps and bars and put it on your neck.

3 Then send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre and the king of Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.

4 Give them this message for their masters: This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Tell your masters this:

5 By My great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and the people and animals on it, and I give it to whomever I see fit.

6 Now I have given all these lands into the hand of My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I have even given him the wild animals to serve him.

7 Every nation will be subject to him, and to his son and grandson after him, until his own country's time is up; then it will be his turn to be enslaved by many nations and mighty kings.

8 But if any nation or kingdom will not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and put its neck under his yoke, I will punish that nation with sword, famine and plague, declares the LORD, until I have finished it off by his hand.

9 So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your fortune-tellers or your sorcerers who say to you, “You will not serve the king of Babylon.”

10 They are prophesying a lie to you, which will only drive you far from your land; I will banish you, and you will perish.

11 But the nation that bows its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will leave in its own land to farm it and live there, declares the LORD.

12 I said the same thing to Zedekiah king of Judah: “Bow your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon; serve him and his people, and you will live.

13 Why should you and your people die by the sword, famine and plague, as the LORD has threatened any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

14 Do not listen to the words of the prophets who say to you, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon,’ for they are prophesying a lie to you.

15 ‘I have not sent them,’ declares the LORD. ‘They are prophesying falsely in My name, so that I will banish you and you will perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you.’”

16 Then I said to the priests and all this people, “This is what the LORD says: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, ‘The vessels of the LORD’s house will very soon be brought back from Babylon.’ They are prophesying a lie to you.

17 Pay no attention to them. Submit to Babylon’s king and you will stay alive. Why let this city be reduced to rubble?

18 If they are prophets and the word of the LORD is with them, let them plead with the LORD of Armies that the vessels still left in the house of the LORD, in the palace of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem may not go to Babylon.

19 For this is what the LORD of Armies says about the pillars, the bronze Sea, the stands and the other vessels left in this city,[2]

20 which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take when he carried Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem:

21 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says about the vessels left in the house of the LORD, in the palace of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem:

22 They will be carried to Babylon, and there they will stay until the day I come for them, declares the LORD. Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.”

1 Most Hebrew manuscripts read ‘Jehoiakim’, but the chapter itself (27:3, 12, 20) and 28:1 show that Zedekiah is meant, as in a few manuscripts and the Syriac.

2 The bronze pillars, the great basin called the Sea and the wheeled stands made for Solomon’s temple; see 1 Kings 7:15–39 and 52:17.

Chapter 28

Jeremiah 28 records a confrontation in the temple in the fifth month of Zedekiah’s fourth year. The prophet Hananiah declares that within two years the LORD will smash the yoke of the king of Babylon and bring back the temple vessels, Jeconiah and the exiles. Jeremiah replies, “Amen! May the LORD do so!”, but reminds him that a prophet who prophesies peace is recognised only when his word comes true. Hananiah breaks the yoke from Jeremiah’s neck. Then the LORD sends Jeremiah to tell him that he has broken wooden bars but made iron ones in their place, for the LORD has put an iron yoke on all these nations. Because Hananiah made the people trust a lie, he will die that year; and in the seventh month he died.

1 In the fifth month of that same year, the fourth year, early in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and all the people:[1]

2 “This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I have smashed the yoke that the king of Babylon laid on you.

3 Before two full years have passed, I will return to this place every article from the LORD’s house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took away to Babylon.

4 I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, declares the LORD, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.”

5 Then the prophet Jeremiah answered the prophet
Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the
people standing in the house of the LORD.

6 The prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the
LORD do so! May the LORD fulfil the words you
have prophesied and bring back the vessels of the
LORD’s house and all the exiles from Babylon to
this place.

7 Nevertheless, hear what I now have to say to you
and to all the people listening:

8 The prophets who came before you and me from
ancient times prophesied war, disaster and plague
against many lands and great kingdoms.

9 As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when
his word comes true, then it will be known that
the LORD has truly sent him.”

10 Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke off the
neck of the prophet Jeremiah and broke it.

11 And Hananiah said in the presence of all the
people, “This is what the LORD says: In the same
way I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king
of Babylon off the neck of all the nations within
two years.” At this, the prophet Jeremiah went on
his way.

12 Some time after the prophet Hananiah had
broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet
Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to
Jeremiah:

13 “Go and tell Hananiah, ‘This is what the LORD
says: You have broken wooden bars, but in their
place you have made bars of iron.

14 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says: I have put an iron yoke on the neck of
all these nations, to make them serve
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will
serve him. I have even given him the wild
animals.’”

15 Then the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet
Hananiah, “Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not
sent you, and you have made this people trust in a
lie.

16 Therefore this is what the LORD says: I am
going to send you off the face of the earth. This
year you will die, because you have preached
rebellion against the LORD.”[2]

17 In the seventh month of that same year the
prophet Hananiah died.

1 594 BC.

2 ‘Send you off’ plays on ‘the LORD has not sent you’ in 28:15. See Deuteronomy 13:5; 18:20.

Chapter 29

Jeremiah 29 is the letter Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the elders, priests, prophets and people Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon with King Jeconiah. They are to build houses, plant gardens, marry and have children, and seek the welfare of the city where they are exiled, for in its welfare they will find their own. They must not believe the prophets who say the exile will be short: when seventy years are complete for Babylon, the LORD will bring them back, for He has plans for their welfare, to give them a future to hope for. When they seek Him with all their heart, He will be found. Those left in Jerusalem will be like rotten figs, and the false prophets Ahab and Zedekiah will be roasted in the fire by the king of Babylon. Shemaiah, who wrote demanding that Jeremiah be put in the stocks, will have no descendant to see the good the LORD will do.

1 This is the text of the letter Jeremiah the prophet
sent from Jerusalem to those elders who remained
among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets
and the whole people whom Nebuchadnezzar had
deported from Jerusalem to Babylon.

2 This was after King Jeconiah, the queen mother,
the court officials, the leaders of Judah and
Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had left
Jerusalem.[1]

3 He sent it by Elasah son of Shaphan and
Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of
Judah sent to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It
said:

4 “This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says to all the exiles whom I sent into exile
from Jerusalem to Babylon:

5 Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and
eat what they produce.

6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; find
wives for your sons and give your daughters in
marriage, so that they too have sons and
daughters. Increase in number there; do not
dwindle away.

7 Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your own.[2]

8 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to dream.

9 They are prophesying falsely to you in My name; I did not send them, declares the LORD.

10 For this is what the LORD says: When seventy years are complete for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil My good promise to bring you back to this place.

11 For I know what I have in mind for you, declares the LORD: plans for your welfare and not for disaster, to give you a future to hope for.

12 Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

13 When you look for Me, you will find Me, if you seek Me with your whole heart.

14 I will let you find Me, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

15 You say, 'The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon.'

16 But this is what the LORD says about the king who sits on David's throne and all the people who live in this city, your brothers who did not go with you into exile:

17 This is what the LORD of Armies says: I am sending against them the sword, famine and plague, and I will make them like rotten figs that are too bad to eat.

18 I will pursue them with the sword, famine and plague and make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, a curse and an object of horror, scorn and reproach among all the nations where I have driven them,

19 because they have not listened to My words, declares the LORD, which I sent to them again and again through My servants the prophets. And you exiles have not listened either, declares the LORD.

20 So hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon.

21 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying lies to you in My name: I will hand them over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will put them to death before your eyes.

22 Because of them, all the exiles from Judah in Babylon will use this curse: 'May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.'[3]

23 For they have done outrageous things in Israel; they have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives and spoken lies in My name, which I did not command them. I am the One who knows, and I am a witness, declares the LORD."

24 To Shemaiah the Nehelamite you are to say:

25 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: You sent letters in your own name to all the people in Jerusalem, to Zephaniah son of Maaseiah the priest and to all the priests, saying,

26 "The LORD has made you priest in place of Jehoiada the priest, to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to put any madman who acts like a prophet into the stocks and the iron collar.

27 So why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, who is acting the prophet among you?

28 For he has sent this message to us in Babylon: 'It will be a long time. Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce.'"

29 Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet.

30 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

31 Send this message to all the exiles: This is what the LORD says about Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, though I did not send him, and has made you trust in a lie,

32 therefore this is what the LORD says: I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants. He will have no one left among this people, nor will he see the good I will do for My people, declares the LORD, because he has preached rebellion against the LORD.

1 In 597 BC; see 2 Kings 24:12–16.

2 'Welfare' is shalom, 'peace', used three times in this verse.

3 'Curse' (qelalah) sounds like 'roasted' (qalam).

Chapter 30

Jeremiah 30 begins the Book of Consolation (chapters 30–33). The LORD tells Jeremiah to write in a book all the words He has spoken, for the days are coming when He will restore the fortunes of Israel and Judah. A time of terror is coming, a time of distress for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it; the LORD will break the yoke from their neck, and they will serve the LORD and David their king. Jacob need not fear, for the LORD will save him from far away; He will discipline him justly but not make a full end of him. Zion's wound seems incurable, yet the LORD will heal it. The city will be rebuilt on its mound, their ruler will come from among them, and "You will be a people belonging to Me, and I will be God to you."

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

2 This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.

3 For the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and bring them back to the land I gave their fathers, and they will possess it.

4 These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah:

5 This is what the LORD says: We have heard a cry of panic, of terror and not of peace.

6 Ask now and see: can a man give birth? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his belly like a woman in labour, and every face turned deathly pale?

7 Alas! That day will be great, there will be none like it. It will be a time of distress for Jacob, yet he will be saved out of it.

8 On that day, declares the LORD of Armies, I will break his yoke off your neck and snap your bonds, and foreigners will no longer enslave them.

9 Instead they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.[1]

10 So do not be afraid, Jacob My servant, declares the LORD; do not be dismayed, Israel. For I will save you from far away, and your descendants from the land of their captivity. Jacob will return and have quiet and ease, with no one to make him afraid.

11 For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD. I will make a full end of all the nations among which I scattered you, but I will not make a full end of you. I will discipline you justly, and I will by no means leave you unpunished.

12 For this is what the LORD says: Your injury is incurable; your wound is beyond healing.

13 There is no one to plead your cause, no remedy for your sore, no healing for you.

14 All your lovers have forgotten you; they do not care about you. For I have struck you as an enemy would, with the punishment of the cruel, because your guilt is great and your sins are many.

15 Why do you cry out over your injury, your incurable pain? Because your guilt is great and your sins are many, I have done these things to you.

16 But all who devour you will be devoured, and all your enemies, every one of them, will go into captivity. Those who plunder you will be plundered, and all who prey on you I will make prey.

17 For I will restore your health and heal your wounds, declares the LORD, because they have called you an outcast: "That is Zion, whom nobody cares for."

18 This is what the LORD says: I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings. The city will be rebuilt on its mound, and the palace will stand in its proper place.

19 From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of celebration. I will multiply them, and they will not decrease; I will bring them honour, and they will not be disdained.

20 Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before Me; I will punish all who oppress them.

21 Their leader will be one of their own; their ruler will come from among them. I will bring him near, and he will approach Me, for who would dare of himself to approach Me? declares the LORD.

22 You will be a people belonging to Me, and I will be God to you.

23 Look, the storm of the LORD has burst out in fury, a driving storm swirling down on the heads of the wicked.

24 The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has fully carried out the purposes of His heart. In the last days you will understand this.[2]

1 The promised King from David's line; compare 23:5 and Ezekiel 34:23–24.

2 30:23–24 repeat 23:19–20.

Chapter 31

Jeremiah 31 continues the Book of Consolation. The LORD has loved Israel with a love that has no end, and He will rebuild the virgin Israel; she will again take up her tambourines, and watchmen will call, "Come, let us go up to Zion." He will gather the blind and lame from the ends of the earth and lead them by streams of water, for He is Israel's Father. Rachel weeps in Ramah for her children, but the LORD tells her to stop weeping, for they will come back. Ephraim repents, and the LORD's heart yearns for him. The days are coming when no one will say, "The fathers ate sour grapes," and when the LORD will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah, writing His law on their hearts and remembering their sin no more. Israel will last as long as the sun, moon and stars, and Jerusalem will be rebuilt, holy to the LORD.

1 At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they will be My people.

2 This is what the LORD says: The people who survived the sword found favour in the wilderness; Israel went to find its rest.

3 The LORD appeared to me from far away: I have loved you with a love that has no end; so I have drawn you to Me with loyal kindness.[1]

4 Again I will build you, and you will be rebuilt, virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out in the dances of those who celebrate.

5 Once more you will set out vines on Samaria's hills; those who plant them will live to enjoy their harvest.

6 For there will be a day when watchmen will call out on the hills of Ephraim, "Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God."

7 For this is what the LORD says: Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the chief of the nations. Proclaim, give praise and say, "LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!"

8 I am bringing them from the land of the north and gathering them from the far ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and the one in labour, together; a great company will return here.

9 They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, for I am Israel's Father, and Ephraim is My firstborn.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, you nations, and announce it in the distant coastlands: He who scattered Israel will gather him and watch over him as a shepherd watches his flock.

11 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of one stronger than he.

12 They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will be radiant over the LORD's goodness, over the grain, the new wine and the oil, over the young of the flocks and herds. Their life will be like a well-watered garden, and they will never languish again.

13 Then young women will dance for joy, and young men and old together. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.

14 I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and My people will be filled with My goodness, declares the LORD.

15 This is what the LORD says: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.[2]

16 This is what the LORD says: Hold back your weeping and dry your tears, for your labour will have its reward, declares the LORD; your children will return from the enemy's country.

17 So there is hope for your future, declares the LORD; your children will come back to their own territory.

18 I have surely heard Ephraim grieving: "You disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf. Bring me back, so that I may come back, for You are the LORD my God.

19 After I turned away, I repented; after I came to understand, I struck my thigh in grief. I was ashamed and humiliated, because I bore the disgrace of my youth."

20 Is Ephraim My dear son, the child I delight in? For whenever I speak against him, I still remember him. So My heart yearns for him; I will surely have compassion on him, declares the LORD.

21 Set up road markers for yourself; put up signposts. Pay attention to the highway, the road you travelled. Come back, virgin Israel; come back to these towns of yours.

22 How long will you wander, faithless daughter? For the LORD has created something new on earth: a woman will surround a man.[3]

23 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: When I restore their fortunes, people in the land of Judah and its towns will once again use these words: “The LORD bless you, dwelling of righteousness, holy mountain!”

24 Judah and all its towns will live there together, farmers and those who move about with their flocks.

25 For I will refresh the weary soul and satisfy everyone who languishes.

26 At this I woke up and looked around, and my sleep had been pleasant to me.

27 The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will plant the land of Israel and of Judah with a fresh crop of people and of livestock.

28 Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD.

29 In those days people will no longer say, “The fathers ate sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.”

30 Instead, each will die for his own iniquity; whoever eats sour grapes, his own teeth will be set on edge.

31 Look, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,[4]

32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was a husband to them, declares the LORD.[5]

33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.[6]

34 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour and each one his brother, saying, “Know the LORD”, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

35 This is what the LORD says, He who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD of Armies is His name:

36 Only if this fixed order departs from before Me, declares the LORD, will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before Me.

37 This is what the LORD says: Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel for all they have done, declares the LORD.

38 The days are coming, declares the LORD, when this city will be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

39 The measuring line will stretch out from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah.

40 The whole valley of the corpses and the ashes, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley as far as the corner of the Horse Gate towards the east, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be uprooted or torn down.

1 ‘Loyal kindness’ translates hesed, the LORD’s steadfast covenant love.

2 Matthew 2:18 quotes this verse. Ramah, north of Jerusalem, was near Rachel’s tomb, and the exiles were assembled there (40:1).

3 The meaning of this saying is uncertain. It may mean that Israel, the woman, will embrace the LORD, or that the weak will protect the strong.

4 31:31–34 are quoted in Hebrews 8:8–12, and 31:33–34 in Hebrews 10:16–17. Jesus speaks of the new covenant in His blood at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20).

5 ‘Though I was a husband to them’: Hebrews 8:9 follows the Greek translation, ‘and so I showed no concern for them’.

6 Hebrew ‘within them’; Hebrews 8:10 has ‘into their minds’, following the Greek.

Chapter 32

Jeremiah 32 is set in the tenth year of Zedekiah, while Babylon besieges Jerusalem and Jeremiah is confined in the courtyard of the guard. At the LORD's word, Jeremiah buys his cousin Hanamel's field at Anathoth, weighing out seventeen shekels of silver, signing and sealing the deed before witnesses and giving it to Baruch to store in a clay jar, for houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land. Jeremiah prays to the Lord GOD, for whom nothing is too hard, yet wonders why he should buy a field when the city is being handed over. The LORD answers that He is the God of all flesh: He will give the city to the Chaldeans because of its idolatry, but He will gather His people again, make an everlasting covenant with them, and plant them in the land with all His heart and soul.

1 In the tenth year of Zedekiah's reign over Judah,
which was Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year, this
word came to Jeremiah from the LORD.[1]

2 At that time the army of the king of Babylon was
besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet
was confined in the courtyard of the guard in the
palace of the king of Judah.

3 Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him
there, saying, "Why do you prophesy as you do?
You say, 'This is what the LORD says: I am going
to give this city into the hand of the king of
Babylon, and he will capture it.

4 Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape from the
Chaldeans; he will certainly be handed over to the
king of Babylon and will speak with him face to
face and see him eye to eye.

5 He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he
will stay until I attend to him, declares the LORD.
If you fight against the Chaldeans, you will not
succeed.'"

6 Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to
me:

7 'Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to
come to you and say, "Buy my field at Anathoth,
for as nearest relative you have the right to
redeem it by buying it."'[2]

8 Then, just as the LORD had said, my cousin
Hanamel came to me in the courtyard of the guard
and said, 'Buy my field at Anathoth in the land of
Benjamin, for the right of possession and
redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I
knew that this was the word of the LORD.

9 So I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin
Hanamel and weighed out the silver for him,
seventeen shekels of silver.[3]

10 I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed
and weighed the silver on the scales.

11 Then I took the deed of purchase, the sealed
copy containing the terms and conditions, and the
open copy,

12 and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch son
of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my
cousin Hanamel, of the witnesses who had signed
the deed and of all the Judeans sitting in the
courtyard of the guard.

13 In their presence I instructed Baruch,

14 'This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says: Take these documents, both the
sealed and the open copies of this deed of
purchase, and put them in a clay jar so that they
will last a long time.

15 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will
again be bought in this land.'

16 After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch
son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD:

17 'Ah, Lord GOD! You made the heavens and the
earth by Your great power and outstretched arm.
Nothing is too hard for You.

18 You show steadfast love to thousands but repay
the iniquity of fathers into the laps of their
children after them. Great and mighty God, whose
name is the LORD of Armies,

19 great in counsel and mighty in deed, Your eyes
are open to all the ways of mankind, to reward
each according to his ways and the fruit of his
deeds.

20 You performed signs and wonders in the land of
Egypt and have continued them to this day, both in
Israel and among mankind, and You have made a
name for Yourself, as it is today.

21 With miraculous signs and marvels, with a
mighty hand and an arm stretched out, and with
deeds that struck terror, You led Your people
Israel out of Egypt.

22 You gave them this land You had promised on
oath to their ancestors, a land overflowing with
milk and honey.

23 They came in and took possession of it, but they
did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law; they
did nothing of what You commanded them to do.
So You have brought all this disaster on them.

24 Look, the siege ramps have reached the city to
take it, and because of the sword, famine and
plague the city will be handed over to the
Chaldeans who are attacking it. What You said has
happened, as You now see.

25 Yet You, Lord GOD, have said to me, “Buy the
field for silver and have it witnessed,” though the
city is being handed over to the Chaldeans.’”

26 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

27 Look, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is
anything too hard for Me?

28 Therefore this is what the LORD says: I am
going to hand this city over to the Chaldeans and
to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will
capture it.

29 The Chaldeans who are attacking this city will
come in, set it on fire and burn it down, with the
houses on whose roofs the people provoked Me to
anger by burning incense to Baal and pouring out
drink offerings to other gods.

30 For the people of Israel and Judah have done
nothing but evil in My sight from their youth; the
people of Israel have done nothing but provoke
Me to anger with the work of their hands,
declares the LORD.

31 This city has aroused My anger and fury from
the day it was built until now, so that I must
remove it from My sight,

32 because of all the evil the people of Israel and
Judah have done to provoke Me, they, their kings
and officials, their priests and prophets, the
people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

33 They have turned their backs to Me and not
their faces. Though I taught them again and again,
they would not listen or accept correction.

34 They set up their detestable idols in the house
that bears My name and defiled it.

35 They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of
Ben-hinnom to make their sons and daughters
pass through the fire to Molech, something I did
not command them, nor did it enter My mind that
they should do this abomination and make Judah
sin.

36 Now therefore this is what the LORD, the God of
Israel, says about this city, of which you say, “It
will be handed over to the king of Babylon by
sword, famine and plague”:

37 I will surely gather them from all the countries
where I have driven them in My anger, fury and
great wrath. I will bring them back to this place
and let them live in safety.

38 They will be My people, and I will be their God.

39 I will give them a single heart and a single path,
to revere Me for all time, so that it will go well
with them and with their children after them.

40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I
will never turn away from doing them good, and I
will put the fear of Me in their hearts, so that they
will never turn away from Me.

41 I will rejoice in doing them good and will
faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart
and all My soul.

42 For this is what the LORD says: Just as I have
brought all this great disaster on this people, so I
will bring on them all the good I promise them.

43 Fields will again be bought in this land of which
you say, “It is a desolation, without people or
animals; it has been handed over to the
Chaldeans.”

44 Fields will be bought for silver, and deeds will be
signed, sealed and witnessed in the land of
Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, in the
towns of Judah, of the hill country, of the lowlands
and of the Negev, for I will restore their fortunes,
declares the LORD.

1 587 BC, the year before Jerusalem fell.

2 See Leviticus 25:25–28; land was to be kept within the family.

3 About 200 grams (7 ounces).

Chapter 33

Jeremiah 33 brings a second word to Jeremiah while he is still confined in the courtyard of the guard. The LORD, who made the earth, invites him to call, and He will tell him great and hidden things. The houses of Jerusalem torn down for the siege will be filled with corpses, but the LORD will heal the city, restore Judah and Israel, cleanse them from all their guilt and forgive them. Once more the voices of bride and bridegroom will be heard, and the songs of those bringing thank offerings: "Give thanks to the LORD of Armies, for the LORD is good." Shepherds will again count their flocks. The LORD will make a righteous Branch spring up for David, and Jerusalem will be called "The LORD Our Righteousness." His covenant with David and with the Levitical priests is as sure as His covenant with day and night.

1 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time while he was still confined in the courtyard of the guard:

2 This is what the LORD says, He who made the earth, the LORD who formed it to establish it; the LORD is His name:[1]

3 Call to Me, and I will answer you; I will tell you great things, hidden things you have not known.

4 For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says about the houses of this city and the palaces of the kings of Judah that have been torn down to make defences against the siege ramps and the sword:

5 They are coming to fight the Chaldeans, only to fill the houses with the corpses of the men I will strike down in My anger and fury. I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness.

6 Yet I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth.

7 I will restore the fortunes of Judah and Israel and rebuild them as they were at first.

8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against Me and forgive all their guilt in sinning and rebelling against Me.

9 This city will bring Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth that hear of all the good I do for it. They will tremble in awe at all the good and all the peace I provide for it.

10 This is what the LORD says: You say of this place, "It is a ruin, without people or animals." Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without people, inhabitants or animals, there will be heard once more

11 the sound of joy and gladness, the voices of bridegroom and bride, and the voices of those who say, "Give thanks to the LORD of Armies, for the LORD is good; His loyal kindness endures for ever!" as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were at first, says the LORD.

12 This is what the LORD of Armies says: In this place, now a ruin without people or animals, and in all its towns, there will again be pastures where shepherds rest their flocks.

13 In the towns of the hill country, the lowlands and the Negev, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah, flocks will again pass under the hand of the one who counts them, says the LORD.

14 The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfil the good promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

15 In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch spring up for David, and He will do what is just and right in the land.[2]

16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD Our Righteousness."

17 For this is what the LORD says: There will always be a descendant of David seated on the throne of Israel's house,

18 and the Levitical priests will never lack a man to stand before Me to offer burnt offerings, burn grain offerings and present sacrifices continually.

19 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

20 This is what the LORD says: If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time,

21 then My covenant with My servant David may also be broken, so that he will have no son to reign on his throne, and My covenant with the Levitical priests who minister to Me.

22 As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of My servant David and the Levites who minister to Me.

23 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

24 Have you not noticed what this people is saying: “The LORD has rejected the two families He chose”? So they despise My people and no longer regard them as a nation.[3]

25 This is what the LORD says: If I have not established My covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth,

26 then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and of My servant David, and not choose any of his descendants to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them.

1 Hebrew ‘who made it’; the Greek translation reads ‘who made the earth’.

2 33:14–26 are not in the Greek translation. Compare 23:5–6.

3 The two families are Israel and Judah, or perhaps the royal and priestly lines of 33:17–18.

Chapter 34

Jeremiah 34 records two messages during the siege. While Nebuchadnezzar’s army fights against Jerusalem, Lachish and Azekah, Jeremiah tells Zedekiah that the city will be burned and he will see the king of Babylon face to face, yet he will die in peace and be mourned as a king. Then Zedekiah and the people make a covenant to set free their Hebrew slaves, but afterwards take them back. The LORD reminds them that He commanded the release of Hebrew slaves after six years, and declares that since they have not proclaimed liberty, He proclaims a “liberty” for them, to the sword, plague and famine. Those who walked between the halves of the calf will be handed over to their enemies, and the Babylonian army, which has withdrawn, will return and burn the city.

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, while Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, with all the kingdoms and peoples of the lands under his rule, were fighting against Jerusalem and all its towns:

2 “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Go to Zedekiah king of Judah and give him this message: ‘This is what the LORD says: I am about to give this city into the power of Babylon’s king, and he will set it on fire.

3 You will not escape from his hand, but will surely be captured and handed over to him. You will see the king of Babylon eye to eye, and he will speak with you face to face, and you will go to Babylon.

4 Yet hear the word of the LORD, Zedekiah king of Judah. This is what the LORD says about you: You will not die by the sword.

5 You will die in peace. As spices were burned for your fathers, the former kings who came before you, so people will burn spices for you and lament, “Alas, master!” For I Myself have spoken this word, declares the LORD.’”

6 Jeremiah the prophet delivered this whole message to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem,

7 while the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against the towns of Judah that were left, Lachish and Azekah, for these were the only fortified cities left in Judah.[1]

8 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim liberty to them,

9 that everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one would keep a fellow Judean in slavery.

10 All the officials and all the people who entered into the covenant agreed to set free their male and female slaves and no longer keep them as slaves. They obeyed and set them free.

11 But afterwards they changed their minds and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and forced them to become slaves again.

12 So the LORD’s word came to Jeremiah:

13 “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. I said,

14 ‘At the end of seven years each of you must set free his fellow Hebrew who has sold himself to you. He is to serve you six years, and then you must let him go free.’ But your fathers did not listen to Me or pay attention.[2]

15 Recently you repented and did what is right in My sight, each of you proclaiming liberty to his neighbour, and you made a covenant before Me in the house that bears My name.

16 But then you turned round and profaned My
name; each of you took back the male and female
slaves you had set free to go wherever they
wished, and you forced them to become your
slaves again.

17 Therefore this is what the LORD says: You have
not obeyed Me by proclaiming liberty, each to his
brother and to his neighbour. So I am proclaiming
liberty for you, declares the LORD: liberty to the
sword, the plague and the famine. I will make you
a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

18 The men who have violated My covenant and not
kept the terms of the covenant they made before
Me, I will make like the calf they cut in two and
walked between its pieces,[3]

19 the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the court
officials, the priests and all the people of the land
who walked between the pieces of the calf.

20 I will hand them over to their enemies and to
those who seek their lives. Their corpses will be
food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the
earth.

21 I will hand Zedekiah king of Judah and his
officials over to their enemies, to those who seek
their lives, and to the army of the king of Babylon,
which has withdrawn from you.

22 I am going to give the command, declares the
LORD, and bring them back to this city. They will
fight against it, capture it and burn it down. I will
make the towns of Judah a desolation without
inhabitant."

1 Letters written on pottery found at Lachish come from these weeks; one says the signal fires of Azekah can no longer be seen.
2 See Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12.
3 Those making a covenant walked between the halves of a slaughtered animal, calling down its fate on themselves if they broke their word; compare Genesis 15:9–17.

Chapter 35

Jeremiah 35 goes back to the days of Jehoiakim. The LORD sends Jeremiah to bring the Rechabite family into a room in the temple and offer them wine. They refuse, because their ancestor Jonadab son of Rechab commanded them never to drink wine, build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards, but to live in tents; they have kept his command, coming into Jerusalem only to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies. The LORD contrasts their faithfulness with Judah's: the Rechabites obey a human ancestor, but Judah has not listened to the LORD, though He has spoken again and again. So disaster will come on Judah, but Jonadab will never lack a descendant to stand before the LORD.

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the
LORD in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king
of Judah:[1]

2 "Go to the Rechabite community, speak to them
and bring them into one of the side rooms of the
house of the LORD, and give them wine to drink."

3 So I brought Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, son of
Habazziniah, with his brothers and all his sons,
the whole Rechabite community,

4 into the house of the LORD, to the room of the
sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah, the man of God. It
was next to the room of the officials, above the
room of Maaseiah son of Shallum, the keeper of
the threshold.

5 Then I set before the Rechabites bowls full of
wine and some cups, and said to them, "Drink
some wine."

6 But they replied, "We do not drink wine, for our
forefather Jonadab son of Rechab commanded us,
'You and your descendants must never drink
wine.[2]

7 You must not build houses, sow seed or plant
vineyards, or own any of these. You must always
live in tents, so that you may live a long time in
the land where you are sojourners.'

8 We have obeyed everything our forefather
Jonadab son of Rechab commanded us. We have
never drunk wine, nor have our wives, our sons or
our daughters.

9 We have not built houses to live in, and we have
no vineyards, fields or seed.

10 We have lived in tents and fully obeyed
everything our forefather Jonadab commanded us.

11 But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon
invaded the land, we said, 'Come, let us go to
Jerusalem to escape the armies of the Chaldeans
and the Arameans.' So we have stayed in
Jerusalem."

12 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

13 "This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey My words? declares the LORD.

14 The words of Jonadab son of Rechab, who commanded his descendants not to drink wine, have been kept; to this day they do not drink it, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, and you have not listened to Me.

15 Again and again I sent you all My servants the prophets, urging you to turn from your evil ways, amend your deeds and not follow other gods to serve them, so that you might live in the land I gave to you and your fathers. But you did not pay attention or listen to Me.

16 The descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab have kept the command their forefather gave them, but this people has not listened to Me.'

17 Therefore this is what the LORD God of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem every disaster I have pronounced against them, because I spoke to them and they did not listen; I called to them and they did not answer."

18 Then Jeremiah said to the Rechabite community, "This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Because you have obeyed the command of your forefather Jonadab and kept all his instructions and done everything he commanded you,

19 therefore this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Jonadab son of Rechab will never lack a man to stand before Me."

1 About 599 BC, when Babylonian and Aramean raiders were attacking Judah (2 Kings 24:2).
2 Jonadab helped Jehu stamp out Baal worship about 840 BC (2 Kings 10:15–23).

Chapter 36

Jeremiah 36 tells how, in Jehoiakim's fourth year, the LORD told Jeremiah to write on a scroll all the words He had spoken to him, in the hope that Judah would turn from its evil. Jeremiah dictated them to Baruch, and because Jeremiah was barred from the temple, Baruch read the scroll there on a fast day. The officials heard it, told Baruch and Jeremiah to hide, and reported to the king. As Jehudi read the scroll to Jehoiakim beside the fire in his winter house, the king cut off each few columns with a scribe's knife and threw them into the fire, until the whole scroll was burned. The LORD told Jeremiah to write another scroll and declared that Jehoiakim would have no descendant on David's throne and his body would be thrown out. Baruch wrote the words again, with many more added.

1 This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD during the fourth year that Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king of Judah:[1]

2 "Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the nations, from the time I began speaking to you in the days of Josiah until today.

3 Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about all the disaster I intend to bring on them, each of them will turn from his evil way, and I will forgive their iniquity and their sin."

4 So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on a scroll.

5 Then Jeremiah told Baruch, "I am restricted; I cannot go into the house of the LORD.

6 So you go, and on a day of fasting read in the hearing of the people in the house of the LORD the words of the LORD that you wrote at my dictation. Read them also to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns.

7 Perhaps their plea will come before the LORD, and each of them will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and fury the LORD has pronounced against this people."

8 Baruch son of Neriah did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him; he read from the scroll the words of the LORD in the house of the LORD.

9 In the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, a fast before the LORD was proclaimed for all the people in Jerusalem and all who had come there from the towns of Judah.

10 Then, in the hearing of all the people, Baruch read Jeremiah's words from the scroll in the house of the LORD, in the room of Gemariah son of Shaphan the secretary, in the upper courtyard at

the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD's house.

11 When Micaiah son of Gemariah, son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the LORD from the scroll,

12 he went down to the secretary's room in the king's palace, where all the officials were sitting: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Achbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah and all the other officials.

13 Micaiah told them everything he had heard when Baruch read the scroll in the hearing of the people.

14 Then all the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, son of Shelemiah, son of Cushi, to tell Baruch, "Bring the scroll you read to the people, and come." So Baruch son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and went to them.

15 They said to him, "Sit down, please, and read it to us." So Baruch read it to them.

16 When they had heard all the words, they turned to one another in fear and said to Baruch, "We must report all these words to the king."

17 Then they asked Baruch, "Tell us, how did you come to write all this? Was it at his dictation?"

18 "Yes," Baruch replied, "he dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them in ink on the scroll."

19 Then the officials said to Baruch, "Go and hide, you and Jeremiah. Do not let anyone know where you are."

20 After they had put the scroll in the room of Elishama the secretary, they went to the king in the courtyard and reported everything to him.

21 The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama the secretary and read it to the king and all the officials standing beside him.

22 It was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house with a fire burning in the brazier in front of him.[2]

23 Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the fire in the brazier, until the whole scroll was consumed in the fire.

24 Neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words showed any fear or tore their clothes.

25 Even though Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.

26 Instead the king ordered Jerahmeel, the king's son, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them.

27 After the king had burned the scroll containing the words Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

28 "Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned.

29 And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah say, 'This is what the LORD says: You burned that scroll and asked why Jeremiah wrote on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and wipe out both people and animals from it.

30 Therefore this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his corpse will be thrown out to the heat by day and the frost by night.

31 I will call him, his family and his officials to account for their wrongdoing. Every calamity I warned them about I will bring down on them and on Jerusalem's citizens and Judah's people, for they refused to listen.'"

32 Jeremiah then took a fresh scroll and handed it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah. As Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote down everything that had been on the scroll King Jehoiakim had burned, and much more of the same kind was added.

1 605 BC; compare 25:1.

2 The ninth month, Kislev, is November–December.

Chapter 37

Jeremiah 37 tells how Zedekiah, made king by Nebuchadnezzar, did not listen to the LORD, yet sent to Jeremiah asking him to pray for them. When Pharaoh's army came out of Egypt, the Babylonians lifted the siege, but Jeremiah warned that Egypt's army would go home and the Chaldeans would return and burn the city; even if only wounded men were left in their tents, they would get up and burn it. When Jeremiah set out for the land of Benjamin to claim his share of property, he was arrested at the Benjamin Gate as a deserter, beaten and thrown into a dungeon. Zedekiah secretly asked him, "Is there any word from the LORD?" "There is," he replied: the king would be handed over to Babylon. At Jeremiah's plea, the king moved him to the courtyard of the guard and gave him a loaf of bread a day.

1 It was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon who placed Zedekiah son of Josiah on the throne of Judah, to rule instead of Coniah son of Jehoiakim.[1]

2 But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words the LORD spoke through Jeremiah the prophet.

3 Yet King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah son of Maaseiah the priest to Jeremiah the prophet with this message: "Please pray to the LORD our God for us."

4 At that time Jeremiah was still free to come and go among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison.

5 Meanwhile Pharaoh's forces had marched out of Egypt, and when news of it reached the Chaldeans besieging Jerusalem, they pulled back from the city.[2]

6 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet:

7 "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: This is what you are to tell the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of Me: Pharaoh's army, which has come out to help you, is about to go back to its own land, to Egypt.

8 Then the Chaldeans will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down.

9 This is what the LORD says: Do not deceive yourselves, saying, 'The Chaldeans will certainly leave us,' for they will not leave.

10 Even if you were to defeat the whole Chaldean army that is fighting against you, and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would get up and burn this city down."

11 When the Chaldean army had withdrawn from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's army,

12 Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to take possession of his share of property among the people there.

13 But when he reached the Benjamin Gate, the captain of the guard there, a man named Irijah son of Shelemiah, son of Hananiah, arrested Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "You are deserting to the Chaldeans!"

14 "That is a lie!" Jeremiah said. "I am not deserting to the Chaldeans." But Irijah would not listen to him; he arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials.

15 The officials were furious with Jeremiah; they had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary, which they had made into a prison.

16 So Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in the dungeon, and he remained there many days.

17 Then King Zedekiah sent for him and had him brought to the palace, where he asked him privately, "Is there any word from the LORD?" "There is," Jeremiah replied. "You will be handed over to the king of Babylon."

18 Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, "What wrong have I done to you, your servants or this people, that you have put me in prison?

19 Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, 'The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land'?

20 But now please listen, my lord the king. Let my plea come before you: do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the secretary, or I will die there."

21 So King Zedekiah gave orders, and they committed Jeremiah to the courtyard of the guard and gave him a loaf of bread every day from the bakers' street until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

1 In 597 BC; see 2 Kings 24:17.

2 Pharaoh Hophra (44:30), in 588 BC.

Chapter 38

Jeremiah 38 tells how four officials heard Jeremiah urging the people to surrender to the Chaldeans and live, and demanded his death for weakening the soldiers' morale. Zedekiah gave him into their hands, and they lowered him with ropes into a cistern where he sank into the mud. Ebed-melech the Cushite, a palace official, appealed to the king and, with thirty men, pulled Jeremiah out with ropes and old rags. Zedekiah then met Jeremiah secretly at the third entrance of the temple. Jeremiah told him that if he surrendered to the king of Babylon's officers he and his household would live and the city would not be burned; if not, the city would be burned and he would not escape. Zedekiah swore him to silence, and Jeremiah stayed in the courtyard of the guard until Jerusalem was captured.

1 Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal son of Shelemiah and Pashhur son of Malkijah heard what Jeremiah was telling all the people:

2 "This is what the LORD says: Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague, but whoever goes out to the Chaldeans will live; he will escape with his life as his only spoil, and he will live.

3 This is what the LORD says: This city will certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it."

4 Then the officials said to the king, "This man must be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, and all the people too, by saying such things to them. This man is not seeking the welfare of this people but their harm."

5 "He is in your hands," King Zedekiah replied, "for the king can do nothing against you."

6 So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard, lowering him down with ropes. There was no water in the cistern, only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud.

7 But Ebed-melech the Cushite, an official in the king's palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting at the Benjamin Gate,[1]

8 Ebed-melech went out of the palace and said to the king,

9 "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into the cistern, and he will die of hunger there, for there is no more bread in the city."

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Cushite, "Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies."

11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to a room under the treasury in the palace. He took some worn-out clothes and rags from there and let them down with ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern.

12 Ebed-melech the Cushite said to Jeremiah, "Put these old clothes and rags under your arms to pad the ropes." Jeremiah did so,

13 and they pulled him up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah stayed in the courtyard of the guard.

14 Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and had him brought to the third entrance of the house of the LORD. "I am going to ask you something," the king said to Jeremiah. "Do not hide anything from me."

15 Jeremiah answered Zedekiah, "If I give you an answer, you will have me killed, will you not? And if I advise you, you will pay no attention."

16 But King Zedekiah swore this oath secretly to Jeremiah: "As surely as the LORD lives, who has given us this life, I will not put you to death or hand you over to these men who seek your life."

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the LORD God of Armies, the God of Israel, says: If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down; you and your household will live.

18 But if you do not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be handed over to the Chaldeans and they will burn it down, and you yourself will not escape from them."

19 King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans, for the Chaldeans may hand me over to them and they will mistreat me."

20 "They will not hand you over," Jeremiah replied. "Obey the voice of the LORD in what I am telling

you, so that it may go well with you and your life may be spared.

21 But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has shown me:

22 All the women left in the palace of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon, and they will say to you, ‘Your trusted friends misled you and overcame you. Now that your feet are sunk in the mud, they have turned their backs on you.’

23 All your wives and children will be brought out to the Chaldeans, and you yourself will not escape from them; you will be seized by the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned down.”

24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Do not let anyone know about this conversation, or you will die.

25 If the officials hear that I have talked with you and come and say to you, ‘Tell us what you said to the king and what the king said to you; do not hide it from us, or we will put you to death,’

26 then tell them, ‘I was pleading with the king not to send me back to the house of Jonathan to die there.’”

27 All the officials did come to Jeremiah and question him, and he told them exactly what the king had instructed him to say. So they stopped questioning him, for no one had heard the conversation.

28 And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured.[2]

1 Ebed-melech means ‘servant of the king’. A Cushite came from the upper Nile region (modern Sudan).

2 The Hebrew adds ‘And this is what happened when Jerusalem was captured’, which introduces 39:1–14.

Chapter 39

Jeremiah 39 records the fall of Jerusalem. After a siege from Zedekiah’s ninth year to his eleventh, the city wall was breached, and Babylon’s officials took their seats in the Middle Gate. Zedekiah fled by night but was caught on the plains of Jericho and brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, who killed his sons before his eyes, blinded him and bound him for Babylon. The Chaldeans burned the palace and the houses and broke down the walls, and Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took the people into exile, leaving the poorest with vineyards and fields. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that Jeremiah be well treated, and he was entrusted to Gedaliah. Earlier, while Jeremiah was still confined, the LORD had promised Ebed-melech the Cushite that he would escape with his life because he had trusted in the LORD.

1 It was in the tenth month of Zedekiah’s ninth year as king of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched on Jerusalem with all his forces and laid siege to it.[1]

2 In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, on the ninth day of the fourth month, the city wall was breached.

3 Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took their seats in the Middle Gate: Nergal-sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-sarsechim the chief officer, Nergal-sharezer the chief adviser, and all the other officials of the king of Babylon.[2]

4 When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled. They left the city by night through the gate between the two walls near the king’s garden, and went in the direction of the Arabah.

5 But the Chaldean forces chased them and caught up with Zedekiah in the plains near Jericho. They captured him and brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where sentence was passed on him.

6 At Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered Zedekiah’s sons before his eyes; he also slaughtered all the nobles of Judah.

7 Then he put out Zedekiah’s eyes and bound him in bronze shackles to take him to Babylon.

8 The Chaldeans burned down the royal palace and the houses of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem.

9 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took into exile to Babylon the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to him, and the rest of the people who remained.

10 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people who owned nothing, and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields.

11 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard:

12 "Take him and look after him. Do him no harm, but do for him whatever he asks."

13 So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, Nebushazban the chief officer, Nergal-sharezer the chief adviser and all the senior officials of the king of Babylon

14 sent and had Jeremiah taken out of the courtyard of the guard. They entrusted him to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, to take him home. So he stayed among the people.[3]

15 While Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD had come to him:

16 "Go and tell Ebed-melech the Cushite, 'This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I am about to fulfil My words against this city for disaster and not for good. On that day they will come true before your eyes.

17 But I will rescue you on that day, declares the LORD; you will not be handed over to the men you fear.

18 I will certainly deliver you; you will not fall by the sword, but you will escape with your life, because you have trusted in Me, declares the LORD.'"

1 January 588 BC. Verses 1–10 tell more briefly what is told in 2 Kings 25:1–12 and Jeremiah 52:4–16.

2 The names and titles here are uncertain; 'Rab-saris' is translated 'chief officer' and 'Rab-mag' 'chief adviser'.

3 40:1–6 gives a fuller account of how Jeremiah came to stay with Gedaliah.

Chapter 40

Jeremiah 40 tells how Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah in chains among the captives at Ramah and set him free, telling him that the LORD his God had brought this disaster because the people had sinned. He gave Jeremiah the choice of coming to Babylon or staying, and Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor at Mizpah. The army commanders who were still in the open country came to Gedaliah, and he swore to them that if they settled down and served the king of Babylon it would go well with them. Judeans who had fled to Moab, Ammon and Edom came back and gathered a great harvest. But Johanan son of Kareah warned Gedaliah that Baalis king of the Ammonites had sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to kill him, and offered to kill Ishmael secretly. Gedaliah refused to believe it.

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had released him at Ramah. He had found him bound in chains among all the captives from Jerusalem and Judah who were being taken into exile to Babylon.

2 The captain of the guard took Jeremiah aside and said to him, "The LORD your God pronounced this disaster against this place,

3 and now the LORD has brought it about; He has done just as He said. All this has happened to you because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey His voice.

4 But today I am freeing you from the chains on your wrists. If you would like to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if you do not wish to come with me to Babylon, do not come. Look, the whole land lies before you; go wherever you think good and right."

5 Before Jeremiah had turned to go, Nebuzaradan added, "Go back to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the towns of Judah, and stay with him among the people, or go wherever you think right." Then the captain of the guard gave him provisions and a gift and let him go.[1]

6 Jeremiah therefore went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and lived with him among those who had been left behind in the land.

7 When all the army commanders and their men who were still in the open country heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam as governor of the land and had put him in charge of the men, women and children, the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile to Babylon,

8 they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of the Maacathite, together with their men.[2]

9 Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, swore an oath to them and their men. "Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans," he said. "Settle down in

the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you.

10 As for me, I will stay at Mizpah to represent you before the Chaldeans who come to us. But you are to gather wine, summer fruit and oil, store them in your jars and live in the towns you have taken over."

11 Likewise, when all the Judeans in Moab, among the Ammonites, in Edom and in all the other countries heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, over them,

12 all these Judeans came back from all the places where they had been scattered. They came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered a great abundance of wine and summer fruit.

13 Johanan son of Kareah and all the army commanders still in the open country came to Gedaliah at Mizpah

14 and said to him, "Do you not know that Baalis king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to take your life?" But Gedaliah son of Ahikam would not believe them.

15 Then Johanan son of Kareah spoke to Gedaliah privately at Mizpah: "Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah, and no one will know. Why should he take your life and cause all the Judeans who have gathered round you to be scattered and the remnant of Judah to perish?"

16 But Gedaliah son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah, "Do not do such a thing! What you are saying about Ishmael is a lie."

1 The first words of this verse in Hebrew are uncertain.

2 Compare 2 Kings 25:23.

Chapter 41

Jeremiah 41 tells how, in the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, of the royal line, came with ten men to Gedaliah at Mizpah and, while they were eating together, struck him down with the sword, along with the Judeans and the Chaldean soldiers there. The next day eighty pilgrims from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria came mourning with offerings for the house of the LORD; Ishmael lured them into the city and slaughtered them, sparing ten who promised him hidden stores of food, and threw the bodies into the cistern King Asa had made. He then took the rest of the people captive and set out for the Ammonites. Johanan son of Kareah and the commanders caught up with him at the great pool in Gibeon; the captives went over to Johanan, but Ishmael escaped with eight men. Fearing the Babylonians, Johanan led the survivors towards Egypt, stopping at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem.

1 In the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, who was of royal descent and one of the king's chief officers, came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. As they ate a meal together there at Mizpah,[1]

2 Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the ten men with him got up and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, with the sword, killing the man the king of Babylon had appointed governor of the land.

3 Ishmael also killed all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldean soldiers who were there.

4 On the day after Gedaliah's murder, before anyone knew of it,

5 eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria with their beards shaved, their clothes torn and their bodies gashed, bringing grain offerings and incense to the house of the LORD.[2]

6 Ishmael son of Nethaniah came out of Mizpah to meet them, weeping all the way. When he reached them he said, "Come and see Gedaliah son of Ahikam."

7 But as soon as they were inside the city, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the men with him slaughtered them and threw them into a cistern.

8 But ten of them said to Ishmael, "Do not kill us! We have stores of wheat and barley, oil and honey hidden in a field." So he held back and did not kill them with the others.

9 The cistern into which Ishmael threw all the bodies of the men he had killed because of Gedaliah was the one King Asa had made as part of his defence against Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain.[3]

10 Then Ishmael took captive all the rest of the people at Mizpah, the king's daughters and all the others left there, whom Nebuzaradan the captain

of the guard had put in the charge of Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael son of Nethaniah took them captive and set out to cross over to the Ammonites.

11 When Johanan son of Kareah and all the army commanders with him heard about all the crimes Ishmael son of Nethaniah had committed,

12 they took all their men and went to fight Ishmael son of Nethaniah. They caught up with him by the great pool in Gibeon.

13 When all the people Ishmael had with him saw Johanan son of Kareah and all the army commanders with him, they were glad.

14 All the people Ishmael had taken captive from Mizpah turned round and went over to Johanan son of Kareah.

15 Ishmael son of Nethaniah, however, got away from Johanan along with eight of his men and fled to the Ammonites.

16 Then Johanan son of Kareah and all the army commanders with him took all the survivors from Mizpah whom he had rescued from Ishmael son of Nethaniah after he had killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam: soldiers, women, children and court officials, whom he brought back from Gibeon.

17 They went on and stayed at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem, on their way to Egypt

18 to escape the Chaldeans. They were afraid of them because Ishmael son of Nethaniah had killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor of the land.

1 Probably the autumn of 586 BC, a few months after the fall of Jerusalem; compare 2 Kings 25:25.

2 Signs of mourning, probably for the temple. Though it had been burned, people still brought offerings to its site.

3 See 1 Kings 15:22.

Chapter 42

Jeremiah 42 tells how the commanders and all the people, from the least to the greatest, asked Jeremiah to pray to the LORD and tell them where to go, promising to obey whether His answer was good or bad. After ten days the word of the LORD came. If they stay in the land, He will build them up and not tear them down, for He relents of the disaster He brought on them; they need not fear the king of Babylon, for the LORD is with them. But if they insist on going to Egypt, where they think they will see no war and know no hunger, the sword and famine they fear will overtake them there, and none will survive. Jeremiah warns them that they deceived themselves when they sent him to the LORD, for they have not obeyed.

1 Then all the army commanders, including Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, came

2 to Jeremiah the prophet and said, “Please hear our plea and pray to the LORD your God for us, for all this remnant. For as you can see, though we were once many, only a few of us are left.

3 Pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do.”

4 “I have heard you,” Jeremiah the prophet replied. “I will pray to the LORD your God as you have asked, and I will tell you everything the LORD answers; I will keep nothing back from you.”

5 Then they said to Jeremiah, “May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with every word the LORD your God sends you to tell us.

6 Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it may go well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.”

7 Ten days later the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.

8 So he called Johanan son of Kareah and all the army commanders with him and all the people from the least to the greatest,

9 and said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says, to whom you sent me to present your plea:

10 If you will stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I relent of the disaster I have brought on you.

11 Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear; do not be afraid of him, declares the LORD, for I am with you to save you and rescue you from his hand.

12 I will show you compassion, and he will have compassion on you and let you return to your own

land.

13 But if you say, ‘We will not stay in this land,’ and
so disobey the voice of the LORD your God,

14 and if you say, ‘No, we will go to the land of
Egypt, where we will not see war or hear the
sound of the ram’s horn or be hungry for bread,
and we will live there,’

15 then hear the word of the LORD, remnant of
Judah. This is what the LORD of Armies, the God
of Israel, says: If you are determined to go to
Egypt and you go to live there,

16 then the sword you fear will overtake you there
in the land of Egypt, and the famine you dread will
follow you there to Egypt, and there you will die.

17 All the men who are determined to go to Egypt
to live there will die by the sword, famine and
plague. Not one of them will survive or escape the
disaster I will bring on them.

18 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says: As My anger and fury were poured
out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so My fury
will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt.
You will become an object of cursing and horror,
of condemnation and reproach, and you will never
see this place again.

19 The LORD has spoken to you, remnant of Judah:
Do not go to Egypt. Know for certain that I have
warned you today

20 that you have deceived yourselves. For you sent
me to the LORD your God, saying, ‘Pray to the
LORD our God for us, and tell us everything the
LORD our God says, and we will do it.’[1]

21 I have told you today, but you have not obeyed
the voice of the LORD your God in anything He
sent me to tell you.

22 So now know for certain that you will die by the
sword, famine and plague in the place where you
want to go to live.”

1 Or ‘you have made a fatal mistake’.

Chapter 43

Jeremiah 43 tells how Azariah son of Hoshaiah, Johanan son of Kareah and other arrogant men accused Jeremiah of lying and said Baruch had turned him against them so that they would be handed over to the Babylonians. Disobeying the LORD, they took the whole remnant of Judah, including the king’s daughters, Jeremiah and Baruch, and went to Egypt as far as Tahpanhes. There the LORD told Jeremiah to bury large stones in the clay of the pavement at the entrance of Pharaoh’s building, while the Judeans watched. Nebuchadnezzar would set his throne over those very stones, strike Egypt, burn the temples of its gods and wrap himself in the land as a shepherd wraps himself in his cloak.

1 When Jeremiah had finished telling all the people
all the words of the LORD their God, everything
the LORD their God had sent him to tell them,

2 Azariah son of Hoshaiah, Johanan son of Kareah
and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, “You
are lying! The LORD our God has not sent you to
say, ‘You must not go to Egypt to live there.’

3 Baruch son of Neriah is inciting you against us,
to hand us over to the Chaldeans so that they may
kill us or carry us into exile in Babylon.”

4 So Johanan son of Kareah, all the army
commanders and all the people disobeyed the
voice of the LORD to stay in the land of Judah.

5 Instead, Johanan son of Kareah and all the army
commanders took the whole remnant of Judah
who had come back to live in the land of Judah
from all the nations where they had been
scattered:

6 men, women and children, the princesses, and
every person Nebuzaradan the captain of the
guard had placed under Gedaliah son of Ahikam,
son of Shaphan; Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch
son of Neriah went too.

7 They went into the land of Egypt, for they did not
obey the voice of the LORD, and they came as far
as Tahpanhes.[1]

8 In Tahpanhes the word of the LORD came to
Jeremiah:

9 “Take some large stones in your hands and, while
the Judeans are watching, bury them in the clay of
the brick pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh’s
building in Tahpanhes.[2]

10 Then say to them, ‘This is what the LORD of
Armies, the God of Israel, says: I am going to send
for My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,
and I will set his throne over these stones I have

buried, and he will spread his royal canopy over them.

11 He will come and strike the land of Egypt,
bringing death to those destined for death,
captivity to those destined for captivity,
and the sword to those destined for the sword.

12 He will set fire to the temples of the gods of Egypt; he will burn them and take their gods captive. He will wrap himself in the land of Egypt as a shepherd wraps himself in his cloak, and he will leave there unharmed.

13 He will smash the sacred pillars of the temple of the sun in the land of Egypt and burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt.'"[3]

1 Tahpanhes was a frontier fortress in the eastern Nile Delta; see 2:16.

2 The meaning of the Hebrew words for 'clay' and 'brick pavement' is uncertain.

3 Hebrew 'Beth-shemesh', 'house of the sun', that is, Heliopolis, north of modern Cairo.

Chapter 44

Jeremiah 44 is the LORD's word to the Judeans living in Egypt at Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis and Pathros. They have seen the disaster He brought on Jerusalem because of its idolatry, yet they are provoking Him by burning incense to other gods in Egypt, and so none of them will escape. The men whose wives burned incense, and the women themselves, answer that they will go on burning incense to the Queen of Heaven, for when they did so they had plenty, and since they stopped they have lacked everything. Jeremiah replies that it was precisely their incense that the LORD remembered. Since they insist on keeping their vows, the LORD swears that His name will no longer be invoked by any Judean in Egypt; only a few will escape back to Judah, and as a sign He will hand Pharaoh Hophra over to his enemies.

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans living in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, Tahpanhes and Memphis and in the land of Pathros:[1]

2 "This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: You have seen all the disaster I brought on Jerusalem and all the towns of Judah. Today they lie in ruins, with no one living in them,

3 because of the evil they did to provoke Me to anger by going to burn incense and serve other gods that neither they nor you nor your fathers had known.

4 Again and again I sent you all My servants the prophets, saying, 'Do not do this detestable thing that I hate!'

5 But they did not listen or pay attention; they did not turn from their wickedness or stop burning incense to other gods.

6 So My fury and My anger were poured out and burned in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, and they became the desolate ruin they are today.

7 Now this is what the LORD God of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Why are you doing such great harm to yourselves, cutting off from Judah man and woman, child and infant, so that you leave yourselves no remnant?

8 Why do you anger Me with idols you have made, offering incense to other gods here in Egypt where you have come to settle? You will destroy yourselves and become a curse and a disgrace in the eyes of every nation on earth.

9 Have you forgotten all the evil done in Judah and in Jerusalem's streets by your forefathers, by Judah's kings and their wives, and by you and your own wives?

10 To this day they have not humbled themselves or shown reverence, nor have they walked in My law and My statutes, which I set before you and your fathers.

11 Therefore this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I am determined to bring disaster on you and to cut off all Judah.

12 I will take away the remnant of Judah who were determined to go to the land of Egypt to live there. They will all perish in the land of Egypt; they will fall by the sword or meet their end by famine. From the least to the greatest they will die by sword and famine, and they will become an object of cursing and horror, of condemnation and reproach.

13 I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt as I punished Jerusalem, with sword, famine and plague.

14 None of the remnant of Judah who have come to
live in the land of Egypt will escape or survive to
return to the land of Judah, though they long to go
back and live there. None will return except a few
fugitives."

15 Then all the men who knew that their wives
were burning incense to other gods, and all the
women standing by, a great assembly, and all the
people living in Pathros in the land of Egypt,
answered Jeremiah:

16 "We will not listen to the message you have
spoken to us in the name of the LORD!

17 Instead, we will do everything we have vowed:
we will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and
pour out drink offerings to her, as we and our
fathers, our kings and our officials did in the
towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. At
that time we had plenty of food and were well off
and saw no disaster.

18 But since we stopped burning incense to the
Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings
to her, we have lacked everything and have been
perishing by sword and famine."

19 And the women added, "When we burned
incense to the Queen of Heaven and poured out
drink offerings to her, was it without our
husbands' knowledge that we made cakes in her
image and poured out drink offerings to her?"[2]

20 Then Jeremiah said to all the people, the men
and the women and all who were answering him,

21 "As for the incense you burned in the towns of
Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, you and your
fathers, your kings and your officials and the
people of the land, did the LORD not remember it?
Did it not come into His mind?

22 When the LORD could no longer endure your
evil deeds and the abominations you committed,
your land became a ruin, an object of horror and
cursing, without inhabitant, as it is today.

23 It is because you burned incense and sinned
against the LORD, and did not obey the voice of
the LORD or walk in His law, His statutes and His
decrees, that this disaster has come upon you, as
it is today."

24 Then Jeremiah said to all the people, including
all the women, "Hear the word of the LORD, all
you people of Judah who are in the land of Egypt.

25 This is what the LORD of Armies, the God of
Israel, says: You and your wives have spoken with
your mouths and carried it out with your hands,
saying, 'We will certainly keep the vows we have
made to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and
pour out drink offerings to her.' Go ahead, then,
keep your vows! Carry out your vows!

26 But hear the word of the LORD, all Judah living
in the land of Egypt: I have sworn by My great
name, says the LORD, that My name will never
again be invoked by any man of Judah in all the
land of Egypt, saying, 'As the Lord GOD lives.'

27 I am watching over them for harm and not for
good. All the men of Judah in the land of Egypt
will perish by sword and famine until they are
wiped out.

28 Those who escape the sword and return from
the land of Egypt to the land of Judah will be very
few. Then the whole remnant of Judah who came
to live in the land of Egypt will know whose word
stands, Mine or theirs.

29 This will be the sign to you, declares the LORD,
that I will punish you in this place, so that you
may know that My words against you for harm will
surely stand.

30 This is what the LORD says: I am going to hand
Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt over to his
enemies, to those who seek his life, just as I
handed Zedekiah king of Judah over to
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy who
sought his life."[3]

1 Migdol and Tahpanhes were in the north-east of Egypt, Memphis near modern Cairo, and Pathros was Upper (southern) Egypt.

2 Under the law a husband could cancel his wife's vows (Numbers 30:6–15); the women claim their husbands approved.

3 Hophra (Apries) reigned 589–570 BC and was killed in a revolt.

Chapter 45

Jeremiah 45 is a short word to Baruch son of Neriah, given in the fourth year of Jehoiakim when Baruch wrote down Jeremiah's words on a scroll. Baruch had lamented that the LORD had added sorrow to his pain and he could find no rest. The LORD answers that He is tearing down what He built and uprooting what He planted throughout the land. Baruch should not seek great things for himself, for disaster is coming on all people; but wherever he goes, the LORD will let him escape with his life.

1 This is the message Jeremiah the prophet gave to Baruch son of Neriah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, when Baruch had written on a scroll the words Jeremiah dictated:[1]

2 "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch:

3 You said, 'Woe is me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain. I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.'

4 The LORD has told me to say to you: This is what the LORD says: What I have built I am tearing down, and what I have planted I am uprooting, the whole land.

5 And you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them. For I am bringing disaster on all flesh, declares the LORD, but I will let you escape with your life wherever you go."

1 605 BC; see 36:1–8.

Chapter 46

Jeremiah 46 begins the oracles concerning the nations (chapters 46–51). The first concerns Egypt's army, defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish on the Euphrates in Jehoiakim's fourth year. Egypt rose like the Nile in flood, boasting that it would cover the earth, but the day belongs to the Lord GOD of Armies, a day of vengeance; there is no healing for the virgin daughter of Egypt. A second oracle foretells Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt itself: Pharaoh is only a noise who missed his chance, the mercenaries flee like calves, and Egypt is a beautiful heifer stung by a gadfly from the north. The LORD will punish Amon of Thebes, Pharaoh and those who trust in him, though later Egypt will be inhabited again. Jacob, His servant, need not fear, for the LORD is with him.

1 This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations.

2 Concerning Egypt, about the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt, which was at Carchemish on the River Euphrates and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah:[1]

3 Get your shields ready, both small and large, and advance for battle!

4 Harness the horses; mount the steeds! Take your positions with helmets on! Polish your spears; put on your armour!

5 What do I see? They are terrified; they are falling back. Their warriors are beaten down; they flee headlong without looking back. Terror is on every side, declares the LORD.

6 The swift cannot flee, nor the warrior escape. In the north, by the River Euphrates, they stumble and fall.

7 Who is this rising like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge?

8 Egypt rises like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge. Egypt says, "I will rise and cover the earth; I will destroy cities and their inhabitants."

9 Charge, you horses! Drive furiously, you chariots! Let the warriors march out: men of Cush and Put who carry shields, men of Lud who draw the bow.

10 But that day belongs to the Lord GOD of Armies, a day of vengeance, to avenge Himself on His enemies. The sword will devour until it is satisfied, until it has drunk its fill of their blood. For the Lord GOD of Armies holds a sacrifice in the land of the north by the River Euphrates.

11 Go up to Gilead and get balm, virgin daughter of Egypt! In vain you multiply remedies; there is no healing for you.

12 The nations have heard of your shame; your cry fills the earth. Warrior has stumbled over warrior, and both have fallen together.

13 This is the word the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to attack the land of Egypt:

14 Announce it in Egypt; proclaim it in Migdol;
proclaim it in Memphis and Tahpanhes. Say, “Take
your stand and get ready, for the sword devours
all around you.”

15 Why are your mighty ones swept away? They
cannot stand, for the LORD has thrust them
down.[2]

16 He has made many stumble; they fall over one
another. They say, “Get up, let us go back to our
own people and our native land, away from the
oppressor’s sword.”

17 There they will cry, “Pharaoh king of Egypt is
only a noise; he has let the appointed time pass
by.”

18 As surely as I live, declares the King, whose
name is the LORD of Armies, one will come who is
like Tabor among the mountains, like Carmel by
the sea.

19 Pack your belongings for exile, you who live in
Egypt, for Memphis will become a waste, a ruin
without inhabitant.

20 Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but a gadfly is
coming against her from the north.

21 Even her hired soldiers in her ranks are like
fattened calves; they too turn and flee together;
they do not stand their ground, for the day of their
disaster has come upon them, the time of their
punishment.

22 Egypt will hiss like a snake slithering away as
the enemy advances in force; they come against
her with axes, like men felling trees.

23 They will cut down her forest, declares the
LORD, dense though it is, for they are more
numerous than locusts; they cannot be counted.

24 The daughter of Egypt will be put to shame,
handed over to a people from the north.

25 The LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: I
am going to punish Amon of Thebes, Pharaoh,
Egypt with her gods and her kings, Pharaoh and
those who trust in him.[3]

26 I will hand them over to those who seek their
lives, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his
officers. But afterwards Egypt will be inhabited as
in days of old, declares the LORD.

27 But you, do not be afraid, Jacob My servant; do
not be dismayed, Israel. For I will save you from
far away, and your descendants from the land of
their captivity. Jacob will return and have quiet
and ease, with no one to make him afraid.

28 Do not be afraid, Jacob My servant, declares the
LORD, for I am with you. I will make a full end of
all the nations to which I have driven you, but I
will not make a full end of you. I will discipline you
justly, and I will by no means leave you
unpunished.

1 The battle of Carchemish, 605 BC, which made Babylon the master of the region.

2 The Greek translation reads ‘Why has Apis fled? Your bull did not stand’, referring to the sacred bull of Memphis.

3 Amon was the chief god of Thebes (Hebrew ‘No’), in Upper Egypt.

Chapter 47

Jeremiah 47 is the LORD’s word concerning the Philistines, given before Pharaoh attacked Gaza. Waters are rising from the north to become an overflowing torrent that will sweep over the land; at the thunder of hooves and the rumble of chariots, fathers will not turn back for their children, so limp are their hands. The LORD is destroying the Philistines, the remnant from the coastland of Caphtor, and cutting off every ally of Tyre and Sidon. Gaza shaves its head and Ashkelon is silenced. The sword of the LORD is asked how long it will go on, but it cannot rest, for the LORD has given it a charge against Ashkelon and the coast.

1 This is the word of the LORD that came to
Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines,
before Pharaoh attacked Gaza.[1]

2 This is what the LORD says: Waters are rising
from the north; they will become an overflowing
torrent. They will overflow the land and
everything in it, the cities and those who live in
them. People will cry out, and all who live in the
land will wail

3 at the sound of the hooves of galloping stallions,
at the clatter of chariots and the rumble of their
wheels. Fathers will not turn back for their
children, so limp will their hands be,

4 for the day has come to ruin every Philistine and
to cut off from Tyre and Sidon any ally left to help
them. The LORD is about to destroy the
Philistines, all that remains of those from the
island of Caphtor.[2]

5 Baldness has come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is
silenced. Remnant of their valley, how long will
you gash yourselves?

6 Ah, sword of the LORD, how long until you are
quiet? Return to your sheath; rest and be still.

7 But how can it be quiet when the LORD has given
it a charge? Against Ashkelon and against the
seacoast, there He has appointed it.

1 Probably Pharaoh Neco, about 609 BC.
2 Caphtor is probably Crete, the Philistines' place of origin (Amos 9:7).

Chapter 48

Jeremiah 48 is a long lament over Moab. Nebo, Kiriathaim and Heshbon are ruined; Moab trusted in its works and treasures, and its god Chemosh will go into exile with his priests and officials. Moab has been at ease since youth, like wine left undisturbed on its dregs, but now the LORD will send pourers to tip it out and smash its jars. Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh as Israel was ashamed of Bethel. Its horn is cut off and its arm broken, because it magnified itself against the LORD and mocked Israel. The LORD laments for Moab: His heart moans for it like a flute, for every head is shaved and there is mourning on every roof. Terror, pit and snare await the people of Moab; fire has gone out from Heshbon. Yet in the latter days the LORD will restore Moab's fortunes.

1 Concerning Moab: This is what the LORD of
Armies, the God of Israel, says: Woe to Nebo, for it
lies in ruins! Kiriathaim is disgraced and taken; its
fortress is humiliated and broken down.[1]

2 Moab is praised no more. In Heshbon they plot
disaster against her: "Come, let us cut her off
from being a nation." You too, Madmen, will be
silenced; the sword will pursue you.[2]

3 Listen! A cry from Horonaim, "Devastation and
great destruction!"

4 Moab is broken; her little ones cry out.

5 For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping
bitterly as they go; on the road down to Horonaim
they hear the anguished cry of destruction.

6 Flee! Save your lives! Be like a juniper in the
wilderness.

7 Because you trusted in your works and your
treasures, you too will be captured, and Chemosh
will go into exile together with his priests and
officials.[3]

8 The destroyer will come against every town, and
not one town will escape. The valley will be ruined
and the plateau destroyed, as the LORD has said.

9 Give wings to Moab, for she will fly away; her
towns will become a desolation with no one living
in them.[4]

10 Cursed is the one who does the LORD's work
negligently, and cursed is the one who holds back
his sword from bloodshed.

11 Moab has been at ease from his youth, settled
like wine on its dregs. He has not been poured
from jar to jar, nor has he gone into exile. So his
flavour has stayed in him, and his aroma is
unchanged.

12 So the days are coming, declares the LORD,
when I will send him pourers who will pour him
out; they will empty his jars and smash his
wineskins.

13 Then Moab will be as ashamed of Chemosh as
Israel's people were ashamed of Bethel, the god
they relied on.[5]

14 How can you say, "We are warriors, mighty men
for battle"?

15 Moab is destroyed and his towns invaded; his
finest young men have gone down to the
slaughter, declares the King, whose name is the
LORD of Armies.

16 The disaster of Moab is near at hand; his
calamity is coming swiftly.

17 Mourn for him, all you who live around him, all
who know his name. Say, "How the mighty sceptre
is broken, the glorious staff!"

18 Come down from your glory and sit in the dust,
daughter living in Dibon, for the destroyer of
Moab has come up against you; he has ruined
your strongholds.

19 Stand by the road and watch, you who live in
Aroer. Ask the man fleeing and the woman
escaping, "What has happened?"

20 Moab is put to shame, for it is shattered. Wail
and cry out! Announce by the Arnon that Moab is
destroyed.

21 Judgement has come on the plateau: on Holon, Jahzah and Mephaath,

22 on Dibon, Nebo and Beth-diblathaim,

23 on Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul and Beth-meon,

24 on Kerioth and Bozrah, and on all the towns of the land of Moab, far and near.

25 Moab's horn has been hacked off and his arm shattered, declares the LORD.

26 Make him drunk, for he has magnified himself against the LORD. Let Moab wallow in his vomit; let him become a laughing-stock too.

27 Was Israel not a laughing-stock to you? Was he caught among thieves, that you shake your head whenever you speak of him?

28 Leave the towns and live among the rocks, you who live in Moab. Be like a dove that nests in the walls of a gorge.

29 We have heard of Moab's pride, how very proud he is, his loftiness, his pride, his arrogance and the haughtiness of his heart.

30 I know his insolence, declares the LORD, but it is futile; his boasts accomplish nothing.

31 Therefore I wail for Moab; I cry out for all Moab; I moan for the men of Kir-heres.

32 More than the weeping of Jazer I weep for you, vine of Sibmah. Your shoots spread out and crossed the sea, reaching as far as Jazer. The destroyer has fallen on your summer fruit and your grape harvest.

33 Joy and gladness are taken from the orchards and from the land of Moab. I have stopped the flow of wine from the presses; no one treads them with shouts of joy. The shouting is not a shout of joy.

34 The cry of Heshbon reaches Elealeh; their voice is heard as far as Jahaz, from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah, for even the waters of Nimrim have dried up.

35 I will put an end in Moab, declares the LORD, to those who offer sacrifices on the high place and burn incense to their gods.

36 So my heart moans for Moab like a flute; my heart moans like a flute for the men of Kir-heres, for the wealth they acquired is gone.

37 Every head is shaved bald and every beard cut off; every hand is gashed and every waist wrapped in sackcloth.

38 On all the rooftops of Moab and in its squares there is nothing but mourning, for I have broken Moab like a jar that no one wants, declares the LORD.

39 How shattered it is! How they wail! How Moab has turned its back in shame! Moab has become a laughing-stock and an object of horror to all around him.

40 For this is what the LORD says: Look, one will swoop down like an eagle and spread his wings over Moab.

41 The towns will be captured and the strongholds seized. On that day the hearts of Moab's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labour.

42 Moab will be destroyed as a people, because he magnified himself against the LORD.

43 Terror, pit and snare await you, you who live in Moab, declares the LORD.

44 Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into the pit, and whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare. For I will bring on Moab the year of their punishment, declares the LORD.

45 In the shadow of Heshbon the fugitives stand exhausted, for fire has gone out from Heshbon, flame from the midst of Sihon. It devours the forehead of Moab, the skulls of the noisy boasters.

46 Alas for you, Moab! The people of Chemosh are undone. Your sons have been taken into captivity and your daughters into exile.

47 Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, declares the LORD. Here ends the judgement on Moab.

1 Much of this chapter echoes Isaiah 15–16; compare also Numbers 21:28–29.

2 'Heshbon' sounds like 'plot', and 'Madmen' like 'be silenced'.

3 Chemosh was the national god of Moab.

4 'Wings' is uncertain; the word may mean 'salt', that is, sow her with salt.

5 Bethel was the site of one of the golden calves set up by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28–29).

Chapter 49

Jeremiah 49 gathers oracles against five neighbours. Ammon, whose god Milcom seized Gad's land, will hear the battle cry against Rabbah, and Israel will dispossess those who dispossessed it; yet Ammon's fortunes will be restored. Edom, proud in its rocky heights, has lost its wisdom; the LORD will strip Esau bare and bring him down from the eagle's nest, and Edom will become like Sodom and Gomorrah. Damascus grows feeble and flees, and fire will consume the fortresses of Ben-hadad. Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, the tent-dwelling peoples of the east, will be plundered by Nebuchadnezzar. Elam's bow will be broken and its people scattered to the four winds, but in the latter days the LORD will restore Elam's fortunes too.

1 Concerning the Ammonites: This is what the LORD says: Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? Why then has Milcom taken possession of Gad, and why do his people live in its towns?[1]

2 So the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sound the battle cry against Rabbah of the Ammonites. It will become a desolate mound, and its villages will be set on fire. Then Israel will dispossess those who dispossessed him, says the LORD.

3 Wail, Heshbon, for Ai is laid waste! Cry out, you daughters of Rabbah! Put on sackcloth and lament; run here and there among the walls, for Milcom will go into exile together with his priests and officials.

4 Why do you boast of your valleys, your valley flowing with plenty, faithless daughter? You trust in your treasures and say, "Who will come against me?"

5 I am going to bring terror on you from all around you, declares the Lord GOD of Armies. Every one of you will be driven away headlong, and no one will gather the fugitives.

6 But afterwards I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites, declares the LORD.

7 Concerning Edom: This is what the LORD of Armies says: Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel vanished from the prudent? Has their wisdom gone stale?[2]

8 Turn and flee; hide in deep places, you who live in Dedan, for I will bring disaster on Esau at the time I punish him.

9 If grape-pickers came to you, would they not leave some gleanings? If thieves came by night, would they not steal only what they wanted?

10 But I have stripped Esau bare; I have uncovered his hiding places so that he cannot conceal himself. His children, his brothers and his neighbours are destroyed, and he is no more.

11 Leave your orphans; I will keep them alive. Let your widows trust in Me.

12 For this is what the LORD says: If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You will not go unpunished; you must drink it.

13 For I have sworn by Myself, declares the LORD, that Bozrah will become an object of horror, reproach, ruin and cursing, and all its towns will be ruins for ever.

14 I have heard a message from the LORD, and an envoy has been sent among the nations: "Gather together and come against her! Rise up for battle!"

15 For I will make you small among the nations, despised among mankind.

16 The terror you inspire and the pride of your heart have deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock and hold the height of the hill. Though you build your nest as high as the eagle's, I will bring you down from there, declares the LORD.

17 Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who passes by will be appalled and hiss at all its wounds.

18 As when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbouring towns were overthrown, says the LORD, no one will live there; no human being will stay in it.

19 Look, like a lion coming up from the thickets of the Jordan to a lush pasture, I will suddenly chase Edom from its land, and I will appoint over it whom I choose. For who is like Me? Who can summon Me? What shepherd can stand against Me?

20 So hear the plan the LORD has made against Edom and the purposes He has formed against the people of Teman: Even the little ones of the flock will be dragged away; He will make their pasture desolate because of them.

21 At the sound of their fall the earth will quake; their cry will be heard as far as the Red Sea.

22 Look, he will soar and swoop down like an eagle and spread his wings over Bozrah. On that day the

hearts of Edom's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labour.

23 Concerning Damascus: Hamath and Arpad are put to shame, for they have heard bad news; they melt with fear, troubled like the sea that cannot be still.

24 Damascus has grown feeble; she turns to flee, and panic seizes her. Anguish and pain have gripped her like a woman in labour.

25 How the renowned city has been abandoned, the town that was my joy!

26 So her young men will fall in her squares, and all her soldiers will be silenced on that day, declares the LORD of Armies.

27 I will set fire to the wall of Damascus, and it will consume the fortresses of Ben-hadad.

28 Concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked: This is what the LORD says: Rise up, advance against Kedar and destroy the people of the east![3]

29 Their tents and flocks will be taken; their tent curtains and all their goods and camels will be carried off. People will shout to them, "Terror on every side!"

30 Flee! Wander far away! Hide in deep places, you who live in Hazor, declares the LORD, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has made a plan against you and devised a scheme against you.

31 Rise up and advance against a nation at ease, living in security, declares the LORD, a nation with neither gates nor bars, living alone.

32 Their camels will become plunder, and their great herds spoil. I will scatter to every wind those who clip the hair at their temples, and I will bring disaster on them from every side, declares the LORD.

33 Hazor will become a haunt of jackals, a desolation for ever. No one will live there; no human being will stay in it.

34 Early in Zedekiah's reign over Judah, the LORD gave Jeremiah the prophet this word about Elam:[4]

35 This is what the LORD of Armies says: I am going to break the bow of Elam, the mainstay of their might.

36 I will bring against Elam the four winds from the four corners of heaven and scatter them to all these winds; there will be no nation to which Elam's exiles do not go.

37 I will shatter Elam before their enemies and before those who seek their lives. I will bring disaster on them, My fierce anger, declares the LORD, and I will send the sword after them until I have finished them off.

38 I will set My throne in Elam and destroy its king and officials there, declares the LORD.

39 Yet in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Elam, declares the LORD.

1 Milcom (also called Molech) was the god of the Ammonites. The Hebrew word can also be read 'their king'.

2 49:7–16 are closely parallel to Obadiah 1–9.

3 Kedar was a tribe of the Arabian desert. This Hazor is not the city in Galilee but probably a group of Arab settlements.

4 Elam lay east of Babylon, in what is now south-western Iran.

Chapter 50

> *Jeremiah 50 begins the long oracle against Babylon (chapters 50–51). Babylon is taken, Bel is put to shame and Marduk shattered, for a nation from the north has come against her. In those days the people of Israel and Judah will come weeping to seek the LORD and join themselves to Him in an everlasting covenant. They were lost sheep, but now they must flee from Babylon like he-goats leading the flock. Babylon, the hammer of the whole earth, is broken because she defied the LORD; archers surround her, and her own deeds are repaid to her. Israel was a scattered flock devoured first by Assyria and then by Babylon; the LORD will punish Babylon as He punished Assyria, and Israel's iniquity will be sought and not found. Their Redeemer is strong, the LORD of Armies, and a sword is against the Chaldeans.*

1 This is the word the LORD spoke through Jeremiah the prophet concerning Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans:

2 Announce it among the nations and proclaim it; raise a signal and proclaim it; hide nothing, but say: Babylon is captured; Bel is put to shame; Marduk is shattered. Her images are put to shame; her idols are shattered.[1]

3 For a nation from the north has come up against her; it will make her land a desolation, and no one

will live in it. Both people and animals have fled and gone away.

4 In those days and at that time, declares the LORD, the people of Israel and the people of Judah will come together, weeping as they come, and they will seek the LORD their God.

5 They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces towards it. They will come and join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.

6 My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and made them wander on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill and forgotten their resting place.

7 All who found them devoured them, and their enemies said, “We are not guilty, for they have sinned against the LORD, their true pasture, the LORD, the hope of their fathers.”

8 Flee from the midst of Babylon; go out from the land of the Chaldeans; be like the he-goats that lead the flock.

9 For I am stirring up and bringing against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the land of the north. They will array themselves against her, and from there she will be captured. Their arrows will be like those of a skilled warrior who does not come back empty-handed.

10 Chaldea will be plundered; all who plunder her will have their fill, declares the LORD.

11 Because you rejoice and exult, you who plunder My inheritance, because you frisk about like a heifer threshing grain and neigh like stallions,

12 your mother will be deeply humiliated, she who gave you birth disgraced. Look, she will be last among the nations, a wasteland of drought and desert.

13 Because of the LORD’s wrath she will not be inhabited but will be completely desolate. Everyone who passes by Babylon will be appalled and hiss at all her wounds.

14 Take up your positions round Babylon, all you who draw the bow. Shoot at her; spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the LORD.

15 Raise the battle cry against her on every side! She surrenders; her towers fall; her walls are torn down. Since this is the vengeance of the LORD, take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done.

16 Cut off from Babylon the sower and the one who wields the sickle at harvest time. Because of the oppressor’s sword each will turn back to his own people, each will flee to his own land.

17 Israel is a scattered flock, chased away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and last of all Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones.

18 So this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: As I dealt with Assyria’s king, so I will deal with Babylon’s king and his country.

19 I will lead Israel home to his own grazing land, to feed on Carmel and in Bashan; on Ephraim’s hills and in Gilead he will eat all he wants.

20 In those days and at that time, declares the LORD, the iniquity of Israel will be sought, but there will be none, and the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare.

21 Go up against the land of Merathaim and against those who live in Pekod. Kill them and devote them to destruction, declares the LORD; do all that I have commanded you.[2]

22 The noise of battle is in the land, the noise of great destruction.

23 The hammer that pounded the whole earth, how it lies broken in pieces! What a horror Babylon has become to the nations!

24 I set a trap for you, Babylon, and you were caught before you knew it. You were found and seized because you challenged the LORD.

25 The LORD has opened His armoury and brought out the weapons of His wrath, for the Lord GOD of Armies has work to do in the land of the Chaldeans.

26 Come against her from far away; open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain and devote her to destruction. Leave her no remnant.

27 Put all her young bulls to the sword; send them down to be slaughtered. Woe to them! Their day has arrived, the hour when they must answer for it.

28 Listen! Fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon are declaring in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, vengeance for His temple.

29 Summon archers against Babylon, all who draw the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; do to her as she has done. For she has defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

30 So her young men will fall in her squares, and
all her soldiers will be silenced on that day,
declares the LORD.

31 I am against you, you arrogant one, declares the
Lord GOD of Armies, for your day has come, the
time when I will punish you.

32 The arrogant one will stumble and fall, with no
one to raise him up. I will kindle a fire in his
towns, and it will consume everything around him.

33 This is what the LORD of Armies says: The
people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of
Judah with them. All their captors hold them fast;
they refuse to let them go.

34 But their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of
Armies is His name. He will vigorously plead their
cause, so that He may give rest to the earth but
unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

35 A sword against the Chaldeans, declares the
LORD, against the inhabitants of Babylon, against
her officials and her wise men!

36 A sword against her false prophets, and they will
become fools! A sword against her warriors, and
they will be shattered!

37 A sword against her horses and chariots and all
the foreigners in her ranks, and they will become
like women! A sword against her treasures, and
they will be plundered!

38 A drought on her waters, and they will dry up!
For it is a land of images, and they go mad over
their idols.[3]

39 So desert creatures will live there with jackals,
and ostriches will dwell in it. It will never again be
inhabited or lived in from generation to
generation.

40 As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah
and their neighbouring towns, declares the LORD,
no one will live there; no human being will stay in
it.

41 Look, a people is coming from the north; a great
nation and many kings are being stirred up from
the far ends of the earth.

42 They grip bow and javelin; they are cruel and
show no mercy. Their voice roars like the sea as
they ride on horses, drawn up like a warrior for
battle against you, daughter of Babylon.

43 The king of Babylon has heard the report of
them, and his hands hang limp. Anguish has
gripped him, pain like a woman in labour.

44 Look, like a lion coming up from the thickets of
the Jordan to a lush pasture, I will suddenly chase
Babylon from its land, and I will appoint over it
whom I choose. For who is like Me? Who can
summon Me? What shepherd can stand against
Me?

45 So hear the plan the LORD has made against
Babylon and the purposes He has formed against
the land of the Chaldeans: Even the little ones of
the flock will be dragged away; He will make their
pasture desolate because of them.

46 At the sound of Babylon's capture the earth will
quake; its cry will be heard among the nations.

1 Bel ('lord') was a title of Marduk, the chief god of Babylon.

2 Merathaim ('double rebellion') and Pekod ('punishment') are word-plays on names of regions in southern Babylonia.

3 'Drought' (horev) sounds like 'sword' (herev).

Chapter 51

> *Jeremiah 51 continues the oracle against Babylon. The LORD is stirring up a destroying wind against Babylon, for Israel and Judah have not been widowed by their God. Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD's hand that made the nations drunk; now she has suddenly fallen, beyond healing, and His people must flee from her. The LORD has stirred up the kings of the Medes. He who made the earth by His power is the Portion of Jacob, and Babylon was His war club for shattering nations, but now He is against that destroying mountain. Nations are summoned against her; Zion cries for vengeance for what Nebuchadnezzar has done, and the LORD will dry up Babylon's sea and make her rulers sleep a lasting sleep. Jeremiah gives Seraiah a scroll of these words to read in Babylon, tie to a stone and throw into the Euphrates: "So will Babylon sink and never rise again."*

1 This is what the LORD says: I am going to stir up
a destroying wind against Babylon and against the
people of Leb-kamai.[1]

2 I will send strangers to Babylon to winnow her
and empty her land, for they will come against her
from every side on the day of disaster.

3 Let not the archer string his bow or stand up in his armour. Do not spare her young men; devote her whole army to destruction.

4 Slain men will lie strewn across Chaldea, run through in the city streets.

5 For Israel and Judah have not been widowed by their God, the LORD of Armies, though their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel.

6 Flee from the midst of Babylon! Let each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed because of her iniquity, for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; He will repay her what she deserves.

7 Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD's hand, making the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; so the nations have gone mad.

8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been shattered. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed.[2]

9 We tried to heal Babylon, but she could not be healed. Leave her, and let each of us go to his own land, for her judgement reaches to the heavens and rises as high as the clouds.

10 The LORD has brought our vindication to light. Come, let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

11 Sharpen the arrows! Take up the shields! The LORD has roused the kings of the Medes, for He means to destroy Babylon. This is the LORD's revenge, revenge for what was done to His temple.

12 Raise a signal against the walls of Babylon! Strengthen the guard; post watchmen; prepare an ambush! For the LORD has both planned and done what He spoke against the people of Babylon.

13 You who live by many waters, rich in treasures, your end has come, the thread of your life is cut.

14 The LORD of Armies has sworn by Himself: I will surely fill you with men as with locusts, and they will raise a shout of triumph over you.

15 It was He whose power formed the earth, whose wisdom set the world in place, whose understanding spread out the skies.[3]

16 When He thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; He makes the clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and brings out the wind from His storehouses.

17 Everyone is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idol, for his cast images are a lie, and there is no breath in them.

18 They are worthless, a work of mockery; when their time of punishment comes they will perish.

19 He who is Jacob's Portion is nothing like them, for He shaped everything that exists, and Israel is the tribe He claims as His own. The LORD of Armies is His name.

20 You are My war club, My weapon for battle: with you I shatter nations; with you I destroy kingdoms;

21 with you I shatter horse and rider; with you I shatter chariot and driver;

22 with you I shatter man and woman; with you I shatter old and young; with you I shatter young man and young woman;

23 with you I shatter shepherd and flock; with you I shatter farmer and team of oxen; with you I shatter governors and officials.

24 But I will repay Babylon and all the people of Chaldea before your eyes for all the evil they have done in Zion, declares the LORD.

25 I am against you, destroying mountain, declares the LORD, you who destroy the whole earth. I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the crags and make you a burnt-out mountain.

26 No stone will be taken from you for a cornerstone, nor any stone for a foundation, for you will be desolate for ever, declares the LORD.

27 Raise a signal in the land! Blow the ram's horn among the nations! Consecrate the nations for war against her; summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz. Appoint a commander against her; bring up horses like a swarm of locusts.[4]

28 Consecrate the nations for war against her: the kings of the Medes, their governors and all their officials, and all the lands they rule.

29 The land quakes and writhes, for the LORD's purposes against Babylon stand: to make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant.

30 Babylon's warriors have stopped fighting; they stay in their strongholds. Their strength is exhausted; they have become like women. Her dwellings are set on fire; the bars of her gates are broken.

31 Runner follows runner, messenger follows messenger, to tell the king of Babylon that his city has been captured from end to end,

32 the river crossings seized, the reed marshes set on fire, and the soldiers terrified.

33 For this is what the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, says: Daughter Babylon is like a threshing floor being stamped hard; very soon her harvest time will arrive.

34 "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured me and crushed me; he has set me aside like an empty jar. Like a sea monster he has swallowed me; he has filled his belly with my delicacies and spewed me out.

35 May the violence done to me and to my flesh be on Babylon," says the one who lives in Zion. "May my blood be on the people of Chaldea," says Jerusalem.

36 So this is what the LORD says: I will take up your case and avenge you. I will make her sea run dry and her fountains fail.

37 Babylon will become a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, without inhabitant.

38 They will roar together like young lions; they will growl like lion cubs.

39 While they are heated, I will set out a feast for them and make them drunk, so that they shout for joy, then sleep a lasting sleep and never wake, declares the LORD.[5]

40 I will lead them down to be slaughtered like lambs, like rams together with goats.

41 Sheshach has fallen! The pride of all the earth is taken! What a horror Babylon has become among the nations!

42 The sea has risen over Babylon; she is covered by its roaring waves.

43 Her towns have become a desolation, a dry and desert land, a land where no one lives and through which no one passes.

44 I will punish Bel in Babylon and make him spew out what he has swallowed. The nations will no longer stream to him; even the wall of Babylon has fallen.

45 Come out of her, My people! Let each of you save his life from the fierce anger of the LORD.[6]

46 Do not lose heart or be afraid at the rumours heard in the land; one rumour comes this year, another the next, rumours of violence in the land and of ruler against ruler.

47 So the days are coming when I will punish the idols of Babylon; her whole land will be put to shame, and all her slain will lie fallen within her.

48 Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for destroyers will come against her from the north, declares the LORD.

49 Babylon must fall because of Israel's slain, just as the slain of all the earth have fallen because of Babylon.

50 You who have escaped the sword, go! Do not stand still! Remember the LORD from far away, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

51 We are ashamed, for we have heard insults; disgrace has covered our faces, for foreigners have entered the holy places of the LORD's house.

52 So the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish her idols, and throughout her land the wounded will groan.

53 Though Babylon should climb to the heavens and fortify her lofty stronghold, destroyers will come against her from Me, declares the LORD.

54 Listen! A cry from Babylon, the sound of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans!

55 For the LORD is destroying Babylon and silencing her great noise. Their waves roar like great waters; the din of their voices resounds.

56 For a destroyer has come against her, against Babylon; her warriors are captured and their bows broken. For the LORD is a God of retribution; He will repay in full.

57 I will make her officials and wise men drunk, her governors, officials and warriors; they will sleep a lasting sleep and never wake, declares the King, whose name is the LORD of Armies.

58 This is what the LORD of Armies says: The broad walls of Babylon will be levelled to the ground, and her high gates set on fire. The peoples exhaust themselves for nothing; the nations wear themselves out only for the fire.[7]

59 This is the message Jeremiah the prophet gave to Seraiah son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, the quartermaster, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign.[8]

60 Jeremiah had written on a scroll all the disaster that would come on Babylon, all these words that are written about Babylon.

61 Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "When you reach Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud.

62 Then say, ‘LORD, You have said that You will destroy this place, so that nothing will live in it, neither people nor animals, and it will be desolate for ever.’

63 When you have finished reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates.

64 Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink and never rise again, because of the disaster I am going to bring on her. And they will grow weary.’” Here end the words of Jeremiah.

1 ‘Leb-kamai’ (‘the heart of those who rise against Me’) is a code name for Chaldea, formed like ‘Sheshach’ in 25:26.

2 Compare Revelation 18:2.

3 51:15–19 repeat 10:12–16.

4 Peoples of the mountains north of Mesopotamia, in what is now Armenia and north-western Iran.

5 Babylon fell to the Persians in 539 BC during a night of feasting; compare Daniel 5.

6 Compare Revelation 18:4.

7 The last sentence is also found in Habakkuk 2:13.

8 594 BC. Seraiah was the brother of Baruch (32:12).

Chapter 52

Jeremiah 52 is a historical appendix, closely matching 2 Kings 24:18–25:30. Zedekiah did evil and rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem from Zedekiah’s ninth year until famine gripped the city and the wall was breached in his eleventh. Zedekiah fled but was captured near Jericho; at Riblah his sons were killed before his eyes, he was blinded and kept in prison in Babylon until he died. Nebuzaradan burned the temple, the palace and the great houses, broke down the walls and took the people into exile, leaving the poorest to tend vines and fields. The bronze pillars, stands and Sea and all the temple vessels were carried off, and the leading priests and officials were executed at Riblah. The chapter numbers the exiles of three deportations and ends with Jehoiachin’s release from prison in Babylon in the thirty-seventh year of his exile.

1 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah.[1]

2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done.

3 Because of the LORD’s anger it came to this in Jerusalem and Judah, until He cast them out of His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4 In the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against Jerusalem with his whole army. They encamped against it and built siege works all round it.

5 The city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

6 By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people of the land.

7 Then the city wall was breached, and all the soldiers fled, leaving the city by night through the gate between the two walls near the king’s garden, though the Chaldeans were all round the city. They went in the direction of the Arabah.

8 The Chaldean forces chased the king and caught up with Zedekiah in the plains near Jericho; his troops had all deserted him.

9 They captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where sentence was passed on him.

10 At Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered Zedekiah’s sons before his eyes; he also slaughtered all the officials of Judah.

11 Then he put out Zedekiah’s eyes, bound him in bronze shackles and took him to Babylon, where the king of Babylon kept him in prison until the day of his death.

12 On the tenth day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.[2]

13 He burned down the house of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem; every important building he burned with fire.

14 The whole Chaldean army under the captain of the guard broke down all the walls round Jerusalem.

15 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took into exile some of the poorest of the people, the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the craftsmen.

16 But some of the very poor of the land were left behind by Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, to tend the vines and till the soil.

17 The Chaldeans broke up the bronze pillars, the stands and the bronze Sea that were in the house of the LORD, and carried all the bronze to Babylon.

18 They also took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the sprinkling bowls, the dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service.

19 The captain of the guard took away the basins, the firepans, the sprinkling bowls, the pots, the lampstands, the dishes and the bowls, whatever was made of gold and whatever was made of silver.

20 As for the two pillars, the one Sea with the twelve bronze bulls under it, and the stands that King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these articles was beyond weighing.[3]

21 Each pillar was eighteen cubits high and twelve cubits round; it was hollow, and its metal was four fingers thick.[4]

22 It had a bronze capital on top, five cubits high, with a network and pomegranates all round it, all of bronze. The second pillar, with its pomegranates, was the same.

23 There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; in all there were a hundred pomegranates on the network all round.

24 The captain of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest and the three doorkeepers.

25 From those still in the city he took the officer who had commanded the troops, seven of the king's counsellors who were discovered there, the secretary to the army commander, whose task was to call up the people of the land for war, and sixty of the common people found in the city.

26 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard led them all away to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

27 There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death. So Judah went into exile from its land.

28 These are the people Nebuchadnezzar took into exile: in the seventh year, 3,023 Judeans;[5]

29 in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, 832 people from Jerusalem;

30 in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took into exile 745 Judeans. There were 4,600 people in all.

31 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison.[6]

32 He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honour higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.

33 So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes, and for the rest of his life he ate regularly at the king's table.

34 A regular allowance was given him by the king of Babylon, a portion for each day, until the day of his death, for as long as he lived.

1 52:1–27 and 31–34 repeat 2 Kings 24:18–25:21 and 25:27–30, kept here in the same wording.

2 2 Kings 25:8 has 'the seventh day'.

3 The Hebrew says the bulls were 'under the stands'; 1 Kings 7:25 places them under the Sea.

4 About 8 metres (27 feet) high and 5.5 metres (18 feet) round.

5 597 BC. These figures, not found in 2 Kings, probably count only adult men.

6 561 BC. 2 Kings 25:27 has 'the twenty-seventh day'.