

Jeremiah

1 These are the messages of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was the son of a man named Hilkiyah. Jeremiah belonged to the family of priests that lived in the city of Anathoth.* That city is in the land that belongs to the family group of Benjamin. **2**The Lord began to speak to Jeremiah during the days when Josiah was king of the nation of Judah. Josiah was the son of a man named Amon. The Lord began to speak to Jeremiah in the 13th year that Josiah was king.* **3**The Lord continued to speak to Jeremiah while Jehoiakim was king of Judah. Jehoiakim was the son of Josiah. The Lord continued to speak to Jeremiah during the eleven years and five months that Zedekiah was king of Judah. Zedekiah was also a son of Josiah. In the fifth month of Zedekiah's eleventh year as king, the people that lived in Jerusalem were taken away into exile.

God Calls Jeremiah

4The Lord's message came to Jeremiah. This message was from the Lord:

5 "Before I made you in your mother's body,
I knew you.
Before you were born,
I chose you for a special work.
I chose you to be a prophet
to the nations."

6Then Jeremiah said, "But Lord All-Powerful, I don't know how to speak. I am only a boy."

priests that lived in the city of Anathoth These priests probably belonged to the family of the priest Abiathar. Abiathar was a high priest in Jerusalem during the time David was king. He was sent away to Anathoth by King Solomon. See 1 Kings 2:26.

13th year that Josiah was king That is 627 B.C.

7But the Lord said to me,

"Don't say, 'I am only a boy.'
You must go everywhere I send you.
You must say everything I tell you to say.

8 Don't be afraid of anyone.
I am with you,
and I will protect you."
This message is from the Lord.

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

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

10 Today I have put you in charge
of nations and kingdoms.
You will pull up and tear down.
You will destroy and overthrow.
You will build up and plant."

Two Visions

11The Lord's message came to me. This message was from the Lord: "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

I answered the Lord and said, "I see a stick made from almond wood."

12The Lord said to me, "You have seen very well. And I am watching* to make sure that my message to you comes true."

13The Lord's message came to me again. This was the Lord's message: "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

I answered the Lord and said, "I see a pot of boiling water. That pot is tipping over from the north."

watching This is a word play. "Shaqed" is the Hebrew word for "almond wood," and "shoqed" means "watching."

- 14 The Lord said to me,
 “Something terrible will come
 from the north.
 It will happen to all the people
 that live in this country.
- 15 In a short time I will call all of the people
 in the northern kingdoms.”
 The Lord said those things.
- “The kings of those countries will come
 and set up their thrones
 near the gates of Jerusalem.
 They will attack the city walls of Jerusalem.
 They will attack all the cities in Judah.
- 16 And I will announce my judgment
 against my people.
 I will do this because they are bad people
 and they have turned against me.
 My people left me.
 They offered sacrifices to other gods.
 They worshiped idols that they had made
 with their own hands.
- 17 “As for you, Jeremiah, get ready.
 Stand up and speak to the people.
 Tell them everything that I tell you to say.
 Don’t be afraid of the people.
 If you are afraid of the people,
 then I will give you good reason
 to be afraid of them.
- 18 As for me, today I will make you
 like a strong city,
 an iron column,
 a bronze wall.
 You will be able to stand
 against everyone in the land,
 against the kings of the land of Judah,
 against the leaders of Judah,
 against the priests of Judah,
 and against the people of the land
 of Judah.
- 19 All those people will fight against you,
 but they will not defeat you.
 Why? Because I am with you,
 and I will save you.”
 This message is from the Lord.

Judah Was Not Faithful

2The Lord’s message came to Jeremiah.
 This message was from the Lord:
 2“Jeremiah, go and speak to the people of
 Jerusalem. Say to them:

- ““At the time you were a young nation,
 you were faithful to me.
 You followed me like a young bride.
 You followed me through the desert,
 through a land that had never been used
 for farm land.
- 3 The people of Israel were a holy gift
 to the Lord.
 They were the first fruit to be gathered
 by the Lord.
 Any people that tried to hurt them
 were judged guilty.
 Bad things happened to those
 wicked people.”
 This message was from the Lord.
- 4 Family of Jacob, hear the Lord’s message.
 Family groups of Israel, hear the message.
- 5 This is what the Lord says:
 “Do you think that I was not fair
 to your ancestors*?
 Is that why they turned away from me?
 Your ancestors worshiped worthless idols,
 and they became worthless themselves.
- 6 Your ancestors did not say,
 ‘The Lord brought us from Egypt.
 The Lord led us through the desert.
 The Lord led us through a dry
 and rocky land.
 The Lord led us through a dark
 and dangerous land.
 No people live there.
 People don’t even travel through
 that land.
 But the Lord led us through that land.
 So where is the Lord now?’
- 7 The Lord says,
 “I brought you into a good land,
 a land filled with many good things.
 I did this so you could eat the fruit and crops
 that grow there.
 But you only made my land ‘dirty.’
 I gave that land to you,
 but you made it a bad place.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents,
 grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

- 8 “The priests did not ask,
 ‘Where is the Lord?’
 The people that know the law
 did not want to know me.
 The leaders of the people of Israel
 turned against me.
 The prophets prophesied* in the name
 of the false god Baal.*
 They worshiped worthless idols.”
- 9 The Lord says,
 “So now I will accuse you again,
 And I will also accuse
 your grandchildren.
- 10 Go across the sea to the Islands
 of Kittim.*
 Send someone to the land of Kedar.*
 Look very carefully.
 See if any person has ever done
 something like this.
- 11 Has any nation ever stopped worshiping
 their old gods so they could worship
 new gods?
 No! And their gods are not really gods at all!
 But my people
 stopped worshiping their glorious God
 and started worshiping idols
 that are worth nothing.
- 12 “Skies, be shocked at the things
 that have happened!
 Shake with great fear!”
 This message was from the Lord.
- 13 “My people have done two evil things.
 They turned away from me
 (I am the spring of living water),
 and they dug their own water cisterns.
 (*They turned to other gods.*)
 But their cisterns are broken.
 Those cisterns can’t hold water.
- 14 “Have the people of Israel become slaves?
 Have they become like a person
 that was born a slave?
 Why did people take the wealth
 from the people of Israel?
- 15 Young lions’ (*enemies*) roar at Israel.
 The lions growl.
 Lions have destroyed the land of Israel.
 The cities of Israel have been burned.
 There are no people left in them.
- 16 People from Memphis and Tahpanhes*
 have smashed the top of your head.
- 17 This trouble is your own fault!
 The Lord your God
 was leading you the right way,*
 but you turned away from him.
- 18 People of Judah, think about this:
 Did it help to go to Egypt?
 Did it help to drink
 from the Nile River? No!
 Did it help to go to Assyria?
 Did it help to drink from
 the Euphrates River? No!
- 19 You did bad things,
 and those bad things will only
 bring punishment to you.
 Trouble will come to you.
 And that trouble will teach you a lesson.
 Think about it!
 Then you will understand how bad it is
 to turn away from your God.
 It is wrong not to fear and respect me!”
 This message was from my Master,
 the Lord All-Powerful.
- 20 “Judah, a long time ago you threw off
 your yoke.
 You broke the ropes
 that I used to control you.
 You said to me,
 ‘I will not serve you!’
 You were like a prostitute
 on every high hill
 and under every green tree.*
- 21 Judah, I planted you like a special vine.
 All of you were like good seed.

prophesied Or, “spoke.”

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

Islands of Kittim The name means the Island of Cyprus. But the name was often used for the other islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea.

Kedar This was the name of an Arabian family group that lived in the desert to the east of Palestine.

Memphis and Tahpanhes Two cities in Egypt.

was leading ... way This line is not in the Greek translation.

prostitute ... green tree This means the people worshiped their false gods in these places.

- How did you turn into a different vine that grows bad fruit?
- 22 Even if you wash yourself with lye,* even if you use much soap, I can still see your guilt.”
This message was from the Lord God.
- 23 “Judah, how can you say to me, ‘I am not guilty; I have not worshiped the Baal* idols?’ Think about the things you did in the valley. Think about what you have done. You are like a fast she-camel that runs from place to place.
- 24 You are like a wild donkey that lives in the desert. At mating time, she sniffs (*smells*) the wind. No person can bring her back at the time she is in heat. At mating time, every male that wants her will get her. It is easy to find her.
- 25 Judah, stop chasing after idols! Stop being thirsty for those other gods. But you say, ‘It is no use! I can’t quit! I love those other gods. I want to worship them.’
- 26 “A thief is ashamed when people catch him. In the same way, the people of Israel are ashamed, the kings and leaders are ashamed, and the priests and prophets are ashamed.
- 27 Those people talk to pieces of wood! They say, ‘You are my father.’ Those people speak to a rock. They say, ‘You gave birth to me.’ All those people will be ashamed. Those people don’t look at me. They have turned their backs to me. But when the people of Judah get into trouble, they say to me, ‘Come and save us!’
- 28 Let those idols come and save you! Where are the idols that you have made for yourselves?

lye A chemical that is used like soap.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

- Let’s see if those idols come and save you when you are in trouble. Judah, you have as many idols as cities!
- 29 “Why do you argue with me? All of you have turned against me.”
This message was from the Lord.
- 30 “I punished you people of Judah, but it did not help. You did not come back when you were punished. You killed with your swords the prophets that came to you. You were like a dangerous lion and you killed the prophets.”
- 31 People of this generation, pay attention to the Lord’s message!
“Have I been like a desert to the people of Israel? Have I been like a dark and dangerous land to them? My people say, ‘We are free to go our own way. We will not come back to you, Lord!’ Why do they say those things?”
- 32 A young woman doesn’t forget her jewelry. A bride doesn’t forget the sash for her dress. But my people have forgotten me too many times to count.
- 33 “Judah, you really know how to chase after lovers (*false gods*). You have really learned to do evil things.
- 34 You have blood on your hands! It is the blood of the poor, innocent people. You did not catch those people breaking into your house! You killed them for no reason!
- 35 But still, you say, ‘I am innocent. God is not angry with me.’ So I will also judge you guilty [of lying]. Why? Because you say, ‘I have done nothing wrong.’
- 36 It is so easy for you to change your mind. Assyria disappointed you, [so you left Assyria and went to Egypt for help.] But Egypt will also disappoint you.

- 37 So you will eventually leave Egypt, too.
And you will hide your face in shame.
You trusted those countries.
But the Lord rejected those countries,
so they can't help you win.
- 3 "If a man divorces his wife,
and she leaves him
and marries another man,
can that man come back
to his wife again?
No! If that man went back to that woman,*
then that land would become 'dirty.'
Judah, you acted like a prostitute
with many lovers (*false gods*).
And now you want to come back to me!"
This message was from the Lord.
- 2 "Look up to the bare hilltops, Judah.
Is there any place where you have not
had sex with your lovers (*false gods*)?
You have sat by the road waiting for lovers,
like an Arab waiting in the desert.
You made the land 'dirty'!
How? You did many bad things
and you were unfaithful to me.
- 3 You sinned, so the rain has not come.
There have not been any springtime rains.
But still you refuse to be ashamed.
The look on your face is like the look
that a prostitute has when she
refuses to be ashamed.
You refuse to be ashamed of what
you did.
- 4 But now you are calling me, 'Father.'
You said,
'You have been my friend
since I was a child.'
- 5 You also said,
'God will not always be angry at me.
God's anger will not continue forever.'
- "Judah, you say those things,
but you do as much evil as you can."

If that man went back to that woman It was against the law of Moses for a man to marry a woman he had divorced if that woman had become another man's wife. It was against the law for that man to marry her again even if her second husband divorced her or died. See Deut. 24:1–4.

The Two Bad Sisters: Israel and Judah

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

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

'Come back, you faithless people of Israel.'
This message was from the Lord.

'I will stop frowning at you.

I am full of mercy.'

This message was from the Lord.

'I will not be angry with you forever.

¹³ But you must recognize your sin.

You turned against the Lord your God.

That is your sin.

You worshiped the idols of people
from other nations.

You worshiped those idols
under every green tree.

You did not obey me."

This message was from the Lord.

Israel Here the name Israel means the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians about 100 years before Jeremiah's time.

14 “You people are unfaithful. But Come back to me!” This message was from the Lord.

“I am your Master. I will take one person from every city and two people from every family and bring you to Zion.* 15 Then I will give you new rulers. Those rulers will be faithful to me. They will lead you with knowledge and understanding. 16 In those days, there will be many of you in the land.” This message is from the Lord.

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

19 “I, the Lord, said to myself,
 ‘I want to treat you like my own children.
 I want to give you a pleasant land,
 a land more beautiful
 than any other nation.’
 I thought that you would call me ‘Father.’
 I thought that you would always follow me.
 20 But you have been like a woman
 that is unfaithful to her husband.
 Family of Israel, you have been
 unfaithful to me!”
 This message was from the Lord.
 21 You can hear crying on the bare hills.
 The people of Israel are crying
 and praying for mercy.
 They became very evil.
 They forgot the Lord their God.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

Box of the Lord’s Agreement The box containing the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them and the other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai Desert. Also called “The Ark of the Covenant.”

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

22 [The Lord also said,]
 “People of Israel, you are unfaithful to me.
 But come back to me!
 Come back and I will forgive* you
 for being unfaithful to me.”

[The people should say,]
 “Yes, we will come to you.
 You are the Lord our God.

23 It was foolish to worship idols on the hills.
 All the loud parties on the mountains
 were wrong.
 Surely the salvation of Israel
 comes from the Lord our God.
 24 That terrible false god Baal has eaten
 everything our fathers owned.
 This has happened since we were children.
 That terrible false god took
 our fathers’ sheep and cattle,
 and their sons and daughters.
 25 Let us lie down in our shame.
 Let our shame cover us like a blanket.
 We have sinned against the Lord our God.
 We and our fathers have sinned.
 We have not obeyed the Lord our God
 from the time we were children.”

4 This message is from the Lord.
 “Israel, if you want to come back,
 then come back to me.
 Throw away your idols.
 Don’t wander away from me.
 2 If you do those things,
 then you will be able to use my name
 to make a promise:
 You will be able to say,
 ‘As the Lord lives.’
 And you will be able to use those words
 in a truthful, honest, and right way.
 If you do these things, then the nations
 will be blessed by the Lord.
 They will brag about the things
 that the Lord has done.”

³This is what the Lord says to the man of Judah and to Jerusalem:

“Your fields have not been plowed.
 Plow those fields!
 Don’t plant seeds among the thorns.

forgive Literally, “heal.”

- 4 Become the Lord's people.
 Change your hearts!*
- Men of Judah and people of Jerusalem,
 if you don't change,
 then I will become very angry.
 My anger will spread fast like a fire,
 and my anger will burn you up.
 And no person will be able to put out
 that fire.
 Why will this happen?
 Because of the evil things you
 have done."

Disaster from the North

- 5 "Give this message to the people of Judah:
 Tell every person in the city of Jerusalem,
 'blow the trumpet all over the country.'
 Shout out loud and say,
 'Come together!
 Let us all escape to the strong cities
 for protection.'
- 6 Raise the signal flag toward Zion.*
 Run for your lives!
 Don't wait!
 Do this because I am bringing disaster
 from the north.*
 I am bringing terrible destruction."
- 7 A lion has come out of his cave.
 A destroyer of nations has begun
 to march.
 He has left his home
 to destroy your land.
 Your towns will be destroyed.
 There will be no people left to live
 in them.
- 8 So put on sackcloth* and cry out loud!
 Why? Because the Lord is angry at us."

Change your hearts Literally, "Be circumcised to the Lord. Cut away the foreskin of your hearts." A man cut away the foreskin from his sex organ to show he was becoming one of God's people. Jeremiah is saying that the real circumcision must be from inside a person's heart (mind).

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

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

sackcloth A kind of cloth that people wore to show they were sad or crying for dead people.

- 9 The Lord says,
 "At the time this happens,
 the king and his officers
 will lose their courage,
 the priests will be scared,
 the prophets will be shocked."

¹⁰Then I, Jeremiah, said, "Lord my Master, you have really tricked the people of Judah and Jerusalem. You said to them, 'You will have peace.' But now the sword is pointing at their throats!"

- 11 At that time a message will be given
 to the people of Judah and Jerusalem:
 "A hot wind blows from the bare hills.
 It comes from the desert to my people.
 It is not like the gentle wind that farmers use
 to separate the grain from the chaff.*
- 12 It is a stronger wind than that,
 and it comes from me.
 Now, I will announce my judgment
 against the people of Judah."
- 13 Look! The enemy rises up like a cloud.
 His chariots* look like a wind storm.
 His horses are faster than eagles.
 It will be very bad for us!
 We are ruined!
- 14 People of Jerusalem, wash the evil
 from your hearts.
 Make your hearts pure so you can be saved.
 Don't continue making evil plans.
- 15 Listen! The voice of a messenger
 from the land of Dan* is speaking.
 A person is bringing bad news
 from the hill country of Ephraim.*
- 16 "Report it to this nation.*
 Spread the news to the people
 in Jerusalem.

chaff The seed coverings and stems separated from the seeds of plants like wheat or barley. Farmers saved the seeds but let the wind blow the useless chaff away.

chariot(s) A small wagon used in war.

land of Dan The people from the family group of Dan lived near the border in the northern part of Israel. They would be the first to be attacked by an enemy from the north.

hill country of Ephraim This was the central part of the land that had been the northern kingdom of Israel.

"Report ... nation The Hebrew is hard to understand here.

- Enemies are coming from a
faraway country.
Those enemies are shouting words of war
against the cities of Judah.
- 17 The enemy has surrounded Jerusalem
like men guarding a field.
Judah, you turned against me!
So the enemy is coming against you!”
This message is from the Lord.
- 18 “The way you lived and the things you did
brought this trouble to you.
It is your evil that made your life so hard.
Your evil life brought the pain
that hurts deep in your heart.”

Jeremiah's Cry

- 19 Oh, my sadness and worry is making
my stomach hurt.
I am bent over in pain.
Oh, I am so scared.
My heart is pounding inside me.
I can't keep quiet. Why?
Because I have heard the trumpet blow.
The trumpet is calling the army to war!
- 20 Disaster follows disaster!
The whole country is destroyed!
Suddenly my tents are destroyed!
My curtains are torn down!
- 21 Lord, how long must I see the war flags?
How long must I hear the war trumpets?
- 22 ^LGod said, “My people are foolish.
They don't know me.
They are stupid children.
They don't understand.
They are skillful at doing evil,
but they don't know how to do good.”

Disaster Is Coming

- 23 I looked at the earth.
The earth was empty;
nothing was on the earth.
I looked at the sky.
and its light was gone.*
- 24 I looked at the mountains,
and they were shaking.
All of the hills were trembling.

The earth ... gone Jeremiah is comparing his country to the time before people were put on the earth. See Gen. 1:1.

- 25 I looked, but there were no people.
All the birds of the sky had flown away.
- 26 I looked, and the good land
had become a desert.
All the cities in that land were destroyed.
The Lord caused this.
The Lord and his great anger caused this.
- 27 The Lord says these things:
“The whole country will be ruined.
(But I will not completely destroy the land.)
- 28 So the people in the land will cry
for the dead people.
The sky will grow dark.
I have spoken and will not change.
I have made a decision
and I will not change my mind.”
- 29 The people of Judah will hear the sound
of the horse soldiers and the archers,*
and the people will run away!
Some of the people will hide in caves,*
some people will hide in the bushes,
some people will climb up into the rocks.
All of the cities of Judah will be empty.
No person will live in them.
- 30 Judah, you have been destroyed.
So what are you doing now?
Why are you putting on your best red dress?
Why are you putting on your gold
jewelry?
Why are you putting on your eye makeup?
You make yourself beautiful,
but it is a waste of time.
Your lovers hate you.
They are trying to kill you.
- 31 I hear a cry like a woman having a baby.
It is a scream like a woman
that is having her first baby.
It is the cry of the Daughter of Zion.*
She is lifting her hands in prayer, saying,
“Oh! I am about to faint!
Murderers are all around me!”

archers Soldiers that use bows and arrows in war.

hide in caves This line is from the ancient Greek translation.
The Hebrew text does not have this line.

Daughter of Zion A name for the city of Jerusalem.

The Evil of the People of Judah

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

- ³ Lord, I know that you want people to be loyal to you.
You hit the people of Judah,
but they did not feel any pain.
You destroyed them,
but they refused to learn their lesson.
They became very stubborn.
They refused to be sorry
for the bad things they did.
- ⁴ But I (*Jeremiah*) said to myself,
“It must be only the poor people
that are so foolish.
Poor people have not learned
the way of the Lord.
Poor people don’t know
the teachings of their God.”
- ⁵ So I will go to the leaders of Judah.
I will talk to them.
Surely the leaders know the way
of the Lord.
I am sure they know the law
of their God.”
But the leaders had all joined together
to break away from serving the Lord.
- ⁶ They turned against God,
so a lion from the forest will attack them.
A wolf from the desert will kill them.
A leopard is hiding near their cities.
The leopard will tear to pieces
any person that comes out of the city.
This will happen because the people
of Judah have sinned again and again.
They have wandered away from the Lord
many times.
- ⁷ ¹God said,¹
“Judah, give me one good reason
why I should forgive you.

- Your children have abandoned me.
They made promises to idols
And those idols are not really gods!
I gave your children everything they needed.
But they still were unfaithful to me!
They spent much time with prostitutes.
- ⁸ They are like horses
that have had plenty to eat
and are ready to mate.
They are like a horse that is
calling its neighbor’s wife.
- ⁹ Should I punish the people of Judah
for doing these things?”
This message is from the Lord.
“Yes! You know I should punish a nation
that lives like that.
I will give them the punishment
that they deserve.
- ¹⁰ “Go along the rows of Judah’s grapevines.
Cut down the vines.
(But don’t completely destroy them.)
Cut off all their branches.
Why? Because they don’t belong
to the Lord.
- ¹¹ The family of Israel and the family of Judah
have been unfaithful to me in every way.”
This message is from the Lord.
- ¹² “Those people have lied about the Lord.
They have said,
‘The Lord will not do anything to us.
Nothing bad will happen to us.
We will never see an army attack us.
We will never starve.’
- ¹³ “The ¹false¹ prophets are only empty wind.*
The word of God is not in them.*
Bad things will happen to them.”
- ¹⁴ The Lord God All-Powerful said
these things:
“Those people said I would not punish them.
So Jeremiah, the words I give you
will be like fire.
And those people will be like wood.
That fire will burn them up completely!

wind This is a word play. The Hebrew word for wind is like the word for Spirit.

The word ... them Literally, “and the ‘He said’ is not in them.”

15 Family of Israel, this message
 is from the Lord,
 “I will soon bring a nation from far away
 to attack you.
 It is an old nation.
 It is an ancient nation.
 The people of that nation speak a language
 that you don’t know.
 You can’t understand what they say.
 16 Their arrow bags are like open graves.
 All of their men are strong soldiers.
 17 Those soldiers will eat all the crops
 that you gathered.
 They will eat all of your food.
 They will eat (*destroy*) your sons
 and daughters.
 They will eat your flocks and your herds.
 They will eat your grapes and your figs.
 They will destroy your strong cities
 with their swords.
 They will destroy the strong cities
 that you trust in!

18 This message is from the Lord,
 “But Judah, when those terrible days come,
 I will not fully destroy you.
 19 The people of Judah will ask you,
 ‘Jeremiah, why has the Lord our God
 done this bad thing to us?’
 Give them this answer:
 ‘You people of Judah have left the Lord,
 and you have served foreign idols
 in your own land.
 You did those things, so now
 you will serve foreigners in a land
 that doesn’t belong to you.’”

20 ^lThe Lord said,
 “Tell this message to the family of Jacob.
 Tell this message in the nation of Judah:
 21 Hear this message.
 You foolish people have no sense:
 ‘You have eyes, but you don’t see!
 You have ears, but you don’t listen!’
 22 Surely you are afraid of me.”
 This message is from the Lord.
 “You should shake with fear
 in front of me.
 I am the One who made the beaches
 to be a boundary for the sea.

I made it that way to keep the water
 in its place forever.
 The waves may pound the beach,
 but they will not destroy it.
 The waves may roar as they come in,
 but they can’t go beyond the beach.
 23 But the people of Judah are stubborn.
 They are always planning ways
 to turn against me.
 They turned away from me
 and left me.
 24 The people of Judah never say
 to themselves,
 ‘Let’s fear and respect the Lord our God.
 He gives us autumn and spring rains
 at just the right time.
 He makes sure that we have the harvest
 at just the right time.’
 25 People of Judah, you have done wrong.
 So the rains and the harvest
 have not come.
 Your sins have kept you from enjoying
 those good things from the Lord.
 26 There are evil men among my people.
 Those evil men are like men
 that make nets for catching birds.*
 These men set their traps,
 But they catch men instead of birds.
 27 The houses of these evil men are full of lies,
 like a cage full of birds.
 Their lies made them rich and powerful.
 28 They have grown big and fat
^lfrom the evil things they have done.
 There is no end to the evil things they do.
 They will not plead the case
 of children that have no parents.
 They will not help those orphans.
 They will not let poor people
 be judged fairly.
 29 Should I punish the people of Judah
 for doing these things?”
 This message is from the Lord.
 “You know that I should punish a nation
 such as this.
 I should give them the punishment
 that they deserve.”

men ... birds The Hebrew is hard to understand here.

30 [The Lord says,]
 “A terrible and shocking thing
 has happened in the land of Judah.
 31 The prophets tell lies.
 The priests will not do
 what they were chosen to do.*
 And my people love it this way!
 But what will you people do
 when your punishment comes?”

The Enemy Surrounds Jerusalem

6 Run for your lives, people of Benjamin!
 Run away from the city of Jerusalem!
 Blow the war trumpet in the city of Tekoa!
 Put up the warning flag
 in the city of Beth Hakkerem!
 Do these things because disaster is
 coming from the north.*
 Terrible destruction is coming to you.
 2 Daughter of Zion,* you are like
 a beautiful meadow.*
 3 Shepherds come to Jerusalem,
 and they bring their flocks.
 They set up their tents all around her.
 Each shepherd takes care
 of his own flock.
 4 “Get ready to fight against Jerusalem.
 Get up! We will attack the city at noon.
 But it is already getting late.
 The evening shadows are growing long.
 5 So get up! We will attack the city at night!
 Let’s destroy the strong walls
 that are around Jerusalem.”
 6 This is what the Lord All-Powerful says:
 “Cut down the trees around Jerusalem.
 And build a siege mound* against it.
 This city should be punished.
 Inside this city is nothing but oppression.

priests ... were chosen to do The Hebrew is hard to understand here.

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north to attack the nation of Judah.

Daughter of Zion A name for the city of Jerusalem.

you are like a beautiful meadow The Hebrew is hard to understand here.

siege mound A large pile of dirt and rock that an army put against the wall of a city they were attacking. This made it easier for the enemy soldiers to climb over the wall into the city.

7 A well keeps its water fresh.
 In the same way,
 Jerusalem keeps its wickedness fresh.
 I hear about the looting and violence
 in this city all the time.
 I see the pain and sickness in Jerusalem
 all the time.
 8 Listen to this warning, Jerusalem.
 If you don’t listen
 then I will turn my back on you.
 I will make your land an empty desert.
 No person will be able to live there.”
 9 This is what the Lord All-Powerful says:
 “Gather* the people of Israel
 that were left on their land.
 Gather them the way you would gather
 the last grapes on a grapevine.
 Check each vine, like a worker checks
 each vine when he picks the grapes.”
 10 Who can I speak to?
 Who can I warn?
 Who will listen to me?
 The people of Israel have closed their ears,
 so they can’t hear my warnings.
 The people don’t like the Lord’s teachings.
 They don’t want to hear his message.
 11 But I (Jeremiah) am full of the Lord’s anger!
 I am tired of holding it in!
 “Pour out the Lord’s anger on the children
 that play in the street.
 Pour out the Lord’s anger on the young men
 that gather together.
 A man and his wife will both be captured.
 All the old people will be captured.
 12 Their houses will be given to other people.
 Their fields and their wives
 will be given to other people.
 I will raise my hand and punish
 the people of Judah.”
 This message was from the Lord.
 13 “All the people of Israel want
 more and more money.
 All the people, from the least important
 to the most important people,
 are like that.

Gather Or “Glean.” Farmers were supposed to leave a little of their grain and other crops in the field. In this way, poor people and travelers could always find something to eat. Gathering this leftover grain is called gleaning.

All the people,
 from prophets to priests
 tell lies.

14 My people have been hurt very badly.
 The prophets and priests
 should bandage those wounds.
 But they treat those wounds
 like they are only a small scratch.
 They say,
 ‘It is all right, everything is fine!’
 But it is not all right!

15 The priests and prophets should
 be ashamed
 of the bad things they do.
 But they are not ashamed at all.
 They don’t know enough
 to be embarrassed of their sins.
 So they will be punished with everyone else.
 They will be thrown to the ground
 when I punish the people.”
 The Lord said those things.

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

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

18 So, listen, all you nations!
 Pay attention, you people in those
 countries!*

19 Hear this, people of the earth.
 I am going to bring disaster
 to the people of Judah.
 Why? Because of all the bad things
 that those people planned.
 And because they ignored my messages.
 Those people refused to obey my law.”

20 [The Lord says,] “Why do you bring me incense*
 from the country of Sheba?*

Why do you bring me sweet-smelling
 cane from a far away country?
 Your burnt offerings don’t make
 me happy.
 Your sacrifices don’t please me.”

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

22 This is what the Lord says:
 “An army is coming from the north.*
 A great nation is coming from
 faraway places on earth.

23 The soldiers carry bows and spears.
 They are cruel.
 They have no mercy.
 They are so powerful.
 They sound like the roaring ocean
 as they ride their horses.
 That army is coming ready for battle.
 That army is coming to attack you,
 Daughter of Zion.”*

24 We have heard the news about that army.
 We are helpless from fear.
 We feel trapped by our troubles.
 We are like a woman that is having
 a baby.

25 Don’t go out into the fields.
 Don’t go on the roads.
 Why? Because the enemy has swords
 and there is danger everywhere.

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

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God.

Sheba A land south of Israel, located where part of Saudi Arabia is today. Sheba controlled the spice trade in the time of Jeremiah.

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north to attack the nation of Judah.

Daughter of Zion A name for the city of Jerusalem.

sackcloth A kind of cloth that people wore to show they were sad or crying for dead people.

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

Pay ... countries The Hebrew is hard to understand here.

Cry loud for the dead people.
 Cry like you lost an only son.
 Do these things because the destroyer
 will come against us very quickly.

- 27 “Jeremiah, I (*the Lord*) made you
 like a worker that tests metals.
 You will test my people
 and watch how they live.
- 28 My people have turned against me,
 and they are very stubborn.
 They say bad things about people.
 They are like bronze and iron,
 that are covered with rust and tarnish.
- 29 [They are like a worker
 that tried to make silver pure.]
 The bellows* blew strongly
 [and the fire became hotter].
 But only lead came from the fire!*
 The worker wasted his time
 trying to make that silver pure.
 In the same way, the evil was not removed
 [from my people].
- 30 My people will be called, ‘Rejected Silver.’
 They will be given that name
 because the Lord did not accept them.”

Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon

7 This is the Lord’s message to Jeremiah:
 2Jeremiah, stand at the gate of the Lord’s
 house. Preach this message at the gate:

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

bellows A tool for blowing air on a fire to make the fire hotter.
lead came from the fire Workers melted metals like silver to
 make the metals pure. Lead was the first metal to melt, so the
 workers poured the lead out, leaving the other metal pure.
 Here Jeremiah is saying the people are all bad—they are all
 lead and no silver!

I will ... place This can also mean, “I will live with you.”

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

the temple of the Lord*!” 5If you change
 your lives and do good things, I will let you
 live in this place. You must be fair to each
 other. 6You must be fair to strangers. You
 must do the right things for widows and
 orphans.* Don’t kill innocent people! Don’t
 follow other gods! Why? Because they will
 ruin your lives. 7If you obey me, I will let
 you live in this place. I gave this land to your
 ancestors* for them to keep forever.

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

12““You people of Judah, go now to the
 town of Shiloh. Go to the place where I first
 made a house for my name. The people of
 Israel also did evil things. Go and see what I
 did to that place because of the evil things
 they did.* 13You people of Israel were doing
 all these evil things”—This message is from
 the Lord!—“I spoke to you again and again,
 but you refused to listen to me. I called to
 you, but you did not answer. 14So I will
 destroy the house called by my name in
 Jerusalem. I will destroy that temple* like I

This is ... Lord Many people in Jerusalem thought that the
 Lord would always protect Jerusalem because his temple was
 there. They thought God would protect Jerusalem, no matter
 how evil the people were.

widows and orphans Widows are women whose husbands
 have died, and orphans are children whose parents have died.
 Often these people have no one to care for them.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents,
 grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

adultery Breaking the marriage promise by sexual sin.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought
 the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land
 produce good crops.

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

destroyed Shiloh. And that house in Jerusalem that is called by my name is the temple that you trust in. I gave that place to you and to your ancestors. ¹⁵I will throw you away from me just like I threw away all your brothers from Ephraim.*

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

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

The Lord Wants Obedience More than Sacrifice

²¹The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says these things: “Go and offer as many burnt offerings and sacrifices as you want. Eat the meat of those sacrifices yourselves. ²²I brought your ancestors* out of Egypt. I spoke to them, but I did not give them any commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices. ²³I only gave them this command: ‘Obey me and I will be your

Ephraim This is the northern kingdom of Israel.

Queen of Heaven Probably the false god Astarte. She was the goddess of sex and war. People in Mesopotamia worshiped her. They thought she was the planet Venus, which looks like a star in the sky.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

God, and you will be my people. Do all that I command, and good things will happen to you.

²⁴“But your ancestors* did not listen to me. They did not pay attention to me. They were stubborn and did the things they wanted to do. They did not become good. They became even more evil—they went backward, not forward. ²⁵From the day that your ancestors left Egypt to this day, I have sent my servants to you. My servants are the prophets. I sent them to you again and again. ²⁶But your ancestors did not listen to me. They did not pay attention to me. They were very stubborn and did evil worse than their fathers.

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

The Valley of Slaughter

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

cut ... away This showed Jeremiah was sad.

high places Special places where the people worshiped false gods. These places were often on hilltops, but not always. Some high places were in valleys.

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

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

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

Sin and Punishment

4 Jeremiah, say this to the people of Judah:

The Lord says these things:
 “You know if a man falls down,
 he gets up again.
 And if a man goes the wrong way,
 he turns around and comes back.

Slaughter Usually, this word means to kill an animal and cut it into pieces of meat. But it often means to kill people like they are animals.

tomb(s) A grave dug in a wall of rock.

- 5** The people of Judah went (*lived*) the wrong way.
 But why do those people of Jerusalem continue going the wrong way?
 They believe their own lies.
 They refuse to turn around and come back.
- 6** I have listened to them very carefully.
 But they don't say what is right.
 The people are not sorry for their sins.
 The people don't think about the bad things they have done.
 The people do things without thinking.
 They are like horses running into a battle.
- 7** Even the birds in the sky know the right time to do things.
 The storks, doves, swifts, and thrushes know when it is time to fly to a new home.
 But my people don't know what the Lord wants them to do.
- 8** “You keep saying,
 ‘We have the Lord's teachings!
 So we are wise!’
 But that is not true.
 Why? Because the scribes* have lied with their pens.
- 9** Those ‘wise people’ refused to listen to the Lord's teachings.
 So they are not really wise people at all.
 Those ‘wise people’ were trapped.
 They became shocked and ashamed.
- 10** So I will give their wives to other men.
 I will give their fields to new owners.
 All the people of Israel want more and more money.
 All the people,
 from the least important to most important people,
 are like that.
 All the people,
 from prophets to priests,
 tell lies.

scribes Men that wrote down and copied different writings. Some of those writings included the books that later became the Old Testament. Those men spent so much time with those writings, that they often became experts at knowing what those scriptures (writings) meant.

- 11 My people have been hurt very badly.
The prophets and priests
should bandage those wounds.
But they treat those wounds
like they are only a small scratch.
They say,
‘It is all right, everything is fine!’
But it is not all right!
- 12 They should be ashamed
of the bad things they do.
But they are not ashamed at all.
They don’t know enough
to be embarrassed of their sins.
So they will be punished with everyone else.
They will be thrown to the ground
when I punish the people.”
The Lord said those things.
- 13 “I will take away their fruit and crops,
so that there will be no harvest.”
This message is from the Lord.
“There will not be any grapes on the vine.
There will not be any figs on the fig tree.
Even the leaves will become dry and die.
I will take away the things I gave them.*
- 14 “Why are we just sitting here?
Come, let’s run to the strong cities.
If the Lord our God is going to make us die,
then let’s die there.
We have sinned against the Lord,
so God gave us poisoned water to drink.
- 15 We hoped to have peace,
but nothing good has come.
We hoped that he would forgive us,
but only disaster has come.
- 16 From the land of the family group of Dan,
we hear the snorting*
of the enemy’s horses.
The ground shakes from the pounding
of their hooves.*
They have come to destroy the land
and everything in it.
They have come to destroy the city
and all the people that live there.

- 17 “People of Judah,
I am sending poisonous snakes*
to attack you.
Those snakes can’t be controlled.
Those snakes will bite you.”
This message is from the Lord.
- 18 God, I am very sad and afraid.
- 19 Listen to my people.
Everywhere in this country
people are crying for help.
They say,
“Is the Lord still at Zion*?
Is Zion’s King still there?”
- But God says,¹
“The people of Judah worshiped
their worthless foreign idols.
That made me very angry!
Why did they do that?”
- 20 ¹And the people say,¹
“Harvest time is over. Summer is gone.
And still we have not been saved.”
- 21 My people are hurt,
so I am hurt.
I am too sad to speak.
- 22 Surely there is some medicine in Gilead.
Surely there is a doctor in Gilead.
So why are the hurts of my people
not healed?
- 9** If my head was filled with water,
and if my eyes were a fountain of tears,
I would cry day and night
for my people that have been destroyed.
- 2 If only I had a place in the desert,
a house where travelers spend the night,
I could leave my people.
I could go away from those people.
Why? Because they are all unfaithful
to God.
They have all turned against him.
- 3 “Those people use their tongues like a bow;
lies fly from their mouths like arrows.

I will take away ... gave them The Hebrew of this line is hard to understand.

snorting The sound that comes from breathing very hard through the nose.

hooves The hard part of the feet of certain animals.

poisonous snakes This probably means one of Judah’s enemies.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

- Lies, not truth, have grown strong
in this land.
Those people go from one sin to another.
They don't know me."
The Lord said these things.
- 4 "Watch your neighbors!
Don't trust your own brothers!
Why? Because every brother is a cheat.
Every neighbor talks behind your back.
- 5 Every person lies to his neighbor.
No person speaks the truth.
The people of Judah have taught
their tongues to lie.
They sinned until they were too tired
to come back.
- 6 One bad thing followed another.
And lies followed lies.
The people refused to know me."
The Lord said those things.
- 7 So, the Lord All-Powerful says:
"A worker heats metal in a fire
to test if it is pure.
I will test the people of Judah like that.
I have no other choice.
My people have sinned.
- 8 The people of Judah have tongues
that are like sharp arrows.
Their mouths speak lies.
Each person speaks nice to his neighbor.
But he is secretly planning ways
to attack his neighbor.
- 9 I should punish the people of Judah."
This message is from the Lord.
"You know that I should punish
that kind of people.
I should give them the punishment
that they deserve."
- 10 I (*Jeremiah*) will cry loud for the mountains.
I will sing a funeral song
for the empty fields.
Why? Because the living things
were taken away.
No person travels there now.
The sounds of cattle can't be heard there.
The birds have flown away
and the animals are gone.
- 11 "I (*the Lord*) will make the city of Jerusalem
a pile of garbage.
- It will be a home for jackals.*
I will destroy the cities in the land of Judah,
so no one will live there."
- 12 Is there a man that is wise enough to
understand these things?
Is there some person that has been
taught by the Lord?
Can anyone explain the Lord's message?
Why was the land ruined?
Why was it made like an empty desert
where no people go?
- 13 The Lord answered these questions. He said,
"It is because the people of Judah quit
following my teachings.
I gave them my teachings,
but they refused to listen to me.
They did not follow my teachings.
- 14 The people of Judah lived their own way.
They were stubborn.
They followed the false god Baal.*
Their fathers taught them to follow
those false gods."
- 15 So the Lord All-Powerful,
the God of Israel, says,
"I will soon make the people of Judah
eat bitter food.
I will make them drink poisoned water.
- 16 I will scatter the people of Judah
through other nations.
They will live in strange nations.
They and their fathers never knew
about those countries.
I will send men with swords.
Those men will kill the people of Judah.
They will kill them until the people
are finished."
- 17 This is what the Lord All-Powerful says:
"Now, think about these things!
Call for the women that get paid
to cry at funerals.
Send for the people that are good
at that job.

jackals A wild animal, like a dog. Those animals only live where there are no people.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

- 18 [The people say,]
 ‘Let those women come quickly
 and cry for us.
 Then our eyes will fill with tears,
 and streams of water will come
 out of our eyes.’
- 19 “The sound of loud crying
 is heard from Zion*:
 ‘We are truly ruined!
 We are truly ashamed!
 We must leave our land,
 because our houses have been
 destroyed.
 Now our houses are only piles of rock.’”
- 20 Now, women of Judah,
 listen to the message from the Lord.
 Listen to the words from the Lord’s mouth.
 [The Lord says,]
 “Teach your daughters how to cry loud.
 Each woman must learn to sing
 this funeral song:
- 21 ‘Death has come.
 Death climbed in through our windows.
 Death came into our palaces.*
 Death has come to our children
 that play in the streets.
 Death has come to the young men
 that meet in the public places.’
- 22 “Jeremiah, say these things:
 ‘The Lord says,
 Dead bodies will lie in the fields
 like dung.
 Their bodies will lie on the ground
 like grain a farmer has cut.
 But there will be no one to gather them.’”
- 23 The Lord says:
 “Wise men must not brag
 about their wisdom.
 Strong men must not brag
 about their strength.
 Rich men must not brag
 about their money.

- 24 But if someone wants to brag,
 then let him brag about these things:
 Let him brag that he learned to know me.
 Let him brag that he understands
 that I am the Lord
 that I am kind and fair and
 that I do good things on earth.
 I love those things.”
 This message is from the Lord.

²⁵This message is from the Lord. “The time is coming when I will punish all the people that are circumcised* only in the body. ²⁶I am talking about the people of the nations of Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and all the people that live in the desert. The men in all those countries really were not circumcised in their bodies. But the people from the family of Israel were not circumcised in their hearts.”

The Lord and the Idols

10 Family of Israel, listen to the Lord!
²This is what the Lord says:

- “Don’t live like people from other nations.
 Don’t be afraid of special signs
 in the sky.*
 The other nations are afraid of the things
 that they see in the sky.
 But you must not be afraid of those things.
- 3 The customs of other people
 are worth nothing.
 Their idols are nothing but wood
 from the forest.
 Their idols are made by a worker
 with his chisel.
- 4 They make their idols beautiful
 with silver and gold.
 They use hammers and nails
 to fasten their idols down,
 so they will not fall over.
- 5 The idols of the other nations are like
 a scarecrow in a cucumber field.

circumcised To have the foreskin cut off. This was done to every Jewish male to show he shared in the Agreement God made with Israel. See Gen. 17:9–14.

special signs in the sky People believed that such things as comets, meteors, or eclipses of the sun and moon could be used to learn what was going to happen in the future.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

palace(s) A large house for the king and his family.

- Those idols can't walk.
They can't talk.
And the people must carry them.
So don't be afraid of those idols.
They can't hurt you.
And they can't help you either!"
- 6 Lord, there is no one like you!
You are great!
Your name is great and powerful!
- 7 Every person should respect you, God.
You are the King of all the nations.
You deserve their respect.
There are many wise men among
the nations.
But none of those people are as wise
as you.
- 8 All the people of the other nations are
stupid and foolish.
Their teachings come from worthless
wooden statues.
- 9 They use silver from the city of Tarshish
and gold from the city of Uphaz
and make their statues.
Carpenters and metal-workers make
those idols.
They put blue and purple clothes on
those idols.
"Wise men" make those "gods."
- 10 But the Lord is the only true God.
He is the only God who is truly alive.
He is the King that rules forever.
The earth shakes when God is angry.
The people of the nations can't stop
his anger.
- 11 [The Lord says,]
"Tell this message to those people:
'Those false gods did not make
heaven and earth.
And those false gods will be destroyed
and disappear from heaven
and earth.'"*
- 12 God is the One who used his power
and made the earth.
God used his wisdom and built the world.
With his understanding,
God stretched out the sky [over the earth].
- 13 God causes the loud thunder,
and he causes great floods of water to
fall from the sky.
He makes clouds rise in the sky every
place on earth.
He sends lightning with the rain.
He brings out the wind from his
storehouses.
- 14 People are so stupid!
Metal workers are fooled by the idols
that they themselves made.
Those statues are nothing but lies.
They are stupid.*
- 15 Those idols are worth nothing.
They are something to make fun of.
In the time of judgment,
those idols will be destroyed.
- 16 But Jacob's God* is not like those idols.
God made everything.
And Israel is the family that God chose
to be his own people.
God's name is "Lord All-Powerful."
- Destruction Is Coming**
- 17 Get everything you own and prepare
to leave.
You people of Judah are caught
in the city,
and the enemy is all around it.
- 18 The Lord says:
"This time, I will throw the people of Judah
out of this country.
I will bring pain and trouble to them.
I will do this so they will learn
their lesson."*

They are stupid Literally, "they have no spirit." The Bible teaches that it is the Spirit of God that makes people wise. This might also mean "they are not alive."

Jacob's God Literally, "Jacob's share." This shows that God and Israel had a special relationship—God belonged to Israel, and Israel belonged to God."

they will learn their lesson The Hebrew here is hard to understand.

Tell this message ... earth This part was written in Aramaic, not Hebrew. This was the language people used often when writing to people in other countries. It was also the language spoken in Babylon.

- 19 Oh, I (*Jeremiah*) am hurt badly.
 I am injured and I can't be healed.
 Yet I told myself,
 "This is my sickness,
 I must suffer through it."
 20 My tent is ruined.
 All the tent's ropes are broken.
 My children left me.
 They are gone.
 No person is left to put up my tent.
 No person is left to fix a shelter for me.
 21 The shepherds (*leaders*) are stupid.
 They don't try to find the Lord.
 They are not wise,
 so their flocks (*people*) are scattered
 and lost.
 22 Listen! A loud noise!
 The loud noise is coming
 from the north.*
 It will destroy the cities of Judah.
 Judah will become an empty desert.
 It will be a home for jackals.*
 23 Lord, I know that a person does not really
 own his life.
 People don't really know the right way
 to live.
 24 Lord, correct us!
 But be fair!
 Don't punish us in anger!
 25 If you are angry, then punish the other
 nations.
 They don't know or respect you.
 Those people don't worship you.
 Those nations destroyed Jacob's family.
 They destroyed Israel completely.
 They destroyed Israel's homeland.

The Agreement Is Broken

11 This is the message that came to Jeremiah. This message came from the Lord: ²"Jeremiah, listen to the words of this Agreement.* Tell the people of Judah about

these things. Tell these things to the people living in Jerusalem. ³This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Bad things will happen to any person that does not obey this Agreement.' ⁴I am talking about the Agreement I made with your ancestors.* I made that Agreement with them at the time I brought them out of Egypt. ⁵Egypt was a place of many troubles—it was like an oven hot enough to melt iron. I told those people: Obey me and do everything I command you. If you do this, you will be my people, and I will be your God.

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

I (Jeremiah) answered, "Amen,* Lord."

⁶The Lord said to me, "Jeremiah, preach this message in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. This is the message: Listen to the words of this Agreement.* And then obey those laws. ⁷I gave a warning to your ancestors* at the time I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I warned them again and again to this very day. I told them to obey me. ⁸But your ancestors did not listen to me. They were stubborn and did what their own evil hearts wanted. The Agreement says that bad things will happen to them if they don't obey. So I made all those bad things happen to them! I commanded them to obey the Agreement, but they did not."

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

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north to attack the nation of Judah.

jackals A wild animal, like a dog. Those animals only live where no people are.

Agreement Literally, "Proof." The flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them were proof of the Agreement between God and Israel.

ancestors Literally, "fathers," meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

Amen The Hebrew word "amen" means, "truly," or "indeed." It is used to show that the person agrees with what has been said.

¹¹So the Lord says: “I will soon make something terrible happen to the people of Judah. They will not be able to escape! They will be sorry. And they will cry to me for help. But I will not listen to them. ¹²The people in the towns of Judah and in the city of Jerusalem will go and pray to their idols for help. Those people burn incense* to those idols. But those idols will not be able to help the people of Judah when that terrible time comes.

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

¹⁴“As for you, Jeremiah, don’t pray for these people of Judah. Don’t beg for them. Don’t say prayers for them. I will not listen. Those people will begin to suffer. And then they will call to me for help. But I will not listen.

¹⁵* “Why is my lover (*Judah*)
in my house (*temple*)?
She has no right to be there.
She had done many evil things.
Judah, do you think that special promises
and animal sacrifices will stop you
from being destroyed?
Do you think you can escape punishment
by offering sacrifices to me?”

- ¹⁶ The Lord gave you a name.
He called you,
‘A green olive tree,
beautiful to look at.’
But with a strong storm,
the Lord will set that tree on fire,
and its branches will be burned up.
- ¹⁷ The Lord All-Powerful planted you.
And he said that disaster will come to you.
Why? Because the family of Israel
and the family of Judah
have done evil things.

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

Verses 15–16 We are not sure of the exact meaning of verses 15–16.

They offered sacrifices to Baal.”*
And that made me angry!

Evil Plans Against Jeremiah

¹⁸The Lord showed me that the men of Anathoth* were making plots against me. The Lord showed me the things they were doing, so I knew they were against me. ¹⁹Before the Lord showed me that the people were against me, I was like a gentle lamb waiting to be butchered. I did not understand that they were against me. They were saying these things about me: “Let us destroy the tree and its fruit! Let us kill him! Then people will forget him.” ²⁰But Lord, you are a fair judge. You know how to test peoples’ hearts and minds. I will tell you my arguments. And I will let you give them the punishment they deserve.

²¹The men from Anathoth were planning to kill Jeremiah. Those men said to Jeremiah, “Don’t prophesy* in the name of the Lord, or we will kill you.” The Lord made a decision about those men from Anathoth. ²²The Lord All-Powerful said, “I will soon punish those men from Anathoth. Their young men will die in war. Their sons and daughters will die from hunger. ²³No person from the city of Anathoth will be left. No person will survive. I will punish them. I will cause something bad to happen to them.”

Jeremiah Complains to God

- 12** Lord, if I argue with you,
you are always right!
But I want to ask you about some things
that don’t seem right.
Why are wicked people successful?
Why do people you can’t trust have
such easy lives?
- 2** You have put those wicked people here.
They are like plants with strong roots,
they grow and produce fruit.

men of Anathoth Anathoth was Jeremiah’s home town. The people that were plotting against him there included his own relatives. See Jer. 12:6.

prophesy To speak for God.

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

But in their hearts, they are really far
away from you.

- 3 But you know my heart, Lord.
You see me and test my mind.
Drag those evil people away
like sheep to be butchered.
Choose them for the day of slaughter.
4 How much longer will the land be dry?
How long will the grass be dry and dead?
The animals and birds in the land have died,
And it is the fault of the wicked people.
Yet those wicked people are saying,
“Jeremiah will not live long enough
to see what happens to us.”

God’s Answer to Jeremiah

- 5 “Jeremiah, if you get tired running
in a footrace with men,
how will you race against horses?
If you get tired in a safe place,
what will you do in a dangerous place?
What will you do in the thorn bushes
that grow along the Jordan River?
6 These men are your own brothers.
Members of your own family
are making plans against you.
People from your own family
are yelling at you.
Don’t trust them,
even when they speak to you
like friends.”

The Lord Rejects His People, Judah

- 7 “I (*the Lord*) have abandoned my house.
I have left my own property.*
I have given the one I love (*Judah*)
to her enemies.
8 My own people turned against me
like a wild lion.
They roared at me,
so I turned away from them.
9 My own people have become like
a dying animal surrounded by vultures.
Those birds fly around her.
Come on, wild animals.
Come get something to eat.

house ... my own property That is, the people of Judah.

- 10 Many shepherds (*leaders*) have ruined
my field of grapes.
Those shepherds have walked
on the plants in my field.
Those shepherds have made my
beautiful field
into an empty desert.
11 They changed my field to a desert.
It is dry and dead.
No people live there.
The whole country is an empty desert.
There is no person left to care for that field.
12 Soldiers came to take things
from every place in that empty land.
The Lord used those armies
to punish that land.
People from one end of the land
to the other were punished.
No person was safe.
13 The people will plant wheat,
but they will harvest only thorns.
They will work hard until they
are very tired,
but they will get nothing for all
their work.
They will be ashamed of their crop.
The Lord’s anger caused those things.”

The Lord’s Promise to Israel’s Neighbors

¹⁴This is what the Lord says: “I will tell you
what I will do for all the people that live around
the land of Israel. Those people are very
wicked. They have destroyed the land I gave to
the people of Israel. I will pull those evil people
up and throw them out of their land. And I will
pull the people of Judah up with them. ¹⁵But
after I pull those people out of their land, I will
feel sorry for them. I will bring each family
back to its own property and to its own land.
¹⁶I want those people to learn their lessons well.
In the past, those people taught my people to
use Baal’s* name to make promises. Now, I
want those people to learn their lessons just as
well. I want those people to learn to use my
name. I want those people to say, ‘As the Lord
lives ...’ If those people do that, then I will

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought
the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land
produce good crops.

allow them to be successful and I will let them live among my people. ¹⁷But if any nation does not listen to my message, then I will completely destroy it. I will pull it up like a dead plant.” This message is from the Lord.

The Sign of the Loincloth

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

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

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

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

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

people would be my people. Then my people would bring fame, praise, and honor to me. But my people would not listen to me.”

Warnings to Judah

¹²“Jeremiah, say to the people of Judah: ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Every wineskin* should be filled with wine.’ Those people will laugh and say to you, ‘Of course, we know that every wineskin should be filled with wine.’ ¹³Then you will say to them, ‘This is what the Lord says: I will make everyone that lives in this land helpless, like a drunken man. I am talking about the kings that sit on David’s throne. I am also talking about the priests, the prophets, and all the people that live in Jerusalem. ¹⁴I will make the people of Judah stumble and fall into one another. Fathers and sons will fall into one another.’” This message is from the Lord. “I will not feel sorry or have pity for them. I will not allow compassion to stop me from destroying the people of Judah.”

- ¹⁵ Listen and pay attention.
The Lord has spoken to you.
Don’t be proud.
- ¹⁶ Honor the Lord your God.
Praise him or he will bring darkness.
Praise him before you fall
on the dark hills.
You people of Judah are hoping for light.
But the Lord will turn the light into
thick darkness.
The Lord will change the light into a
very thick darkness.
- ¹⁷ If you people of Judah don’t listen
to the Lord,
I will hide and cry.
Your pride will cause me to cry.
I will cry very hard.
My eyes will overflow with tears.
Why? Because the Lord’s flock*
will be captured.

loincloth A common undergarment in ancient Judah. It was a short skirt that was wrapped around the hips. It reached about halfway down the thighs.

Perath Probably a village near Jerusalem. It is probably the town that is called Parah in the list of the cities of the land of Benjamin in Joshua 18:23. But the name “Perath” also means the Euphrates River.

wineskin A bottle made from the skin of an animal and used for storing wine.

Lord’s flock This is a figurative name for the people of Judah. The Lord is thought of as a shepherd, while his people are seen as his flock of sheep.

- 18 Tell these things to the king and his wife,
 “Come down from your thrones.
 Your beautiful crowns have fallen
 from your heads.”
- 19 The cities in the Negev desert* are locked.
 No person can open them.
 All the people of Judah are taken
 into exile.*
 They were carried away as prisoners.
- 20 Jerusalem, look!
 The enemy is coming from the north!*
 Where is your flock?*
- 21 You were supposed to care for that flock.⌋
 What will you say when the Lord asks you
 to account for that flock?
 You were supposed to teach the people
 about God.⌋
 Your leaders were supposed to lead
 the people.
 But they did not do their job!⌋
 So you will have much pain and troubles.
 You will be like a woman having
 a baby.
- 22 You might ask yourself,
 “Why has this bad thing happened to me?”
 Those things happened because of your
 many sins.
 Because of your sins,
 your skirt was torn off
 and your shoes were taken away.
 They did this to embarrass you.
- 23 A black man can’t change
 the color of his skin.
 And a leopard can’t change his spots.
 In the same way, Jerusalem, you can’t
 change and do good.
 You always do bad things.
- 24 “I will force you to leave your homes.
 You will run in all directions.

- You will be like chaff* blown away
 by the desert wind.
- 25 These are the things that will happen to you.
 This is your part in my plans.”
- This message is from the Lord.
 “Why will this happen?
 Because you forgot me.
 You trusted false gods.
- 26 Jerusalem, I will pull your skirt up over
 your face.
 Everyone will see you,
 and you will be ashamed.
- 27 I saw the terrible things you did.*
 I saw you laughing
 and having sex with your lovers.
 I know about your plans
 to be like a prostitute.*
 I have seen you on the hills
 and in the fields.
 It will be very bad for you, Jerusalem.
 I wonder how long you will continue doing
 your dirty sins.”

Drought and False Prophets

14 This is the Lord’s message to Jeremiah
 about the drought:*

- 2 “The nation of Judah cries for people
 that have died.
 The people in the cities of Judah
 grow weaker and weaker.
 Those people lie on the ground.
 People in Jerusalem cry to God for help.
- 3 The leaders of the people send their servants
 to get water.
 The servants go to the water storage places,
 but they don’t find any water.
 The servants come back with empty jars.
 So they are ashamed and embarrassed.
 They cover their heads from shame.

chaff The seed coverings and stems separated from the seeds of plants like wheat or barley. Farmers saved the seeds but let the wind blow the useless chaff away.

I saw ... you did This is probably talking about worshipping false gods. But part of that worship was having sex with temple prostitutes.

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops following him.

drought A time when no rain falls and the crops become dry and die.

Negev desert The desert area in the southern part of the kingdom of Judah.

exile Being forced to leave one’s home country and being moved to a foreign country.

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north to attack the nation of Judah.

flock Here, the word “flock” refers to all the towns around Jerusalem, as if Jerusalem were the shepherd and the towns of Judah were her flock.

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

¹⁰This is what the Lord says about the people of Judah: "The people of Judah really love to leave me. Those people don't stop themselves from leaving me. So now, the Lord will not accept them. Now the Lord will remember the bad things they do. The Lord will punish them for their sins."

¹¹Then the Lord said to me, "Jeremiah, don't pray for good things to happen to the people of Judah. ¹²The people of Judah might begin to fast* [and pray to me]. But I will not listen to their prayers. Even if they offer burnt

offerings and grain offerings to me, I will not accept those people. I will destroy the people of Judah with war. I will take away their food, and the people of Judah will starve. And I will destroy them with terrible diseases."

¹³But I said to the Lord, "Lord, my Master, the prophets were telling the people something different. They were telling the people of Judah, 'You people will not suffer from an enemy's sword. You will never suffer from hunger. The Lord will give you peace in this land.'"

¹⁴Then the Lord said to me, "Jeremiah, those prophets are preaching lies in my name. I did not send those prophets. I did not command them or speak to them. Those prophets have been preaching false visions, worthless magic, and their own wishful thinking. ¹⁵So this is what I say about the prophets that are preaching in my name. I did not send those prophets. Those prophets said, 'No enemy with swords will ever attack this country. There will never be hunger in this land.' Those prophets will die from hunger and an enemy's sword will kill them. ¹⁶And the people those prophets spoke to will be thrown into the streets. Those people will die from hunger and from an enemy's sword. No person will be there to bury those people, or their wives or their sons or daughters. I will punish them.

- ¹⁷ "Jeremiah, speak this message to the people of Judah:
 'My eyes are filled with tears.
 I will cry night and day without stopping.
 I will cry for my virgin daughter.*
 I will cry for my people.
 Why? Because someone hit them
 and crushed them.
 They have been hurt very badly.
- ¹⁸ If I go into the country,
 I see the people that were killed
 with swords.
 If I go into the city,
 I see much sickness,
 because the people have no food.
 The priests and the prophets
 have been taken away to a foreign land.'"

No person prepares the ground for crops Following the ancient Greek translation. The Hebrew is hard to understand.

jackals A wild animal, like a dog. Those animals only live where no people are.

fast Going without food for a special time of prayer and worship.

virgin daughter This is another name for Jerusalem.

19 “Lord, have you completely rejected
the nation of Judah?
Lord, do you hate Zion*?
You hurt us so badly
that we can’t be made well again.
Why did you do that?
We were hoping for peace,
but nothing good has come.
We were hoping for a time of healing,
but only terror came.

20 Lord, we know that we are evil people.
We know that our ancestors*
did bad things.
Yes, we sinned against you.

21 Lord, for the good of your name,
don’t push us away.
Don’t take away the honor
from your glorious throne.
Remember your Agreement* with us.
Don’t break that Agreement.

22 Foreign idols don’t have the power
to bring rain.
The sky does not have the power
to send showers of rain down.
You are our only hope.
You are the One who made all
these things.”

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

‘I have chosen some people to die.
Those people will die.
I have chosen some people
to be killed with swords.
Those people will be killed with swords.
I have chosen some people
to die from hunger.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.
ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents,
grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.
Agreement Literally, “Proof.” The flat stones with the Ten
Commandments written on them were proof of the Agreement
between God and Israel.

Those people will die from hunger.
I have chosen some people
to be captured and carried
to a foreign country.
Those people will be prisoners in that
foreign country.

3 I will send four kinds of destroyers
against them.’
This message is from the Lord.
‘I will send the enemy with a sword to kill.
I will send the dogs to drag their
bodies away.
I will send birds of the air and wild animals
to eat and destroy their bodies.

4 I will make the people of Judah
an example of some terrible thing
for all the people on earth.
I will do this to the people of Judah
because of what Manasseh* did
in Jerusalem.
Manasseh was the son of King Hezekiah.
Manasseh was a king of Judah.’

5 “No person will feel sorry for you,
city of Jerusalem.
No person will be sad and cry for you.
No person will go out of his way
to even ask how you are!

6 Jerusalem, you left me.”
This message is from the Lord.
“Again and again you left me!
So I will punish and destroy you.
I am tired of holding back
your punishment.

7 I will separate the people of Judah
with my pitchfork.*
I will scatter them at the city gates
of the land.
My people have not changed.
So I will destroy them.
I will take away their children.

8 Many women will lose their husbands.
There will be more widows
than there is sand in the sea.
I will bring a destroyer at noontime.
The destroyer will attack the mothers
of the young men of Judah.

Manasseh Manasseh was the most evil king of Judah,
according to 2 Kings 21:1–16. He worshiped many gods.
pitchfork A tool with sharp points for throwing hay from one
place to another.

I will bring pain and fear
 on the people of Judah.
 I will make this happen very quickly.
 9 The enemy will attack with swords
 and kill the people.
 They will kill the survivors* from Judah.
 A woman might have seven sons,
 [but they will all die.]
 She will cry and cry
 until she becomes weak
 and not able to breathe.
 She will be upset and confused.
 Her bright day will become dark
 from sadness.”

Jeremiah Again Complains to God

10 Mother, I (*Jeremiah*) am sorry
 that you gave birth to me.
 I am the person that must accuse
 and criticize the whole land.
 I have not loaned or borrowed anything.
 But every person curses me.
 11 Truly, Lord, I have served you well.
 In time of troubles, I prayed to you
 about my enemies.

God Answers Jeremiah

12 “Jeremiah, you know that no person
 can shatter a piece of iron.
 I mean the kind of iron
 that is from the north.*
 And no person can shatter a piece of
 bronze either.
 13 The people of Judah have many treasures.
 I will give those riches to other people.
 Those other people will not have
 to buy them.
 [I will give those riches to them.]
 Why? Because Judah has many sins.
 People sinned in every part of Judah
 14 People of Judah, I will make you slaves
 of your enemies.
 You will be slaves in a land
 that you never knew.

survivors People that escaped some disaster. Here this means
 the Jewish people that survived the destruction of Judah and
 Israel by its enemy armies.

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north
 to attack the nation of Judah.

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

15 Lord, you understand me.
 Remember me and take care of me.
 People are hurting me.
 Give those people the punishment
 that they deserve.
 You are being patient with those people.
 But don’t destroy me
 while you remain patient with them.
 Think about me.
 Think about the pain I suffer for you,
 Lord.
 16 Your message came to me
 and I ate your words.
 Your message made me very happy.
 I was happy to be called by your name.
 Your name is Lord All-Powerful.
 17 I never sat with the crowd
 as they laughed and had fun.
 I sat by myself because of your
 influence on me.
 You filled me with anger
 at the evil around me.
 18 I don’t understand why I still hurt.
 I don’t understand why my wound
 is not cured and cannot be healed.
 Lord, I think you have changed.
 You are like a spring of water
 that became dry.
 You are like a spring
 whose water has stopped flowing.
 19 Then, the Lord said,
 “Jeremiah, if you change
 and come back to me,
 then I will not punish you.
 If you change and come back to me,
 then you can serve me.
 If you speak important things,
 and not those worthless words,
 then you can speak for me.
 The people of Judah should change
 and come back to you [Jeremiah].
 But don’t you change
 and be like them.
 20 I will make you strong.
 Those people will think you are strong
 like a wall made of bronze.

The people of Judah will fight against you.
 But they will not defeat you.
 They will not defeat you.
 Why? Because I am with you.
 I will help you and I will save you.”

This message is from the Lord.
 21 “I will save you from those evil people.
 Those people scare you.
 But I will save you from those people.”

The Day of Disaster

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

3The Lord says these things about the sons and daughters that are born in the land of Judah. And this is what the Lord says about the mothers and fathers of those children:
 4“Those people will die a terrible death. No person will cry for those people. No person will bury them. Their bodies will lie on the ground like dung. Those people will die by an enemy’s sword, or they will starve to death. Their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the wild animals of the earth.”

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

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

8“Jeremiah, don’t go into a house where the people are having a party. Don’t go into that house and sit down to eat and drink. 9The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel says these things: ‘I will soon stop the sounds of people having fun. I will stop the happy

sounds people make during a wedding party. This will happen during your lifetime. I will do these things quickly.’

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

14“People make promises and say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives. He is the One who brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.’ But the time is coming,” this message is from the Lord, “when people will not say those things. 15The people will say something new. They will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives. He is the One who brought the people of Israel out of the northern land. He brought them out of all the countries where he had sent them.’ Why will the people say these things? Because I will bring the people of Israel back to the land that I gave to their ancestors.*

16“I will soon send for many fishermen to come to this land.” This message is from the Lord. “Those fishermen will catch the people of Judah. After that happens, I will send for many hunters to come to this land. Those hunters* will hunt the people of Judah on every mountain and hill and in the cracks of

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

fishermen ... hunters This means the enemy soldiers from Babylon.

the rocks. ¹⁷I see everything they do. The people of Judah can't hide from me the things they do. Their sin is not hidden from me. ¹⁸I will pay the people of Judah back for the bad things they did—I will punish them two times for every sin. I will do this because they have made my land 'dirty.' They made my land 'dirty' with their terrible idols. I hate those idols. But they have filled my country with their idols."

- ¹⁹ Lord, you are my strength
and my protection.
You are a safe place to run to
in time of trouble.
The nations will come to you
from all around the world.
They will say,
"Our fathers had false gods.
They worshiped those worthless idols,
but those idols did not help
them at all."
²⁰ Can people make real gods for themselves?
No! They can make statues,
but those statues are not really gods.
²¹ So I will teach those people that make
idols.
Right now I will teach them
about my power and my strength.
Then they will know that I am God.
They will know that I am the Lord."

Guilt Written on the Heart

17 "The sins of the people of Judah
are written down in a place
where they can't be erased.
Those sins were cut into stone
with an iron pen.
Their sins were cut into stone
with a diamond tipped pen.*
And that stone is their heart.
Those sins were cut
into the horns of their altars.*

diamond tipped pen Or, "flint-tipped pen."

horns of their altars The corners of altars were shaped like horns. This was like a place of safety for the people. If a person did something wrong, he could run to the altar. People could punish them only if they proved the person was guilty. Here Jeremiah is saying that there is no safe place for the people of Judah.

- ² Their children remember the altars
that were dedicated to false gods.
They remember the wooden poles
that were dedicated to Asherah.*
They remember those things
under the green trees and on the hills.
³ They remember those things
on the mountains in the open country.
The people of Judah have many treasures.
I will give those things to other people.
People will destroy all the high places*
in your country.
You worshiped at those places.
And that was a sin.
⁴ You will lose the land I gave you.
I will let your enemies take you
to be their slaves.
Why? Because I am very angry.
My anger is like a hot fire,
and you will be burned forever."

Trusting in People, and Trusting in God

- ⁵ The Lord says these things:
"Bad things will happen to people
that trust only other people.
Bad things will happen to people
that depend on other people for strength.
Why? Because those people have stopped
trusting the Lord.
⁶ Those people are like a bush in a desert.
That bush is in a land where no
people live.
That bush is in a hot and dry land.
That bush is in a bad soil.
That bush does not know
about the good things that God
can give.
⁷ But the person that trusts in the Lord
will be blessed.
Why? Because the Lord will show him
that the Lord can be trusted.
⁸ That person will be strong
like a tree planted near water.
That tree has large roots that find the water.

Asherah An important Canaanite goddess. At this time, the people thought she was the wife of Baal.

high places Special places where the people worshiped false gods. These places were often on hilltops, but not always. Some 'high places' were in valleys.

That tree is not afraid
when the days are hot.
Its leaves are always green.
It does not worry in a year
when no rain comes.
That tree always produces fruit.

- 9 “A person’s mind is very tricky!
The mind can be very sick,
and no person truly understands it.
10 But I am the Lord,
and I can look into a person’s heart.
I can test a person’s mind.
I can decide what each person should have.
I can give each person the right payment
for the things he does.
11 Sometimes a bird will hatch an egg
that it did not lay.
A person that cheats to get money
is like that bird.
When that man’s life is half finished,
he will lose the money.
At the end of his life, it will be clear
that he was a foolish person.”

- 12 From the very beginning, our temple*
has been a glorious throne for God.
It is a very important place.
13 Lord, you are the hope of Israel.
Lord, you are like a spring of
living water.
If a person quits following the Lord,
then his life will be very short.*

Jeremiah’s Third Complaint

- 14 Lord, if you heal me,
I truly will be healed.
Save me,
and I truly will be saved.
Lord, I praise you!
15 The people of Judah continue to ask
me questions.
They say,
“Jeremiah, what about the message
from the Lord?
Let’s see that message come true.”

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.
his life will be very short Literally, “He will be written in the dirt.” This might mean a person’s name was written on a list of people that would soon die. Or that a person’s life will soon be gone—like a name written in the sand.

- 16 Lord, I did not run away from you.
I followed you.
I became the shepherd* you wanted.
I did not want the terrible day to come.
Lord, you know the things I said.
You see all that is happening.
17 Lord, don’t ruin me.
I depend on you in times of trouble.
18 People are hurting me.
Make those people ashamed.
But don’t disappoint me.
Let those people be scared.
But don’t scare me.
Bring the terrible day of disaster
to my enemies.
Break them.
And break them again.

Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

¹⁹The Lord said these things to me:
“Jeremiah, go and stand at the People’s Gate,* where the kings of Judah go in and out. [Tell the people my message, and then] go to all the other gates of Jerusalem and do the same things.”

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

shepherd God’s people are sometimes called his “sheep,” and the person that takes care of them is called the “shepherd.”

People’s Gate This might be one of the gates into Jerusalem or perhaps one of the southern gates the non-priests used to go up into the temple.

Sabbath Saturday, a special day of rest and worship for Jews.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

obey me.” This message is from the Lord. “You must not bring a load through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath. You must make the Sabbath day a holy day. You will do this by not doing any work on that day.

²⁵“If you obey this command, then kings that sit on David’s throne will come through the gates of Jerusalem. Those kings will come riding on chariots* and on horses. The leaders of the people of Judah and Jerusalem will be with those kings. And Jerusalem will have people living in it forever! ²⁶People will come to Jerusalem from the towns of Judah. People will come to Jerusalem from the little villages that are around it. People will come from the land where the family group of Benjamin lives.* People will come from the western foothills and from the hill country. And people will come from the Negev.* All those people will bring burnt offerings, sacrifices, grains offerings, incense,* and thank offerings. They will bring those offerings and sacrifices to the temple of the Lord.

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

The Potter and the Clay

18 This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ²“Jeremiah, go down to the potter’s* house. I will give you my message at the potter’s house.”

³So I went down to the potter’s house. I saw the potter working with clay at the wheel. ⁴He was making a pot from clay. But there

chariot(s) A small wagon used in war.

the land where ... Benjamin lives The land of Benjamin was just north of the land of Judah.

Negev The desert area south of Judah.

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God.

Sabbath Saturday, a special day of rest and worship for Jews.

palaces A large house for the king and his family.

potter’s Someone that makes pottery (jars, bowls, etc.) from clay. The Hebrew word also means, “Creator, or “a person that makes new things.”

was something wrong with the pot. So the potter used that clay again, and he made another pot. He used his hands to shape the pot the way that he wanted it to be.

⁵Then the message from the Lord came to me: ⁶“Family of Israel, you know that I (*God*) can do the same thing with you. You are like the clay in the potter’s* hands. And I am like the potter! ⁷There may come a time that I will speak about a nation or a kingdom. I may say that I will pull that nation up. Or maybe I will say that I will pull that nation down and destroy that nation or kingdom. ⁸But the people of that nation might change their hearts and lives. The people in that nation might stop doing evil things. Then I would change my mind. I would not follow my plans to bring disaster to that nation. ⁹There might come another time when I speak about a nation. I might say that I will build up and plant that nation. ¹⁰But I might see that nation doing evil things and not obeying me. Then I would think again about the good I had planned to do for that nation.

¹¹“So, Jeremiah, say to the people of Judah and the people that live in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the Lord says: I am preparing troubles for you right now. I am making plans against you. So stop doing the evil things that you are doing. Each person must change and start doing good things!’ ¹²But the people of Judah will answer, ‘It will not do any good to try. We will continue to do what we want. Each of us is going to do the things his stubborn, evil heart wants.’”

¹³ Listen to the things the Lord says:

“Ask the other nations this question:

‘Have you ever heard of anyone doing the evil things Israel has done?’

And Israel is special to God.

Israel is like God’s bride!

¹⁴ You know that rocks never leave the fields by themselves.*

You know ... themselves This is probably a word play. In Hebrew this sounds like, “Would anyone leave the Rock, Shaddai?” These are two names for God. But this could also be translated, “Does Lebanon’s snow ever melt from Shaddai’s mountain?” This would probably mean Mount Hermon.

You know that the snow on the mountains
of Lebanon never melts.
You know that cool, flowing streams
do not become dry.
15 But my people have forgotten about me.
They make offerings to worthless idols.
My people stumble in the things they do.
They stumble about in the old paths
of their ancestors.*
My people would rather walk
along back roads and poor highways,
than to follow me on the good roads.
16 So Judah’s country will become
an empty desert.
People will whistle and shake their heads
every time they pass by.
They will be shocked
at how the country was destroyed.
17 I will scatter the people of Judah.
They will run from their enemies.
I will scatter the people of Judah like
an east wind that blows things away.
I will destroy those people.
They won’t see me coming to help them.
No! They will see me leaving!”

Jeremiah’s Fourth Complaint

18 Then the enemies of Jeremiah said,
“Come, let us make plans against Jeremiah.
Surely the teaching of the law by the priest
will not be lost. And the advice from the wise
men will still be with us. We will still have the
words of the prophets. So let us tell lies about
him. That will ruin him. We will not pay
attention to anything he says.”

19 Lord, listen to me!
Listen to my arguments
and decide who is right.
20 I have been good to the people of Judah.
But now they are paying me back
with evil.
They are trying to trap me and kill me.
21 So make their children starve in a famine.*
Let their enemies defeat them
with swords.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents,
grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

famine A time when there is not enough rain for crops to grow.
People and animals die without enough food or water.

Let their wives be without children.
Let the men from Judah be put to death.
Make their wives into widows.
Let the men from Judah be put to death.
Let the young men be killed in battle.
22 Let there be crying in their houses.
Make them cry when you suddenly
bring an enemy against them.
Let all this happen because my enemies
tried to trap me.
They hid traps for me to step in.
23 Lord, you know about their plans
to kill me.
Don’t forgive their crimes.
Don’t erase their sins.
Destroy my enemies!
Punish those people while you are angry!

The Broken Jar

19 The Lord said to me: “Jeremiah, go and
buy a clay jar from a potter.* 2Go out to
the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the front of
the Potsherd Gate.* Take some of the elders
(*leaders*) of the people and some priests with
you. At that place, tell them the things that I
tell you. 3Say to those people with you, ‘King
of Judah and people of Jerusalem, listen to this
message from the Lord! This is what the Lord
All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel,
says: I will soon make a terrible thing happen
to this place! Every person that hears about it
will be amazed and full of fear. 4I will do
these things because the people of Judah quit
following me. They have made this a place for
foreign gods. The people of Judah have
burned sacrifices in this place to other gods.
The people did not worship those gods long
ago. Their ancestors* did not worship those
gods. These are new gods from other
countries. The kings of Judah filled this place
with the blood of the innocent children. 5The
kings of Judah built high places* for the god

potter A worker that makes things from clay. The Hebrew word
also means “creator.”

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

high places Special places where the people worshiped false
gods. These places were often on hilltops, but not always.
Some ‘high places’ were in valleys.

Baal.* They use those places to burn their sons in the fire. They burned their sons as burnt offerings to the god Baal. I did not tell them to do that. I did not ask you to offer your sons as sacrifices. I never even thought of such a thing. ⁶Now people call this place Topheth and the Valley of Hinnom. But, I give you this warning. This message is from the Lord: The days are coming, when people will call this place the Valley of Slaughter.* ⁷At this place, I will ruin the plans of the people of Judah and Jerusalem. The enemy will chase these people. And I will let the people of Judah be killed with swords in this place. And I will make their dead bodies food for the birds and wild animals. ⁸I will completely destroy this city. People will whistle and shake their heads when they pass by Jerusalem. They will be shocked when they see how the city was destroyed. ⁹The enemy will bring its army around the city. That army will not let people go out to get food. So the people in the city will begin to starve. They will become so hungry that they will eat the bodies of their own sons and daughters. And then they will begin to eat each other.⁷

¹⁰“Jeremiah, you will tell those things to the people. And while they are watching, you will break that jar. ¹¹At that time, say these things: ‘The Lord All-Powerful says, I will break the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem just like someone breaking a clay jar! This jar can’t be put back together again. It will be the same for the nation of Judah. The dead people will be buried here in Topheth until there is no more room. ¹²I will do this to these people and to this place. I will make this city like Topheth.’ This message is from the Lord. ¹³‘The houses in Jerusalem will become as “dirty” as this place, Topheth. The kings’ palaces* will be ruined like this place, Topheth. Why? Because the people worshiped false gods on the roofs of those

houses.* They worshiped the stars and burned sacrifices to honor them. They gave drink offerings to false gods.’”

¹⁴Then Jeremiah left Topheth where the Lord had told him to preach. Jeremiah went to the Lord’s temple* and stood in the courtyard* of the temple. Jeremiah said to all the people: ¹⁵“This is what the Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel says: ‘I said I would bring many disasters to Jerusalem and the villages around it. I will soon make those things happen. Why? Because the people are very stubborn—they refused to listen and obey me.’”

Jeremiah and Pashhur

20A man named Pashhur was a priest. He was the highest officer in the temple* of the Lord. Pashhur was the son of a man named Immer. Pashhur heard Jeremiah preach those things in the temple yard. ²So he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten. And he had Jeremiah’s hands and feet locked between large blocks of wood. This was at the Upper Gate of Benjamin of the temple. ³The next day Pashhur took Jeremiah out from between the blocks of wood. Then Jeremiah said to Pashhur, “The Lord’s name for you is not Pashhur. Now the Lord’s name for you is Terror on Every Side. ⁴That is your name, because the Lord says: ‘I will soon make you a terror to yourself! I will soon make you a terror to all your friends. You will watch enemies killing your friends with swords. I will give all the people of Judah to the king of Babylon. He will take the people of Judah away to the country of Babylon. And his army will kill the people of Judah with their swords. ⁵The people of Jerusalem worked hard to build things and become wealthy. But I will give all those things to their enemies. The king in Jerusalem has many treasures. But I will give all those treasures to the enemy. The enemy will take those things and carry them away to the country of Babylon.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

Slaughter Usually, this word means to kill an animal and cut it into pieces of meat. But it often means to kill people like they are animals.

palace(s) A large house for the king and his family.

roofs of those houses People built their house with a flat roof, and they used the roof like an extra room.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

courtyard The large area around the temple sanctuary.

⁶And Pashhur, you and all the people living in your house will be taken away. You will be forced to go and live in the country of Babylon. You will die in Babylon. And you will be buried in that foreign country. You preached lies to your friends. [You said these things would not happen.] But all of your friends will also die and be buried in Babylon.”

Jeremiah's Fifth Complaint

⁷ Lord, you tricked me,
and I certainly was fooled.
You are stronger than I am,
so you won.
I have become a joke.
People laugh at me
and make fun of me all day long.
⁸ Every time I speak, I shout.
I am always shouting about
violence and destruction.
I tell the people about the message
that I received from the Lord.
But people only insult me
and make fun of me.
⁹ Sometimes I say to myself,
“I will forget about the Lord.
I will not speak any more
in the name of the Lord!”
But when I say that,
then the Lord's message is like a fire
burning inside of me!
It feels like it is burning
deep in my bones!
I get tired of trying to hold
the Lord's message inside of me.
And finally, I am not able to hold it in.
¹⁰ I hear people whispering against me.
Everywhere, I hear things that scare me.
Even my friends are saying things
against me.
People are just waiting for me
to make some mistake.
They are saying,
“Let us lie and say he did some bad thing.
Maybe we can trick Jeremiah.
Then we will have him.
We will finally be rid of him.
Then we will grab him
and take our revenge on him.”

¹¹ But the Lord is with me.
The Lord is like a strong soldier.
So the people that are chasing me will fall.
Those people will not defeat me.
Those people will fail.
They will be disappointed.
Those people will be ashamed.
And people will never forget that shame.
¹² Lord All-Powerful, you test good people.
You look deeply into a person's mind.
I told you my arguments
against those people.
So let me see you give them
the punishment that they deserve.
¹³ Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord!
The Lord saves the lives of poor people!
He saves them from wicked people!

Jeremiah's Sixth Complaint

¹⁴ Curse the day that I was born!
Don't bless the day my mother had me.
¹⁵ Curse the man that told my father
the news that I was born.
“You have a son,” he said.
“It is a boy!”
He made my father very happy
when he told him that news.
¹⁶ Let that man be the same as
the cities that the Lord destroyed.*
The Lord did not have any pity
on those cities.
Let that man hear shouts of war
in the morning.
And let him hear battle cries
at noontime.
¹⁷ Why? Because that man did not kill me
while I was in my mother's body.
If he had killed me at that time,
my mother would have been my grave,
and I would never have been born.
¹⁸ Why did I have to come out of the body?
All I have seen is trouble and sorrow.
And my life will end in shame.

cities that the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen. 19.

God Rejects King Zedekiah's Request

21 This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the Lord. This was when Zedekiah, the king of Judah, sent a man named Pashhur and a priest named Zephaniah to Jeremiah. Pashhur* was the son of a man named Malkijah. Zephaniah was the son of a man named Maaseiah. Pashhur and Zephaniah brought a message for Jeremiah. ²Pashhur and Zephaniah said to Jeremiah, “Pray to the Lord for us. Ask the Lord what will happen. We want to know, because Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, is attacking us. Maybe the Lord will do great things for us, like he did in the past. Maybe the Lord will make Nebuchadnezzar stop attacking us and leave.”

³Then Jeremiah answered Pashhur and Zephaniah. He said, “Tell King Zedekiah: ⁴This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘You have weapons of war in your hands. You are using those weapons to defend yourselves against the king of Babylon and the Babylonians.* But I will make those weapons worthless.

“‘The army from Babylon is outside the wall around the city. That army is all around the city. Soon I will bring that army into Jerusalem. ⁵I myself will fight against you people of Judah. I will fight against you with my own powerful hand. I am very angry with you, so I will fight against you with my own powerful arm. I will fight very hard against you and show how angry I am. ⁶I will kill the people living in Jerusalem. I will kill people and animals. They will die from terrible sicknesses that will spread all through the city. ⁷After that happens,’” this message is from the Lord, “‘I will give Zedekiah king of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. I will also give Zedekiah’s officials to Nebuchadnezzar. Some of the people in Jerusalem will not die from the terrible sicknesses. Some of the people will not be

killed with swords. Some of them will not die from hunger. But I will give those people to Nebuchadnezzar. I will let Judah’s enemy win. Nebuchadnezzar’s army wants to kill the people of Judah. So the people of Judah and Jerusalem will be killed with swords. Nebuchadnezzar will not show any mercy. He will not feel sorry for those people.’

⁸“Also tell these things to the people of Jerusalem. The Lord says these things: ‘Understand that I will let you choose to live or die. ⁹Any person that stays in Jerusalem will die. That person will die by a sword, or from hunger, or from a terrible sickness. But any person that goes out of Jerusalem and surrenders to the Babylonian army will live! That army has surrounded the city. So no person can bring food into the city. But any person that leaves the city will save his life. ¹⁰I have decided to make trouble for the city of Jerusalem. I will not help the city.’” This message is from the Lord. “‘I will give the city of Jerusalem to the king of Babylon. He will burn it with fire.’

¹¹ “Tell these things to Judah’s royal family:
Listen to the message from the Lord.

¹² Family of David,*
the Lord says these things:
‘You must judge people fairly every day.
Protect the victims* from the criminals.
If you don’t do that,
then I will become very angry.
My anger will be like a fire
that no person will be able to put out.
This will happen because you
have done evil things.’

¹³ “Jerusalem, I am against you.
You sit on top of the mountain.
You sit like a queen over this valley.
You people of Jerusalem say,
‘No person can attack us.
No person can come into our strong city.’
But listen to this message from the Lord.

Pashhur This is not the same Pashhur as the man in Jer. 20:1.

Babylonians The Babylonians were the family group to which King Nebuchadnezzar belonged. They were the group that controlled the land of Babylon at this time.

Family of David The royal family of Judah. God promised that men from David’s family would be kings in Judah.

victims People that have suffered some kind of hurt or trouble. Often this means people that were hurt or lost something during a crime.

14 ‘You will get the punishment you deserve.
I will start a fire in your forests.
That fire will completely burn everything
around you.’”

Judgment Against Evil Kings

22 The Lord said: “Jeremiah, go down to the king’s palace. Go to the king of Judah and preach this message there: ²Listen to the message from the Lord, King of Judah. You rule from David’s throne, so listen. King, you and your officials must listen well. All of your people that come through the gates of Jerusalem must listen to the message from the Lord. ³The Lord says: Do the things that are fair and right. Protect the person that has been robbed from the person that robbed him. Don’t hurt or do anything wrong to orphans* or widows.* Don’t kill innocent people. ⁴If you obey these commands, then this is what will happen: kings that sit on David’s throne will continue to come through the gates into the city of Jerusalem. Those kings will come through the gates with their officials. Those kings, their officials, and their people will come riding in chariots* and on horses. ⁵But if you don’t obey these commands, this is what the Lord says: I, the Lord, promise that this king’s palace* will be destroyed—it will become a pile of rocks.’”

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

“The palace* is tall,
like the forests of Gilead.
The palace is tall
like the mountains of Lebanon.
But I will make it like a desert.
This palace will be empty
like a city where no person lives.
⁷ I will send men to destroy the palace.
Each man will have weapons
that he will use to destroy that house.

orphan(s) Children whose parents are dead. Often these children have no one to care for them.

widow(s) Women whose husbands have died. Often these women had no one to care for them.

chariot(s) A small wagon used in war.

palace A large house for the king and his family.

Those men will cut up your strong,
beautiful cedar beams.
Those men will throw those beams
into the fire.”

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

Judgment Against King Jehoahaz

¹⁰ Don’t cry for the king that has died.*
Don’t cry for him.
But cry very hard for the king
that must leave this place.*
Cry for him
because he will never come back again.
Jehoahaz will never see his homeland again.

¹¹This is what the Lord says about Shallum (Jehoahaz) son of Josiah. (Shallum became king of Judah after his father Josiah died.) “Jehoahaz has gone away from Jerusalem. He will never come back to Jerusalem again. ¹²Jehoahaz will die in the place where the Egyptians have taken him. He will not see this land again.”

Judgment Against King Jehoiakim

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

Agreement Literally, “Proof.” The flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them were proof of the Agreement between God and Israel.

king that has died This means King Josiah that was killed in battle against the Egyptians in 609 B.C.

king ... place This means Josiah’s son, Jehoahaz. He became king after Josiah died. He is also called Shallum. Neco, the king of Egypt, defeated Josiah. And Neco took Jehoahaz off the throne of Judah and made him a prisoner in Egypt.

- 14 Jehoiakim says,
 ‘I will build a great palace for myself.
 I will have large upper rooms.’
 So he builds the house with
 large windows.
 He uses cedar wood for paneling,
 and he paints it red.
- 15 “Jehoiakim,
 having a lot of cedar in your house
 does not make you a great king.
 Your father Josiah was satisfied
 to have food and drink.
 He did what was right and fair.
 Josiah did that,
 so everything went well for him.
- 16 Josiah helped the poor and needy people.
 Josiah did that,
 so everything went well for him.
 Jehoiakim, what does it mean
 “to know God?”
 It means living right and being fair.
 That is what it means to know me.
 This message is from the Lord.
- 17 “Jehoiakim, your eyes look
 only for what benefits yourself.
 You are always thinking about
 getting more for yourself.
 You are willing to kill innocent people.
 You are willing to steal things
 from other people.”
- 18 So this is what the Lord says
 to King Jehoiakim son of Josiah:
 “The people of Judah will not cry
 for Jehoiakim.
 They will not say to each another,
 ‘Oh, my brother,
 I am so sad about Jehoiakim!’
 Oh, my sister,
 I am so sad about Jehoiakim!’
 The people of Judah will not cry
 for Jehoiakim.
 They will not say about him,
 ‘Oh, master, I am so sad!’
 Oh, King, I am so sad!’”
- 19 The people of Jerusalem will bury
 Jehoiakim
 like they were burying a donkey.
- They will just drag his body away
 and throw it outside the gates
 of Jerusalem.
- 20 “Judah, go up to the mountains of Lebanon
 and cry out.
 Let your voice be heard
 in the mountains of Bashan.
 Cry out in the mountains of Abarim.
 Why? Because your ‘lovers’
 will all be destroyed.
- 21 Judah, you felt safe.
 But I warned you!
 I warned you,
 but you refused to listen.
 You have lived like this
 from the time you were young.
 And from the time you were young,
 you have not obeyed me, Judah.
- 22 Judah, the punishment I give
 will come like a storm.
 And it will blow all your shepherds away.
 You thought some of the other nations
 would help you.
 But those nations will also be defeated.
 Then you will really be disappointed.
 You will be ashamed of all the bad things
 that you did.
- 23 King, you live high on the mountain
 in your house made from cedar wood.
 It is almost like you live in Lebanon
 where that wood came from.
 You think you are safe,
 high on the mountain in your big house.
 But you will really groan
 when your punishment comes.
 You will hurt like a woman
 giving birth to a baby.”

Judgment Against King Jehoiachin

24“As surely as I live,” this message is from the Lord, “I will do this to you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah: Even if you were a signet ring* on my right hand, I would still pull

signet ring A special ring worn by a king. The design on the ring could be pressed into a bit of clay or warm wax and leave an impression of the design. This was like a person’s signature—so the ring was very important.

you off. ²⁵Jehoiachin, I will give you to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and the Babylonians. Those are the people you are afraid of. Those people want to kill you. ²⁶I will throw you and your mother into another country where neither of you was born. You and your mother will die in that country. ²⁷Jehoiachin, you will want to come back to your land—but you will never be allowed to come back.”

- ²⁸ Coniah (*Jehoiachin*) is like a broken pot that some person threw away.
He is like a pot that no person wants.
Why will Jehoiachin and his children be thrown out?
Why will they be thrown away into a foreign land?
- ²⁹ Land, land, land of Judah!
Listen to the message of the Lord!
- ³⁰ The Lord says,
“Write this down about Jehoiachin:
‘He is a man that has no children anymore!
Jehoiachin will not be successful in his lifetime.
And none of his children will sit on the throne of David.
None of his children will rule in Judah.’”

23 “It will be very bad for the shepherds (*leaders*) of the people of Judah. Those shepherds are destroying the sheep. They are making the sheep run from my pasture in all directions.” This message is from the Lord.

²Those shepherds (*leaders*) are responsible for my people. And the Lord, the God of Israel, says these things to those shepherds: “You shepherds (*leaders*) have made my sheep run away in all directions. You have forced them to go away. And you have not taken care of them. But I will take care of you—I will punish you for the bad things you did.” This message is from the Lord: ³“I sent my sheep (*people*) to other countries. But I will gather together my sheep that are left. And I will bring them back to their pasture (*country*). When my sheep are back in their pasture, they will have many children and grow in number. ⁴I will place new shepherds

(*leaders*) over my sheep. Those shepherds will take care of my sheep. And my sheep will not be scared or afraid. None of my sheep will be lost.” This message is from the Lord.

The Righteous “Sprout”

- ⁵ This message is from the Lord,
“The time is coming,”
“when I will raise up a good ‘sprout.’”
He will be a king
who will rule in a wise way.
He will do what is fair and right
in the land.
- ⁶ In the time of that good ‘sprout,’
the people of Judah will be saved.
And Israel will live in safety.
This will be his name:
The Lord is our Goodness.*

⁷“So the time is coming,” this message is from the Lord, “when people won’t say the old promise by the Lord any more. The old promise is: ‘As surely as the Lord lives, the Lord is the One who brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.’ ⁸But people will say something new. They will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, the Lord is the One who brought the people of Israel out of the land of the north. He brought them out of all the countries where he had sent them.’ Then the people of Israel will live in their own land.”

Judgments Against False Prophets

- ⁹ A message to the prophets:
I am very sad—my heart is broken.
All my bones are shaking.
I (*Jeremiah*) am like a man that is drunk.
Why? Because of the Lord
and his holy words.
- ¹⁰ The land of Judah is full of people that do the sin of adultery.*
They are unfaithful in many ways.

sprout This means a new king from the family of David.

The Lord is our Goodness This is a word play. In Hebrew, this is like the name Zedekiah, the king of Judah at the time that this prophecy was probably given. But Jeremiah is talking about another king.

adultery Breaking the marriage promise by sexual sin.

- The Lord cursed the land,
and it became very dry.
The plants are dried and dying
in the pastures.
The fields have become like the desert.
The prophets are evil.
Those prophets use their influence
and power in the wrong way.
- 11 “The prophets and even the priests are evil.
I have seen them doing evil things
in my own temple.”
This message is from the Lord.
- 12 “[I will stop giving my messages to them.]
It will be like they must walk
in darkness.
It will be like the road is slippery
for those prophets and priests.
And they will fall in that darkness.
I will bring disaster on them.
I will punish those prophets and priests.”
This message is from the Lord.
- 13 “I saw the prophets of Samaria*
doing wrong things.
I saw those prophets prophesy*
in the name of the false god Baal.*
Those prophets led the people of Israel
away from the Lord.
- 14 Now I have seen the prophets of Judah
do those terrible things in Jerusalem.
These prophets do the sin of adultery.*
They listened to lies—and they obeyed
those false teachings.
They encourage wicked people
to continue doing evil things.
So the people did not stop sinning.
They are like the people of Sodom*.
Now Jerusalem is like Gomorrah* to me.”
- 15 So, this is what the Lord All-Powerful says
about the prophets:

- “I will punish those prophets.
The punishment will be
like eating poisoned food and water.
The prophets started a spiritual sickness.
And that sickness spread through
the whole country.
So I will punish those prophets.
That sickness came from the prophets
in Jerusalem.”
- 16 The Lord All-Powerful says these things:
“Don’t pay attention to the things
that those prophets are saying to you.
They are trying to fool you.
Those prophets talk about visions.*
But they did not get their visions
from me.
Their visions come from their own minds.
- 17 Some of the people hate
the real messages from the Lord.
So those prophets give a different message
to those people.
They say,
‘You will have peace.’
Some of the people are very stubborn.
They do only the things they want to do.
So those prophets say,
‘Nothing bad will happen to you!’
- 18 But none of those prophets
has stood in the heavenly council.*
None of them has seen or heard
the message of the Lord.
None of them has paid close attention
to the Lord’s message.
- 19 Now the punishment from the Lord
will come like a storm.
The Lord’s anger will be like a tornado.
It will come crashing down
on the heads of those wicked people.
- 20 The Lord’s anger will not stop
until he finishes what he plans to do.
When that day is over,
you will understand this clearly.

Samaria The capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. This kingdom was destroyed by God because its people did many bad things.

prophesy To speak for God or for a false god.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

adultery Breaking the marriage promise by sexual sin.

Sodom, Gomorrah Two cities that God destroyed because the people were so evil. See Gen. 19.

vision(s) Something like a dream that God used to speak to people.

heavenly council The people in the Old Testament often talk about God like he was the leader of a council of heavenly beings (angels). Compare 1 Kings 22:19-23; Isa. 6:1-8; and Job chapters 1 and 2.

- 21 I did not send those prophets.
But they ran to tell their messages.
I did not speak to them.
But they preached in my name.
- 22 If they had stood in my heavenly council,
then they would have told my messages
to the people of Judah.
They would have stopped the people
from doing bad things.
They would have stopped them
from doing evil.”
- 23 “I am God, and I am always near!”
This message is from the Lord.
“I am not far away!”
- 24 A person might try to hide from me
in some hiding place.
But it is easy for me to see him.
Why? Because I am everywhere
in heaven and earth!”
The Lord said these things.

25“There are prophets that preach lies in my name. They say, ‘I have had a dream! I have had a dream!’ I heard them say those things. 26How long will this continue? Those prophets think up lies. And then they teach those lies to the people. 27These prophets are trying to make the people of Judah forget my name. They are doing this by telling each other these false dreams. They are trying to make my people forget me in the same way that their ancestors* forgot me. Their ancestors forgot me and worshiped the false god Baal.* 28Straw is not the same thing as wheat! In the same way, those prophets’ dreams are not messages from me. If a person wants to tell about his dreams, then let him. But let the man that hears my message speak my message truthfully. 29My message is like a fire.” This message is from the Lord. “It is like a hammer that smashes a rock.

30“So I am against the false prophets.” This message is from the Lord. “These prophets keep stealing my words from one another. 31I

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

am against the false prophets.” This message is from the Lord. “They use their own words and pretend that it is a message from me. 32I am against the false prophets that preach fake dreams.” This message is from the Lord. “They mislead my people with their lies and false teachings. I did not send those prophets to teach the people. I never commanded them to do anything for me. They can’t help the people of Judah at all.” This message is from the Lord.

The Sad Message from the Lord

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

34“‘A prophet, or a priest, or maybe one of the people might say, ‘This is an announcement from the Lord ...’ [That person lied,] so I will punish that person and his whole family. 35This is what you will say to one another: ‘What did the Lord answer?’ or ‘What did the Lord say?’ 36But you will never again use the expression, ‘The announcement (*heavy load*) of the Lord.’ This is because the Lord’s message should not be a heavy load for anyone. But you changed the words of our God. He is the living God, the Lord All-Powerful!

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

heavy load This is a word play. The Hebrew word for “announcement” is like the word translated “heavy load.”

The Good Figs and the Bad Figs

24 The Lord showed me these things: I saw two baskets of figs arranged in front of the temple* of the Lord. (I saw this vision after Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, took Jeconiah* as a prisoner. Jeconiah was the son of King Jehoiakim. Jeconiah and his important officials were taken away from Jerusalem. They were taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took away all the carpenters and metal-workers of Judah.) ²One basket had very good figs in it. Those figs were like figs that ripen early in the season. But the other basket had rotten figs. They were too rotten to eat.

³The Lord said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I answered, “I see figs. The good figs are very good. And the rotten figs are very rotten. They are too rotten to eat.”

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

⁸“But Zedekiah king of Judah will be like those figs that are too rotten to eat. Zedekiah, his high officials, all the people that are left in Jerusalem, and those people of Judah that are living in Egypt will be like those rotten figs.

⁹“I will punish those people. The punishment will shock all the people on earth. People will make fun of those people from Judah. People will tell jokes about them. People will curse them in all the places where I scatter them.

¹⁰I will send a sword, starvation, and disease against them. I will attack them until they have all been killed. Then they will no longer be on the land which I gave to them and to their ancestors.*

A Summary of Jeremiah’s Preaching

25 This is the message that came to Jeremiah concerning all of the people of Judah. This message came in the fourth year* that Jehoiakim was king of Judah. Jehoiakim was the son of Josiah. The fourth year of his time as king was the first year that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. ²This is the message that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and all the people of Jerusalem:

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

⁵Those prophets said, “Change your lives! Stop doing those bad things! If you change, then you can return to the land which the Lord gave you and your ancestors* long ago. He gave you this land to live in forever. ⁶Don’t follow other gods. Don’t serve or worship them. Don’t worship idols that some person has made. That only makes me angry at you. Doing this only hurts yourselves.”*

⁷“But you did not listen to me.” This message is from the Lord. “You worshiped idols that some person made. And that made me angry. And that only hurt you.”

⁸So, this is what the Lord All-Powerful says, “You have not listened to my messages. ⁹So I will soon send for all the family groups of the

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

Jeconiah This is another name for King Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin was taken prisoner in the year 597 B.C.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

fourth year This was the year 605 B.C.

Doing this only hurts yourselves Following the ancient Greek translation. The Hebrew reads, “Then I will not hurt you.”

north.*” This message is from the Lord. “I will soon send for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He is my servant. I will bring those people against the land of Judah and against the people of Judah. I will bring them against all the nations around you too. I will destroy all of those countries. I will make those lands like an empty desert forever. People will see those countries, and whistle at how badly they were destroyed. ¹⁰I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and happiness in those places. There will be no more happy sounds of the brides and bridegrooms. I will take away the sound of people grinding meal. I will take away the light of the lamp. ¹¹That whole area will be an empty desert. All of those people will be slaves of the king of Babylon for 70 years.

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

Judgment on the Nations of the World

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

¹⁷So I took the cup of wine from the Lord’s hand. I went to those nations and I made those people drink from the cup. ¹⁸I poured this wine for the people of Jerusalem and Judah. I made the kings and leaders of Judah drink

from the cup. I did this so that they would become an empty desert. I did this so that place would be destroyed so badly that people would whistle about it and say curses about that place. And it happened—Judah is like that now!

¹⁹I also made Pharaoh king of Egypt drink from the cup. I made his officials, his important leaders, and all his people drink from the cup of the Lord’s anger.

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

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

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

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

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

²⁷“Jeremiah, say to those nations, this is what the Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says, ‘Drink this cup of my anger. Get drunk from it and vomit! Fall down and don’t get up. Don’t get up because I am sending a sword to kill you.’”

²⁸“Those people will refuse to take the cup from your hand. They will refuse to drink it. But you will say to them, ‘The Lord All-Powerful says these things: You will indeed drink from this cup! ²⁹I am already making these bad things happen to Jerusalem, the city that is called by my name. Maybe you people think that you will not be punished. But you are wrong. You will be punished. I am calling

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north to attack the nation of Judah.

out a sword to attack all the people of the earth.” This message is from the Lord.

- 30 “Jeremiah, you will give them this message:
 ‘The Lord shouts from above.
 He shouts from his holy temple!
 The Lord shouts at his pasture (*people*)!
 His shouts are loud like the songs of
 people walking on grapes
 to make wine.
 31 The noise spreads to all the people on earth.
 What is all the noise about?
 The Lord is punishing the people
 from all the nations.
 The Lord told his arguments
 against the people.
 He judged the people.
 And now he is killing the evil people
 with a sword.’”
 This message is from the Lord.

- 32 This is what the Lord All-Powerful says:
 “Disasters will soon spread
 from country to country.
 They will come like a powerful storm
 to all the faraway places on earth!”

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

- 34 Shepherds (*leaders*), you should be leading the sheep (*people*).
 Start crying you great leaders!
 Roll around on the ground in pain,
 you leaders of the sheep (*people*).
 Why? Because it is now time
 for your slaughter.*
 [I will scatter your sheep.]
 They will scatter everywhere,
 like pieces flying from a broken jar.
 35 There will be no place for the shepherds
 to hide.
 Those leaders will not escape.

- 36 I hear the shepherds (*leaders*) shouting.
 I hear the leaders of the sheep (*people*)
 crying.
 The Lord is destroying
 their pastures (*country*).
 37 Those peaceful pastures are like
 an empty desert.
 This happened because the Lord is angry.
 38 The Lord is like a dangerous lion
 leaving his cave.
 The Lord is angry!
 And that anger will hurt those people.
 Their country will be an empty desert.

Jeremiah’s Lesson at the Temple

26 This message came from the Lord during the first year that Jehoiakim was king* of Judah. Jehoiakim was the son of King Josiah. ²The Lord said: “Jeremiah, stand in the temple* yard of the Lord. Give this message to all the people of Judah that are coming to worship at the temple of the Lord. Tell them everything that I tell you to speak. Don’t leave out any part of my message. ³Maybe they will listen and obey my message. Maybe they will stop living such evil lives. If they change, then I might change my mind about my plans to punish them. I am planning this punishment because of many bad things those people have done. ⁴You will say to them, ‘This is what the Lord says: I gave my teachings to you. You must obey me and follow my teachings. ⁵You must listen to the things my servants say to you. (The prophets are my servants.) I have sent prophets to you again and again, but you did not listen to them. ⁶If you don’t obey me, then I will make my temple in Jerusalem just like my Holy Tent at Shiloh.* People all over the world will think of Jerusalem when they ask for bad things to happen to other cities.’”

⁷The priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah say all of these words at the Lord’s temple.* ⁸Jeremiah finished

slaughter Usually, this means to kill an animal and cut it into pieces of meat. But it often means to kill people like they are animals.

first year that Jehoiakim was king This was 609 B.C.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

my Holy Tent at Shiloh The holy place at Shiloh was probably destroyed during the time of Samuel. See Jer. 7 and 1 Sam. 4.

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

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

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

¹⁶Then the rulers and all the people spoke. Those people said to the priests and the prophets, “Jeremiah must not be killed. The things Jeremiah told us come from the Lord our God.”

¹⁷Then some of the elders (*leaders*) stood up and spoke to all the people. ¹⁸They said, “Micah the prophet was from the city of Moresheth. Micah was a prophet during the time that Hezekiah was king of Judah. Micah said these things to all the people of Judah:

The Lord All-Powerful says:

“Zion* will be destroyed.

It will become a plowed field.

Jerusalem will become a pile of rocks.

Temple Mount will be an empty hill* overgrown with bushes.”

Micah 3:12

¹⁹“Hezekiah was the king of Judah. And Hezekiah didn’t kill Micah. None of the people of Judah killed Micah. You know that Hezekiah respected the Lord. He wanted to please the Lord. The Lord had said he would do bad things to Judah. But Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, and the Lord changed his mind. The Lord didn’t do those bad things. If we hurt Jeremiah, then we will bring many troubles on ourselves. And those troubles will be our own fault.”

²⁰In the past, there was another man that preached the Lord’s message. His name was Uriah. He was the son of a man named Shemaiah. Uriah was from the city of Kiriath Jearim. Uriah preached the same things against this city and this land as Jeremiah did. ²¹King Jehoiakim and his army officers and the leaders of Judah heard Uriah preach. They became angry. King Jehoiakim wanted to kill Uriah. But Uriah heard that Jehoiakim wanted to kill him. Uriah was afraid, so he escaped to the land of Egypt. ²²But King Jehoiakim sent a man named Elnathan and some other men to Egypt. Elnathan was the son of a man named Acbor. ²³Those men brought Uriah from Egypt. Then those men took Uriah to King Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim ordered Uriah to be killed with a sword. Uriah’s body was thrown into the burial place where poor people are buried.

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

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

empty hill Or, “high place,” a term usually used for local shrines (*places for worship*) where people often worshiped idols.

The Lord Made Nebuchadnezzar Ruler

27 A message from the Lord came to Jeremiah. It came during the fourth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah.* Zedekiah was the son of King Josiah. ²This is what the Lord said to me: “Jeremiah, make a yoke* out of straps and poles. Put that yoke on the back of your neck. ³Then send messages to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. Send the messages with the messengers of these kings that have come to Jerusalem to see Zedekiah king of Judah. ⁴Tell those messengers to give this message to their masters. Tell them, ‘The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: Tell your masters that ⁵I made the earth and all the people on it. I made all the animals on the earth. I did this with my great power and my strong arm. I can give the earth to anyone I want. ⁶Now I have given all your countries to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He is my servant. I will make even the wild animals obey him. ⁷All nations will serve Nebuchadnezzar and his son and his grandson. Then the time will come for Babylon to be defeated. Many nations and great kings will make Babylon their servant.

⁸“But now, some nations or kingdoms might refuse to serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. They might refuse to put his yoke* on their necks. If that happens, this is what I will do: I will punish that nation with sword, hunger, and terrible sickness.” This message is from the Lord. “I will do that until I destroy that nation. I will use Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the nation that fights against him. ⁹So don’t listen to your prophets. Don’t listen to the people that use magic to tell what will happen in the future. Don’t listen to people that say they can interpret dreams. Don’t listen to people that talk to the dead or to people that practice

the fourth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah The Hebrew has, “At the beginning of the kingship of Jehoiakim.” This is probably a scribal error. Vs. 3 talks about Zedekiah. Jer. 28:1 mentions the fourth year: 594–593 B.C.

yoke A pole that was put on the shoulders of men or animals to help them carry or pull things. This often showed that a person was a slave.

magic. All those people tell you, “You will not be slaves to the king of Babylon.” ¹⁰But those people are telling you lies. They will only cause you to be taken far from your homeland. I will force you to leave your homes. And you will die in another land.

¹¹“But the nations that put their necks under the yoke* of the king of Babylon and obey him will live. I will let those nations stay in their own country and serve the king of Babylon.” This message is from the Lord. “The people from those nations will live in their own land and farm it.

¹²“I gave the same message to Zedekiah king of Judah. I said, “Zedekiah, you must place your neck under the yoke* of the king of Babylon and obey him. If you serve the king of Babylon and his people, then you will live. ¹³If you don’t agree to serve the king of Babylon, then you and your people will die from the enemy’s sword, from hunger, and from terrible sicknesses. The Lord said those things will happen. ¹⁴But the false prophets are saying: You will never be slaves to the king of Babylon.

“Don’t listen to those prophets, because they are preaching lies to you. ¹⁵I didn’t send those prophets.” This message is from the Lord. “They are preaching lies and saying that the message is from me. So, I will send you people of Judah away. You will die. And those prophets that preach to you will die also.”

¹⁶Then I (*Jeremiah*) said to the priests and all those people, “The Lord says: Those false prophets are saying, ‘The Babylonians took many things from the Lord’s temple.* Those things will be brought back soon.’ Don’t listen to those prophets because they are preaching lies to you. ¹⁷Don’t listen to those prophets. Serve the king of Babylon. Accept your punishment, and you will live. There is no reason for you to cause this city of Jerusalem to be destroyed. ¹⁸If those men are prophets and have the message from the Lord, let them pray. Let them pray about the things that are still in the Lord’s temple. Let them pray about the things that are still in the king’s palace. And let them pray about the

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

things that are still in Jerusalem. Let those prophets pray that all those things will not be taken away to Babylon.”

¹⁹The Lord All-Powerful says this about those things that are still left in Jerusalem. In the temple,* there are the pillars, the bronze sea, the moveable stands, and other things.* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, left those things in Jerusalem. ²⁰Nebuchadnezzar didn’t take those things away at the time he took Jehoiachin king of Judah away as a prisoner. Jehoiachin was the son of King Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar also took other important people away from Judah and Jerusalem. ²¹The Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says this about the things still left in the Lord’s temple, and in the king’s palace and in Jerusalem: “All of those things will also be taken to Babylon. ²²Those things will be brought to Babylon until the day comes when I go to get them.” This message is from the Lord. “Then I will bring those things back. I will put those things back in this place.”

The False Prophet Hananiah

28 In the fifth month of the fourth year* that Zedekiah was king of Judah, Hananiah the prophet spoke to me. Hananiah was the son of a man named Azzur. Hananiah was from the town of Gibeon. Hananiah was in the Lord’s temple when he spoke to me. The priests and all the people were there also. This is what Hananiah said: ²“The Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘I will break the yoke* that the king of Babylon has put on the people of Judah. ³Before two years are over, I will bring back all the things that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took from the Lord’s temple. Nebuchadnezzar has carried those things to Babylon. But I will bring those things back here to Jerusalem. ⁴I will also bring Jehoiachin king of Judah back to this place.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

pillars ... other things For a description of these things, see 1 Kings 7:23–37.

fourth year This was about 593 B.C.

yoke A pole that was put on the shoulders of men or animals to help them carry or pull things. This often showed that a person was a slave.

Jehoiachin is the son of Jehoiakim. And I will bring back all those people of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar forced to leave their homes and go to Babylon.’ This message is from the Lord. ‘So I will break the yoke that the king of Babylon put on the people of Judah!’”

⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah answered the prophet Hananiah. They were standing in the temple of the Lord. The priests and all the people there could hear Jeremiah’s answer. ⁶Jeremiah said to Hananiah, “Amen!* I hope the Lord will really do that! I hope the Lord will make the message you preach come true. I hope the Lord will bring the things of the Lord’s temple* back to this place from Babylon. And I hope the Lord will bring all the people that were forced to leave their homes back to this place.

⁷“But listen to what I must say, Hananiah. Listen to what I say to all you people. ⁸There were prophets long before you and I became prophets, Hananiah. They preached that war, hunger, and terrible sicknesses would come to many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹But the prophet that preaches that we will have peace must be tested to see if he truly was sent by the Lord. If the message of that prophet comes true, then people can know that he truly was sent by the Lord.”

¹⁰Jeremiah was wearing a yoke* around his neck. Then the prophet Hananiah took that yoke from Jeremiah’s neck. Hananiah broke that yoke. ¹¹Then Hananiah spoke loudly, so all the people could hear him. He said, “The Lord says: ‘In the same way I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He put that yoke on all the nations of the world. But I will break that yoke before two years are over.’”

After Hananiah said that, Jeremiah left the temple.*

¹²Then the message of the Lord came to Jeremiah. This happened after Hananiah had taken the yoke* off of Jeremiah’s neck and had broken it. ¹³The Lord said to Jeremiah, “Go and tell Hananiah, ‘This is what the Lord says: You have broken a wooden yoke. But I

Amen A Hebrew word meaning “truly,” “indeed.” It is used to show that a person agrees with what has been said.

will make a yoke of iron in the place of the wooden yoke.’ ¹⁴The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘I will put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these nations. I will do that to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. And they will be slaves to him. I will even give Nebuchadnezzar control over the wild animals.’”

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

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

A Letter to the Jewish Captives in Babylon

29 Jeremiah sent a letter to the Jewish captives* in Babylon. He sent it to the elders (*leaders*), the priests, the prophets, and all the other people that were living in Babylon. These were the people that Nebuchadnezzar took from Jerusalem and brought to Babylon. ²(This letter was sent after King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the carpenters, and the metal workers had been taken from Jerusalem.) ³Zedekiah sent Elasah and Gemariah to King Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah was the king of Judah. Elasah was the son of Shaphan. And Gemariah was the son of Hilkiyah. Jeremiah gave the letter to those men to take to Babylon. This is what the letter said:

⁴The Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says these things to all those people he sent into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵“Build houses and live in them. Settle in the land. Plant gardens and eat the food you grow. ⁶Get married and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons. And let your daughters be married. Do that so they also may have sons and daughters. Have

many children and grow in number in Babylon. Don’t become fewer in number.

⁷Also, do good things for the city I sent you to. Pray to the Lord for the city you are living in. Why? Because if there is peace in that city, then you will have peace also.” ⁸The Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: “Don’t let your prophets and the people that practice magic fool you. Don’t listen to the dreams they have. ⁹They are preaching lies. And they are saying that their message is from me. But I didn’t send it.” This message is from the Lord.

¹⁰This is what the Lord says:

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

¹⁵You people might say, “But the Lord has given us prophets here in Babylon.” ¹⁶But the Lord says these things about your relatives that were not carried away to Babylon. I am talking about the king that is sitting on David’s throne now and all the other people that are still in the city of Jerusalem. ¹⁷The Lord All-Powerful says: “I will soon send the sword, hunger, and terrible sicknesses against those people that are still in Jerusalem. And I will make them the same as bad figs, which are too

captives People that were taken away like prisoners. Here this means the Jewish people that were taken to Babylon.

rotten to eat. ¹⁸I will chase those people that are still in Jerusalem with the sword, with hunger, and terrible sicknesses. And I will make it so that all the kingdoms of the earth will be frightened at what has happened to those people. Those people will be destroyed. People will whistle with amazement when they hear about the things that happened. And people use them as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to people. People will insult them wherever I force those people to go. ¹⁹I will make all those things happen because those people of Jerusalem have not listened to my message.” This message is from the Lord. “I sent my message to them again and again. I used my servants, the prophets, to give my messages to those people. But the people didn’t listen.” This message is from the Lord. ²⁰“You people are captives.* I forced you to leave Jerusalem and go to Babylon. So, listen to the message from the Lord.”

²¹The Lord All-Powerful says this about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah: “These two men have been preaching lies to you. They have said that their message is from me. [But they were lying.] I will give those two prophets to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. And Nebuchadnezzar will kill those prophets in front of all you people that are captives in Babylon. ²²All of the Jewish captives will use those men as examples when they ask for bad things to happen to other people. Those captives will say: ‘May the Lord treat you like Zedekiah and Ahab. The king of Babylon burned those two in the fire!’ ²³Those two prophets did very bad things among the people of Israel. They did the sin of adultery* with their neighbors’ wives. They also spoke lies and said those lies

were a message from me, the Lord. I did not tell them to do those things. I know what they have done. I am a witness.” This message is from the Lord.

God’s Message to Shemaiah

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

²⁹Zephaniah the priest read the letter to Jeremiah the prophet. ³⁰Then the message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: ³¹“Jeremiah, send this message to all the captives* in Babylon: ‘This is what the Lord says about Shemaiah, the man from the Nehelam family: Shemaiah has preached to you, but I didn’t send him. Shemaiah has made you believe a lie. ³²Because Shemaiah has done that, this is what the Lord says: I will soon punish Shemaiah, the man from the Nehelam family. I will completely destroy his family. And he will not share in the good things I will do for my people.’” This message is from the Lord. “I will punish Shemaiah because he has taught the people to turn against the Lord.”

crazy person Shemaiah is referring to Jeremiah here. See verses 27–28.

neck-iron(s) A ring made from iron. People put the rings around prisoners necks. They often fastened a chain to the ring to control the prisoners.

captives People taken away like prisoners. Here this means the Jewish people that were taken to Babylon.

adultery Breaking the marriage promise by sexual sin.

Promises of Hope

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

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

“We hear people crying from fear!
People are scared!
There is no peace!

⁶ “Ask this question, and consider it:
Can a man have a baby? Of course not!
Then why do I see every strong man
holding his stomach
like a woman having labor pains?
Why is every person’s face turning white
like a dead man?
⌋ Why? Because the men are very scared.⌋

⁷ “This is a very important time for Jacob.*
This is a time of great trouble.
There will never be another time like this.
But Jacob will be saved.

⁸“At that time,” this message is from the Lord All-Powerful, “I will break the yoke* from the necks of the people of Israel and Judah. And I will break the ropes holding you. People from foreign countries will never again force my people to be slaves. ⁹The people of Israel and Judah will not serve foreign countries. No! They will serve the

exile Being forced to leave one’s home country.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

yoke A pole that was put on the shoulders of men or animals to help them carry or pull things. This often showed that a person was a slave.

Lord their God. And they will serve David their king,* I will send that king to them.

¹⁰ “So, Jacob* my servant, don’t be afraid!”
This message is from the Lord.
“Israel, don’t be afraid.
I will save you from that faraway place.
You are captives* in that faraway land,
But I will save your descendants.*
⌋ I will bring them back⌋ from that land.
Jacob will have peace again.
People will not bother Jacob.
There will be no enemy to scare my people.”
¹¹ People of Israel and Judah, I am with you.”
This message is from the Lord.
“And I will save you.
I sent you to those nations.
But I will completely destroy
all those nations.
It is true, I will destroy those nations,
but I will not destroy you.
You must be punished
for the bad things you did.
But I will discipline you fairly.”

¹² The Lord says:
“You people of Israel and Judah
have a wound that can’t be cured.
You have an injury that will not heal.”
¹³ There is no person to care for your sores.
So you will not be healed.
¹⁴ You became friends with many nations.
But those nations don’t care about you.
Your ‘friends’ have forgotten you.
I hurt you like an enemy.
I punished you very hard.
I did this because of your great guilt.
I did this because of your many sins.
¹⁵ Israel and Judah, why are you yelling
about your wound?
Your wound is painful,
and there is no cure for it.
I, the Lord, did these things to you
because of your great guilt.
I did these things
because of your many sins.

David their king This means another king of Israel, that will be great like King David.

captives People that were taken away like prisoners. Here this means the Jewish people that were taken to Babylon.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

- 16 Those nations destroyed you,
but now they have been destroyed.
Israel and Judah,
your enemies will become captives.*
Those people stole things from you.
But other people will steal from them.
Those people took things from you in war.
But other people will take things
from them in war.
- 17 And I will bring your health back.
And I will heal your wounds.”
This message is from the Lord.
“Why? Because other people
said you were outcasts.*
Those people said,
‘No one cares about Zion.*’”
- 18 The Lord says:
“Jacob’s* people are now in captivity.
But they will come back.
And I will have pity on Jacob’s houses.
The city* is now only an empty hill
covered with ruined buildings.
But the city will be built again on its hill.
And the king’s house will be built again
where it should be.
- 19 People in those places
will sing songs of praise.
And there will be the sound of laughter.
I will give them many children.
Israel and Judah will not be small.
I will bring honor to them.
No person will look down on them.
- 20 Jacob’s family will be
like the family of Israel long ago.
I will make Israel and Judah strong,
and I will punish the people
that hurt them.
- 21 One of their own people will lead them.
That ruler will come from my people.
People can come close to me
only if I ask them to.

captives People that were taken away like prisoners. Here this means the Jewish people that were taken to Babylon.

outcasts People that were thrown out of some special group of people. Usually other people don’t like or respect outcasts.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

city This probably refers to Jerusalem. But it might also mean all of the cities of Israel and Judah.

- So I will ask that leader to come to me,
and he will be close to me.
- 22 You will be my people.
And I will be your God.”
- 23 The Lord was very angry!
He punished the people.
The punishment came like a storm.
The punishment came like a tornado
against those wicked people.
- 24 The Lord will be angry
until he finishes punishing the people.
He will be angry until he finishes
the punishment he planned.
When that day comes,
you people of Judah will understand.

The New Israel

31 The Lord said these things, “At that time, I will be the God of all the family groups of Israel. And they will be my people.”

- 2 The Lord says:
“The people who escaped the enemy’s sword
will find comfort in the desert.
Israel will go there looking for rest.”
- 3 From far away, the Lord
will appear to his people.
- The Lord says,¹
“I love you people with a love
that continues forever.
That is why I have continued
showing you kindness.
- 4 Israel, my bride, I will build you again.
You will be a country again.
You will pick up your tambourines again.
You will dance with all the other people
that are having fun.
- 5 You farmers of Israel will plant
fields of grapes again.
You will plant those vineyards on the hills
around the city of Samaria.
And those farmers will enjoy the fruit
from those vineyards.
- 6 There will be a time when watchmen*
shout this message:

watchmen Usually this means a guard that stands on the city walls watching for people coming to the city. But here it probably means the prophets.

- ‘Come, let’s go up to Zion*
to worship the Lord our God!’
Even the watchmen in the hill country of
Ephraim* will shout that message.”
- 7 The Lord says:
“Be happy and sing for Jacob*!
Shout for Israel,
the greatest of the nations!
Sing your praises and shout:
‘The Lord saved his people!*He has saved the people that are left alive
from the nation of Israel.’
- 8 Remember, I will bring Israel
from that country in the north.
I will gather the people of Israel
from the faraway places on earth.
Some of the people will be blind
and crippled.
Some of the women will be pregnant
and ready to give birth.
But many, many people will come back.
- 9 Those people will come back crying.
But I will lead them and comfort them.
I will lead those people by streams of water.
I will lead them on an easy road,
so that they will not stumble.
I will lead them in that way
because I am Israel’s father.
And Ephraim* is my firstborn son.
- 10 “Nations, listen to this message
from the Lord!
Tell this message in the faraway lands
by the sea:
‘God scattered the people of Israel
But God will bring them back together.
And he will watch over his flock (*people*)
like a shepherd.’
- 11 The Lord will bring Jacob* back.
The Lord will save his people from people
that were stronger than them.
- 12 The people of Israel will come
to the top of Zion,*
and they will shout with joy.
- Their faces will shine with happiness
about the good things the Lord
gives them.
The Lord will give them grain, new wine,
olive oil, young sheep, and cows.
They will be like a garden
that has plenty of water.
And the people of Israel will not
be troubled anymore.
- 13 Then the young women of Israel
will be happy and dance.
And the young men and old men
will join in the dancing.
I will change their sadness into happiness.
I will comfort the people of Israel.
I will change their sadness to happiness.
- 14 I will give the priests plenty of food.
And my people will be filled and satisfied
with the good things I give them.”
This message is from the Lord.
- 15 The Lord says:
“A sound will be heard in Ramah.
It will be bitter crying and
much sadness.
Rachel* will be crying for her children.
Rachel will refuse to be comforted,
because her children are dead.”
- 16 But the Lord says:
“Stop crying!
Don’t fill your eyes with tears!
You will be rewarded for your work!”
This message is from the Lord.
“The people of Israel will come back from
their enemy’s land.
- 17 Israel, there is hope for you.”
This message is from the Lord.
“Your children will come back
to their own land.
- 18 I have heard Ephraim* crying.
I heard Ephraim say these things:
‘Lord, you really punished me!
And I learned my lesson.
I was like a calf that was never trained.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

Ephraim This means the northern kingdom of Israel.

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

The Lord saved his people Or, “Lord, save your people!” This
is often a shout of victory.

Rachel Jacob’s wife. Here this means all the women that are
crying for their husbands and children that have died in the
war with Babylon.

- Please stop punishing me,
and I will come back to you.
You truly are the Lord my God.
- 19 Lord, I wandered away from you.
But I learned about the bad things I did.
So I changed my heart and life.
I am ashamed and embarrassed about the
foolish things I did when I was young.’
- 20 ^lGod says,^l
“You know that Ephraim* is my dear son.
I love that child.
Yes, I often criticized Ephraim,
but I still think about him.
I love him very much.
And I really do want to comfort him.”
This message is from the Lord.
- 21 “People of Israel, fix the road signs.
Put up the signs that show the way home.
Watch the road.
Remember the road you are leaving on.
Israel, my bride, come home.
Come back to your towns.
- 22 Unfaithful daughter,
how long will you wander around?
^lWhen will you come home?’”

When the Lord creates something new in
the land: A woman surrounding a man.*

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

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

Ephraim This means the northern kingdom of Israel.

A woman surrounding a man This line is hard to understand. It might be part of some saying that was familiar to the people in Jeremiah’s time.

good home and holy mountain This was a blessing for the temple and for Zion, the mountain the temple was built on.

²⁶After hearing that, I (*Jeremiah*) woke up and looked around. That was a very pleasant sleep.

²⁷“The days are coming,” this message is from the Lord, “when I will help the family of Israel and Judah to grow. I will help their children and animals to grow too. It will be like planting and caring for a plant. ²⁸In the past, I watched over Israel and Judah, but I watched for the time to pull them up. I tore them down. I destroyed them. I gave many troubles to them. But now, I will watch over them to build them up and make them strong.” This message is from the Lord.

²⁹“People won’t use this saying anymore:

The parents ate the sour grapes,
but the children got the sour taste.*

³⁰No, each person will die for his own sin. The person that eats sour grapes will get the sour taste.”

The New Agreement

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

³³“In the future, I will make this Agreement* with the people of Israel.” This message is from the Lord. “I will put my teachings in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴People will not have to teach their neighbors and relatives to know the Lord. Why? Because all people, from the least important to the greatest, will know me.” This message is from

parents ... sour taste This means that children were suffering for the things their parents did.

Agreement Literally, “Proof.” The flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them were proof of the Agreement between God and Israel.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

the Lord. “I will forgive them for the bad things they did. I won’t remember their sins.”

The Lord Will Never Leave Israel

- 35 The Lord says:
 “The Lord makes the sun shine in the day.
 And the Lord makes the moon and
 the stars shine at night.
 The Lord stirs up the sea so that its waves
 crash on the shore.
 The Lord All-Powerful is his name.”
- The Lord says these things:
- 36 “The descendants* of Israel will never
 stop being a nation.
 That would happen only if I lost control
 of the sun, moon, stars, and sea.”
- 37 The Lord says:
 “I’ll never reject the descendants of Israel.
 That would happen only if people could
 measure the sky above,
 and learn all the secrets
 of the earth below.
 Only then would I reject
 the descendants of Israel.
 Only then would I reject them
 for the bad things they have done.”
 This message is from the Lord.

The New Jerusalem

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

descendants A person’s children and their future families.
measuring line A rope or chain for measuring property lines.

Jeremiah Buys a Field

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

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

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

So I knew that this was a message from the Lord. ⁹I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel. I weighed out 17 shekels* of

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

prophesied Spoke for God.

shekel Or, “2/5 of an ounce.”

silver for him. ¹⁰I signed the deed.* And I had a copy of the deed sealed up.* And I got some men to witness the things I had done. And I weighed out the silver on the scales. ¹¹Then I took the sealed copy of the deed and the copy that was not sealed, ¹²and I gave them to Baruch. Baruch was the son of Neriah. Neriah was the son of Mahseiah. The sealed copy of the deed had all the terms and conditions of my purchase. I gave this deed to Baruch while my cousin Hanamel and the other witnesses were there. Those witnesses also signed the deed. There were also many people of Judah sitting in the courtyard that saw me give the deed to Baruch.

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

¹⁶After I gave the deed to Baruch son of Neriah I prayed to the Lord. I said:

¹⁷“Lord God, you made the skies and the earth. You made them with your great power. There is nothing too wonderful for you to do. ¹⁸Lord, you are loyal and kind to thousands of people. But you also bring punishment to children for their fathers’ sins. Great and powerful God, your name is the Lord All-Powerful. ¹⁹You plan and do great things, Lord. You see everything that people do. You give reward to people that do good things and you punish people that do bad things—you give them what they deserve. ²⁰Lord, you did powerful miracles in the land of Egypt. You have done powerful miracles even until today. You did those things in Israel

and you did those things wherever there are people. You have become famous because of these things. ²¹Lord, you used powerful miracles and brought your people Israel out of Egypt. You used your own powerful hand to do those things. Your power was amazing!

²²“Lord, you gave this land to the people of Israel. This is the land you promised to give to their ancestors* long ago. It is a very good land. It is a good land with many good things. ²³The people of Israel came into this land and took it for their own. But those people didn’t obey you. They didn’t follow your teachings. They didn’t do the things you commanded. So you made all these terrible things happen to the people of Israel.

²⁴“And now, the enemy has surrounded the city. They are building ramps, so that they can get over the walls of Jerusalem and capture it. By using their swords, and hunger, and terrible sicknesses, the Babylonian army will defeat the city of Jerusalem. The Babylonian army is attacking the city now. Lord, you said this would happen—and now you see it is happening.

²⁵“Lord my Master, all of those bad things are happening. But now you are telling me, ‘Jeremiah, buy the field with silver and choose some men to witness the purchase.’ You are telling me this while the Babylonian army is ready to capture the city. [Why should I waste my money like that?]”

²⁶Then the message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: ²⁷“Jeremiah, I am the Lord. I am the God of every person on the earth. Jeremiah, you know that nothing is impossible for me.” ²⁸The Lord also said, “I will soon give the city of Jerusalem to the Babylonian army and to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. That army will capture the city. ²⁹The Babylonian army is already attacking the city of Jerusalem.

deed A piece of paper that proves a person owns a certain piece of property.

sealed up Important documents were rolled up and tied with a string. Then a piece of clay or wax was put on the string. Then a person’s mark was put in that clay or wax. This way, people could prove nothing in the document was changed.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

They will soon enter the city and start a fire. They will burn this city down. There are houses in this city where the people of Jerusalem made me angry by offering sacrifices to the false god Baal* on the housetops. And the people poured out drink offerings to other idol gods. The Babylonian army will burn down those houses. ³⁰I have watched the people of Israel and the people of Judah. Everything they do is evil. They have done evil things since they were young. The people of Israel have made me very angry. They have made me angry because they worship idols that they made with their own hands.” This message is from the Lord. ³¹“From the time that Jerusalem was built until now, the people of this city have made me angry. This city has made me so angry, I must remove it from my sight. ³²I will destroy Jerusalem because of all the evil things the people of Israel and Judah have done. The people, their kings, leaders, their priests and prophets, the men of Judah, and the people of Jerusalem have all made me angry.

³³“Those people should have come to me for help. But they turned their backs to me. I tried to teach those people again and again. But they would not listen to me. I tried to correct them, but they would not listen. ³⁴Those people have made their idols—and I hate those idols. They put their idols in the temple* that is called by my name. In this way, they made my temple ‘dirty.’

³⁵“In the Valley of Ben Hinnom,* those people built high places* to the false god Baal.* They built those worship places so that they could burn their sons and daughters as child sacrifices. I never commanded them to do

such a terrible thing. I never even thought the people of Judah would do such a terrible thing.

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

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

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

Baal The Canaanite people believed that this false god brought the rain and storms. They also thought that he made the land produce good crops.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

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

high places Special places where the people worshiped false gods. These places were often on hilltops, but not always. Some ‘high places’ were in valleys.

deed(s) A piece of paper that proves a person owns a certain piece of property.

southern desert. That will happen because I will bring your people back home.” This message is from the Lord.

The Promise of God

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

⁵“The people in Jerusalem have done many bad things. I am angry at those people. I have turned against them. So I will kill many, many people there. The Babylonian army will come to fight against Jerusalem. There will be many, many dead bodies in the houses in Jerusalem.

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

¹⁰“You people are saying, ‘Our country is an empty desert. There are no people or animals living there.’ It is now quiet in the streets of Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah. But it will be noisy there soon. ¹¹There will be sounds of joy and happiness. There will be the happy sounds of a bride and groom. There

will be the sounds of people bringing their gifts to the Lord’s temple.* Those people will say, ‘Praise the Lord All-Powerful! The Lord is good! The Lord’s kindness continues forever!’ The people will say these things because I will again do good things to Judah. It will be like in the beginning.” The Lord said these things.

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

The Good Branch

¹⁴This message is from the Lord: “I made a special promise to the people of Israel and Judah. The time is coming when I will do the things I promised. ¹⁵At that time, I will make a good ‘branch’ grow from David’s family. That good ‘branch’ will do the things that are good and right for the country. ¹⁶At the time of this ‘branch,’ the people of Judah will be saved. The people will live safely in Jerusalem. The branch’s name is: ‘The Lord is Good.’”

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

¹⁹This message from the Lord came to Jeremiah. ²⁰The Lord says, “I have an agreement with day and night. I agreed that they will continue forever. You can’t change that agreement. Day and night will always come at the right time. If you could change that agreement, ²¹then you could change my Agreement with David and Levi. Then

courtyard An area around the king’s house.
palace(s) A large house for the king and his family.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.
Negev The desert area south of Judah.

descendants* from David would not be the kings and the family of Levi would not be priests. ²²But I will give many descendants to my servant David and to the family group of Levi. They will be as many as the stars in the sky—no person can count all those stars. And they will be as many as the pieces of sand on the seashore—no person can count those pieces of sand.”

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

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

A Warning to Zedekiah King of Judah

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

²This was the message: “This is what the Lord, the God of the people of Israel, says: Jeremiah, go to Zedekiah king of Judah and give him this message: ‘Zedekiah, this is what the Lord says: I will give the city of Jerusalem to the king of Babylon very soon, and he will burn it down. ³Zedekiah, you will not escape from the king of Babylon. You will surely be caught and given to him. You will see the king of Babylon with your own eyes. He will talk to you face to face, and you will go to

Babylon. ⁴But listen to the promise of the Lord, Zedekiah king of Judah. This is what the Lord says about you: You will not be killed with a sword. ⁵You will die in a peaceful way. People made funeral fires to honor your ancestors,* the kings that ruled before you became king. In the same way, people will make a funeral fire to honor you. They will cry for you. They will sadly say, ‘Oh, master!’” I myself make this promise to you.” This message is from the Lord.

⁶So Jeremiah gave the message from the Lord to Zedekiah in Jerusalem. ⁷This was while the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem. The army of Babylon was also fighting against the cities of Judah that had not been captured. Those cities were Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities left in the land of Judah.

The People Break One of their Agreements

⁸King Zedekiah had made an agreement with all the people in Jerusalem to give freedom to all the Hebrew slaves. A message from the Lord came to Jeremiah after Zedekiah had made that agreement. ⁹Every person was supposed to free his Hebrew slaves. All male and female Hebrew slaves were to be set free. No one was supposed to keep another person from the family group of Judah in slavery. ¹⁰So all the leaders of Judah and all the people accepted this agreement. Every person would free their male and female slaves and no longer keep them as slaves. Every person agreed, and so all the slaves were set free. ¹¹But after that,* the people that had slaves changed their minds. So they took the people they had set free and made them slaves again.

¹²Then the message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: ¹³Jeremiah, this is what the Lord, the God of the people of Israel, says: “I

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

after that In the summer of 588 B.C., the Egyptian army came to help the people of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian army had to leave Jerusalem briefly to fight the Egyptians. The people of Jerusalem thought that God had helped them, and that things were back to normal, so they didn’t keep their promise. They took the slaves that they had set free back into slavery.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

Jacob’s Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

brought your ancestors* out of the land of Egypt, where they were slaves. When I did that, I made an Agreement with them. ¹⁴I said to your ancestors: ‘At the end of every seven years, each person must set his Hebrew slaves free. If you have a fellow Hebrew that has sold himself to you, you must let him go free after he has served you for six years.’ But your ancestors didn’t listen to me or pay attention to me. ¹⁵A short time ago, you changed your hearts to do what is right. Each of you gave freedom to his fellow Hebrews that were slaves. And you even made an agreement before me in the temple* that is called by my name. ¹⁶But now, you have changed your minds. You have shown you don’t honor my name. How did you do this? Each of you has taken back the male and female slaves that you had set free. You have forced them to become slaves again.

¹⁷“So this is what the Lord says: ‘You people have not obeyed me. You have not given freedom to your fellow Hebrews. Because you have not kept the agreement, I will give “freedom.” This is the message of the Lord. *(I will give)* “freedom” to be killed by swords, by terrible sicknesses, and by hunger! I will make you become something that terrifies all the kingdoms of the earth, when they hear about you. ¹⁸I will hand over the men that broke my Agreement, and have not kept the promises they made before me. These men cut a calf into two pieces before me and walked between the two pieces.* ¹⁹These are the people that walked between the two pieces of the calf when they made the Agreement before me: the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the important officials of the court, the priests, and the people of the land. ²⁰So I will give those people to their enemies and to every person that wants to kill them.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

These men ... two pieces This is part of a ceremony people used when they made an important agreement. An animal was cut into two pieces. The people that were making the agreement would walk between the pieces. Then they would say something like, “I hope this same thing happens to me if I don’t keep the agreement.” See Gen. 15.

The bodies of those people will become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth. ²¹I will give Zedekiah king of Judah, and his leaders to their enemies and to every person that wants to kill them. I will give Zedekiah and his people to the army of the king of Babylon, even though that army has left Jerusalem.* ²²But I will give the order,’ this message is from the Lord, ‘to bring the Babylonian army back to Jerusalem. That army will fight against Jerusalem. They will capture it and set it on fire and burn it down. And I will destroy the cities in the land of Judah. Those cities will become empty deserts. No people will live there.’”

The Good Example of the Recabite Family

35 During the time when Jehoiakim was king of Judah, the message from the Lord came to Jeremiah. Jehoiakim was the son of King Josiah. This was the message from the Lord: ²“Jeremiah, go to the Recabite family.* Invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the temple* of the Lord. Offer them wine to drink.”

³So I (*Jeremiah*) went to get Jaazaniah.* Jaazaniah was the son of a man named Jeremiah,* that was the son of a man named Habazziniah. And I got all of Jaazaniah’s brothers and sons. I got the whole family of the Recabites together. ⁴Then I brought the Recabite family into the temple of the Lord. We went into the room called the room of the sons of Hanan. Hanan was the son of a man named Igdaliah. Hanan was a man of God.* The room was next to the room where the princes of Judah stay. It was over the room of Maaseiah son of Shallum. Maaseiah was the doorkeeper in the temple. ⁵Then I (*Jeremiah*)

left Jerusalem An army from Egypt came to help the people of Jerusalem in the summer of 588 B.C. So the Babylonian army left Jerusalem for a short time to fight them. See Jer. 37:5. See also the footnote to Jer. 34:11.

Recabite family A group of people descended from Jonadab son of Recab. The family was very loyal to the Lord. See 2 Kings 10:15–28 for the story of Jonadab.

Jaazaniah He was the head of the Recabite family at that time.

Jeremiah Not the prophet Jeremiah, but a different man of the same name.

man of God This is usually an honorable title for a prophet. We know nothing else about Hanan.

put some bowls full of wine with some cups in front of the Recabite family. And I said to them, “Drink some wine.”

⁶But the Recabite people answered, “We never drink wine. We never drink it because our ancestor* Jonadab son of Recab, gave us this command: ‘You and your descendants* must never drink wine. ⁷Also, you must never build houses, plant seeds, or plant vineyards. You must never do any of those things. You must live only in tents. If you do that, then you will live a long time in the land where you move from place to place.’ ⁸So, we Recabite people have obeyed everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. We never drink wine. And our wives, sons, and daughters never drink wine. ⁹We never build houses to live in. And we never own vineyards or fields. And we never plant crops. ¹⁰We have lived in tents and have obeyed everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. ¹¹But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked the country of Judah, we did go into Jerusalem. We said to each other, ‘Come, we must enter the city of Jerusalem, so that we can escape the Babylonian army and the Aramean army.’ So we have stayed in Jerusalem.”

¹²Then the message from the Lord came to Jeremiah: ¹³The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: “Jeremiah, go and tell this message to the men of Judah and to the people of Jerusalem: You people should learn a lesson and obey my message.” This message is from the Lord. ¹⁴“Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine, and that command has been obeyed. Until today, the descendants* of Jonadab obeyed their ancestor’s* command. They don’t drink wine. But I am the Lord. And I have given you people of Judah messages again and again, but you didn’t obey me. ¹⁵I sent my servants the prophets to you people of Israel and Judah. I sent them to you again and again. Those prophets said to you, ‘Each of you people of Israel and Judah must stop doing evil things. You must be good. Don’t follow

other gods. Don’t worship or serve them. If you obey me, then you will live in the land I have given to you and your ancestors.’ But you people have not paid attention to my message. ¹⁶The descendants of Jonadab obeyed the commands that their ancestor gave them. But the people of Judah have not obeyed me.”

¹⁷So the Lord God All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: “I said many bad things would happen to Judah and Jerusalem. I will soon make all those bad things happen. I spoke to those people, but they refused to listen. I called out to them, but they didn’t answer me.”

¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to the family of the Recabite people, “The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says, ‘You people have obeyed the commands of your ancestor* Jonadab. You have followed all of Jonadab’s teachings. You have done everything he commanded. ¹⁹So the Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: There will always be a descendant* of Jonadab son of Recab to serve me.’”

King Jehoiakim Burns Jeremiah’s Scroll

36 The message from the Lord came to Jeremiah. This was during the fourth year that Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king of Judah. This was the message from the Lord: ²“Jeremiah, get a scroll* and write on it all the messages I have spoken to you. I have spoken to you about the nations of Israel and Judah and all the nations. Write all the words that I have spoken to you from the time that Josiah was king, until now. ³Maybe the family of Judah will hear what I am planning to do to them. And maybe they will stop doing bad things. If they will do that, I will forgive them for the bad sins they have done.”

⁴So Jeremiah called a man named Baruch. Baruch was the son of Neriah. Jeremiah spoke the messages the Lord had given him. While Jeremiah spoke, Baruch wrote those messages on the scroll.* ⁵Then Jeremiah said to Baruch, “I can’t go to the Lord’s temple. I am not allowed to go there. ⁶So I want you to go to

ancestor Literally, “father,” meaning a person that people are descended from.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

scroll(s) A long roll of leather or papyrus (*paper*) used for writing books, letters, and legal documents.

the temple of the Lord. Go there on a day of fasting* and read to the people from the scroll. Read to the people the messages from the Lord that you wrote on the scroll as I spoke them to you. Read those messages to all the people of Judah that come into Jerusalem from the towns where they live. ⁷Perhaps those people will ask the Lord to help them. Perhaps each person will stop doing bad things. The Lord has announced that he is very angry with those people.” ⁸So Baruch son of Neriah did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him to do. Baruch read aloud the scroll that had the Lord’s messages written on it. He read it in the Lord’s temple.

⁹In the ninth month of the fifth year that Jehoiakim was king, a fast* was announced. All the people that lived in the city of Jerusalem, and everyone that had come into Jerusalem from the towns of Judah were supposed to fast before the Lord. ¹⁰At that time, Baruch read the scroll* that contained Jeremiah’s words. He read the scroll in the temple of the Lord. Baruch read the scroll to all the people that were in the Lord’s temple. Baruch was in the room of Gemariah in the upper courtyard when he read from the scroll. That room was located at the entrance of the New Gate of the temple. Gemariah was the son of Shaphan. Gemariah was a scribe* in the temple.

¹¹A man named Micaiah heard all the messages from the Lord that Baruch read from the scroll.* Micaiah was the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan. ¹²When Micaiah heard the messages from the scroll, he went down to the secretary’s room in the king’s palace. All of the royal officials were sitting there in the king’s palace. These are the names of those officials: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Acbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah;

and all the other royal officials were there too. ¹³Micaiah told those officials everything he had heard Baruch read from the scroll.

¹⁴Then all those officials sent a man named Jehudi to Baruch. Jehudi was the son of Nethaniah, son of Shelemiah. Shelemiah was the son of Cushi. Jehudi said to Baruch, “Bring the scroll* that you read from and come with me.”

Baruch son of Neriah took the scroll and went with Jehudi to the officials.

¹⁵Then those officials said to Baruch, “Sit down and read the scroll to us.”

So Baruch read the scroll to them.

¹⁶Those royal officials heard all the messages from the scroll.* Then they became afraid, and they looked at one another. They said to Baruch, “We must tell King Jehoiakim about these messages on the scroll.” ¹⁷Then the officials asked Baruch a question. They said, “Tell us, Baruch, where did you get these messages that you wrote on the scroll? Did you write down the things Jeremiah spoke to you?”

¹⁸“Yes,” Baruch answered. “Jeremiah spoke, and I wrote down all the messages with ink on this scroll.*”

¹⁹Then the royal officials said to Baruch, “You and Jeremiah must go and hide. Don’t tell anyone where you are hiding.”

²⁰Then the royal officials put the scroll* in the room of Elishama the scribe. They went to King Jehoiakim and told him all about the scroll.

²¹So King Jehoiakim sent Jehudi to get the scroll.* Jehudi brought the scroll from the room of Elishama the scribe. Then Jehudi read the scroll to the king and all of the servants that stood around the king. ²²The time this happened was in the ninth month,* so King Jehoiakim was sitting in the winter apartment. There was a fire burning in a small fireplace in front of the king. ²³Jehudi began to read from the scroll. But whenever he would read two or three columns, King Jehoiakim would grab the scroll. Then he would cut those columns off of the scroll

fast(ing) Living without food for a special time of prayer and worship to God.

scroll A long roll of leather or papyrus (*paper*) used for writing books, letters, and legal documents.

scribe A man that wrote down and copied books and letters. He often become an expert at the meaning of those writings (*Scriptures*).

ninth month This was in November or December.

with a small knife and throw them into the fireplace. Finally, the whole scroll was burned in the fire. ²⁴And, when King Jehoiakim and his servants heard the message from the scroll, they were not afraid. They didn't tear their clothes to show sorrow for doing wrong.

²⁵Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah tried to talk King Jehoiakim into not burning the scroll * But the king would not listen to them. ²⁶And King Jehoiakim commanded some men to arrest Baruch the scribe* and Jeremiah the prophet. Those men were Jerahmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel. But those men could not find Baruch and Jeremiah, because the Lord had hidden them.

²⁷The message from the Lord came to Jeremiah. This happened after King Jehoiakim burned the scroll* that had contained all the messages from the Lord. Jeremiah had spoken to Baruch, and Baruch had written the messages on the scroll. This was the message from the Lord that came to Jeremiah:

²⁸“Jeremiah, get another scroll.* Write all the messages on it that were on the first scroll. That is the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah burned. ²⁹Jeremiah, also say this to Jehoiakim king of Judah, ‘This is what the Lord says: Jehoiakim, you burned that scroll. You said, “Why did Jeremiah write that the king of Babylon will surely come and destroy this land? Why did he say that the king of Babylon will destroy both men and animals in this land?”’ ³⁰So, this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: Jehoiakim's descendants* will not sit on David's throne. When Jehoiakim dies, he will not get a king's funeral, but his body will be thrown out on the ground. His body will be left out in the heat of the day and the cold frost of the night. ³¹I, the Lord, will punish Jehoiakim and his

children. And I will punish his officials. I will do this because they are wicked. I have promised to bring terrible disasters on them and on all the people that live in Jerusalem and on the people from Judah. I will bring all the bad things on them, just as I promised, because they have not listened to me.”

³²Then Jeremiah took another scroll* and gave it to Baruch son of Neriah, the scribe.* As Jeremiah spoke, Baruch wrote on the scroll the same messages that were on the scroll that King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. And many other words like those messages were added to the second scroll.

Jeremiah Is Put in Prison

37 Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah as king of Judah in the place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim. Zedekiah was a son of King Josiah. ²But Zedekiah did not pay attention to the messages the Lord had given to Jeremiah the prophet to preach. And Zedekiah's servants and the people of Judah did not pay attention to the Lord's messages.

³King Zedekiah sent a man named Jehucal and the priest Zephaniah to Jeremiah the prophet with a message. Jehucal was the son of Shelemiah. The priest Zephaniah was the son of Maaseiah. This was the message they brought to Jeremiah: “Jeremiah, pray to the Lord our God for us.”

⁴(At that time, Jeremiah had not yet been put into prison, so he was free to go anywhere he wanted. ⁵Also at that time, Pharaoh's army had marched from Egypt toward Judah. The Babylonian army had surrounded the city of Jerusalem, in order to defeat it. Then they had heard about the army from Egypt marching toward them. So the army from Babylon had left Jerusalem to fight with the army from Egypt.)

⁶The message from the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet: ⁷“This is what the Lord, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘Jehucal and Zephaniah, I know that Zedekiah king of Judah, sent you to me to ask questions. Tell this to King Zedekiah: Pharaoh's army marched out of Egypt to come here to help you against the army of Babylon. But Pharaoh's army will go back to Egypt. ⁸After

scroll A long roll of leather or papyrus (*paper*) used for writing books, letters, and legal documents.

scribe A man that wrote down and copied books and letters. He often become an expert at the meaning of those writings (*Scriptures*).

descendants A person's children and their future families.

that, the army from Babylon will come back here. They will attack Jerusalem. Then that army from Babylon will capture and burn Jerusalem.’⁹This is what the Lord says: ‘People of Jerusalem, don’t fool yourselves. Don’t say to yourselves, “The army of Babylon will surely leave us alone.” They will not.’¹⁰People of Jerusalem, even if you could defeat all of the Babylonian army that is attacking you, there would still be a few wounded men left in their tents. Even those few wounded men would come out of their tents and burn Jerusalem down.”

¹¹When the Babylonian army left Jerusalem to fight the army of the Pharaoh of Egypt, ¹²Jeremiah wanted to travel from Jerusalem to the land of Benjamin.* He was going there to attend a division of some property that belonged to his family. ¹³But when Jeremiah got to the Benjamin Gate of Jerusalem,* the captain in charge of the guards arrested him. The captain’s name was Irijah. Irijah was the son of Shelemiah. Shelemiah was the son of Hananiah. So Irijah the captain arrested Jeremiah and said, “Jeremiah, you are leaving us to join the Babylonian side.”

¹⁴Jeremiah said to Irijah, “That is not true. I am not leaving to join the Babylonians.” But Irijah refused to listen to Jeremiah. And Irijah arrested Jeremiah and took him to the royal officials of Jerusalem. ¹⁵Those officials were very angry with Jeremiah. They gave an order for Jeremiah to be beaten. Then they put Jeremiah in a prison. The prison was in the house of a man named Jonathan. Jonathan was a scribe* for the king of Judah. Jonathan’s house had been made into a prison. ¹⁶Those people put Jeremiah into a cell under the house of Jonathan. That cell was in a dungeon* under the ground. Jeremiah was there for a long time.

the land of Benjamin Jeremiah was going to his home town, Anathoth, which was in the land of Benjamin.

Benjamin Gate of Jerusalem This gate led out of Jerusalem to the road which went north to the land of Benjamin.

scribe A man that wrote down and copied books and letters. He often become an expert at the meaning of those writings (*Scriptures*).

dungeon A deep pit in the ground, like a cave, used as a prison.

¹⁷Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and had him brought to the king’s house. Zedekiah talked to Jeremiah in private. He asked Jeremiah, “Is there any message from the Lord?”

Jeremiah answered, “Yes, there is a message from the Lord. Zedekiah, you will be given to the king of Babylon.” ¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What have I done wrong? What crime have I done against you or your officials or the people of Jerusalem? Why have you thrown me into prison? ¹⁹King Zedekiah, where are your prophets now? Those prophets preached a false message to you. They said, ‘The king of Babylon will not attack you or this land of Judah.’ ²⁰But now, my lord, king of Judah, please listen to me. Please let me bring my request to you. This is what I ask: Don’t send me back to the house of Jonathan the scribe. If you send me back, I will die there.”

²¹So King Zedekiah gave orders for Jeremiah to be put under guard in the courtyard. And he ordered that Jeremiah should be given bread from the street bakers. Jeremiah was given bread until there was no more bread in the city. So Jeremiah stayed under guard in the courtyard.

Jeremiah Is Thrown into a Cistern

38 Some of the royal officials heard what Jeremiah was preaching. They were: Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah. Jeremiah was telling all the people this message: ²“This is what the Lord says: ‘Everyone that stays in Jerusalem will die by a sword, or hunger, or terrible sickness. But everyone that surrenders to the army of Babylon will live. Those people will escape with their lives.’ ³And this is what the Lord says: ‘This city of Jerusalem will surely be given to the army of the king of Babylon. He will capture this city.’”

⁴Then those royal officials that heard the things Jeremiah was telling the people went to King Zedekiah. They said to the king, “Jeremiah must be put to death. He is making the soldiers that are still in the city become discouraged. Jeremiah is discouraging

everyone by the things he is saying. Jeremiah does not want good to happen to us. He wants to ruin the people of Jerusalem.”

⁵So King Zedekiah said to those officials, “Jeremiah is in your control. I can’t do anything to stop you.”

⁶So those officials took Jeremiah and put him into Malkijah’s cistern.* (Malkijah was the king’s son.) That cistern was in the temple yard where the king’s guard stayed. Those officials used ropes to lower Jeremiah into the cistern. The cistern didn’t have any water in it, but only mud. And Jeremiah sank down into the mud.

⁷But a man named Ebed Melech heard that those officials had put Jeremiah into the cistern.* Ebed Melech was a man from Ethiopia, and he was a eunuch* in the king’s house. King Zedekiah was sitting at the Benjamin Gate. So Ebed Melech left the king’s house and went to talk to the king at that gate. ^{8–9}Ebed Melech said, “My lord and king, those officials have acted in a wicked way. They have treated Jeremiah the prophet wickedly. They have thrown him into a cistern. They have left him there to die.”*

¹⁰Then King Zedekiah gave a command to Ebed Melech, the Ethiopian. This was the command: “Ebed Melech, take three* men from the king’s house with you. Go and lift Jeremiah out of the cistern before he dies.”

¹¹So Ebed Melech took the men with him. But first he went to a room under the storeroom in the king’s house. He took some old rags and worn-out clothes from that room. Then he let those rags down with some ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern.* ¹²Ebed Melech, the Ethiopian, said to Jeremiah, “Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms. When we pull you out, these rags will pad your underarms. Then the ropes will not hurt you.” So Jeremiah did as Ebed Melech said. ¹³Those men pulled Jeremiah up with the ropes and lifted him out

of the cistern. And Jeremiah stayed under guard in the temple yard.

Zedekiah Asks Jeremiah Some Questions

¹⁴Then King Zedekiah sent someone to get Jeremiah the prophet. He had Jeremiah brought to the third entrance to the temple of the Lord. Then the king said, “Jeremiah, I am going to ask you something. Don’t hide anything from me, but tell me everything honestly.”

¹⁵Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I give you an answer, you will probably kill me. And even if I did give you advice, you would not listen to me.”

¹⁶But King Zedekiah secretly swore an oath to Jeremiah. Zedekiah said, “The Lord gives us breath and life. As surely as the Lord lives I will not kill you, Jeremiah. And I promise not to give you to those officials that want to kill you.”

¹⁷Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “The Lord God All-Powerful is the God of Israel. The Lord says, ‘If you surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, your life will be saved and Jerusalem will not be burned down. And you and your family will live. ¹⁸But if you refuse to surrender then Jerusalem will be given to the Babylonian army. They will burn Jerusalem down, and you will not escape from them.’”

¹⁹But King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “But I am afraid of the men of Judah that have already gone over to the side of the Babylonian army. I am afraid that the soldiers will give me to those men of Judah and they will treat me badly and hurt me.”

²⁰But Jeremiah answered, “The soldiers will not give you to those men of Judah. King Zedekiah, obey the Lord by doing what I tell you. Then things will go well for you, and your life will be saved. ²¹But if you refuse to surrender to the army of Babylon, the Lord has shown me what will happen. This is what the Lord has told me: ²²All the women that are left in the house of the king of Judah will be brought out. They will be brought to the important officials of the king of Babylon. Your women will make fun of you with a song. This is what the women will say:

cistern A deep hole in the ground used to store water.

eunuch A man that had his sexual organs removed. Often important officials of the king were eunuchs.

They have left him there to die Literally, “He will starve to death because there is no more bread in the city.”

three Some Hebrew copies have “30.”

‘Your good friends led you the wrong way
and were stronger than you.
Those were friends that you trusted.
Your feet are stuck in the mud.
Your friends have left you.’

²³All your wives and children will be brought out. They will be given to the Babylonian army. You yourself will not escape from the army of Babylon. You will be captured by the king of Babylon, and Jerusalem will be burned down.”

²⁴Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Don’t tell any person that I have been talking to you. If you do, you might die. ²⁵Those officials might find out that I talked to you. Then they will come to you and say, ‘Jeremiah, tell us what you said to King Zedekiah. And tell us what King Zedekiah said to you. Be honest with us and tell us everything, or we will kill you.’ ²⁶If they say this to you, then tell them, ‘I was begging the king not to send me back to the cell in the dungeon* under Jonathan’s house. If I were to go back there, I would die.’”

²⁷It happened that those royal officials of the king did come to Jeremiah to question him. So Jeremiah told them everything the king had ordered him to say. Then those officials left Jeremiah alone. No person had heard what Jeremiah and the king had talked about.

²⁸So Jeremiah stayed under guard in the temple yard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

The Fall of Jerusalem

39 This is how Jerusalem was captured: During the tenth month of the ninth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He surrounded the city to defeat it. ²And on the ninth day of the fourth month in Zedekiah’s eleventh year, the wall of Jerusalem was broken through. ³Then all the royal officials of the king of Babylon came into the city of Jerusalem. They came in and sat down at the Middle Gate. These are the names of those officials: Nergal-Sharezer, the governor of the district of Samgar,

a very high official; Nebo Sarsekim, another very high official; and various other important officials were there also.

⁴Zedekiah king of Judah saw those officials from Babylon, so he and the soldiers with him ran away. They left Jerusalem at night. They went out through the king’s garden and out through the gate that was between the two walls. Then they went toward the desert. ⁵The Babylonian army chased Zedekiah and the soldiers with him. Those soldiers caught up with Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They captured Zedekiah and took him to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was at the town of Riblah, in the land of Hamath. At that place, Nebuchadnezzar decided what to do to Zedekiah. ⁶There at the town of Riblah, the king of Babylon killed Zedekiah’s sons, while Zedekiah watched. And Nebuchadnezzar killed all the royal officials of Judah while Zedekiah watched. ⁷Then Nebuchadnezzar tore out Zedekiah’s eyes. He put bronze chains on Zedekiah and took him to Babylon.

⁸The army of Babylon set fire to the king’s house and the houses of the people of Jerusalem. And they broke down the walls of Jerusalem. ⁹A man named Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king of Babylon’s special guards. He took the people that were left in Jerusalem and made them captives. He carried them away to Babylon. Nebuzaradan also made those people of Jerusalem captives that had surrendered to him earlier. He made all the others of the people of Jerusalem captives and carried them away to Babylon. ¹⁰But Nebuzaradan, the commander of the special guards, left some of the poor people of Judah behind. Those were the people that owned nothing. So on that day, Nebuzaradan gave those poor people of Judah vineyards and fields.

¹¹But Nebuchadnezzar gave some orders to Nebuzaradan about Jeremiah. Nebuzaradan was the commander of Nebuchadnezzar’s special guards. These were the orders: ¹²“Find Jeremiah and take care of him. Don’t hurt him. Give him whatever he asks for.”

¹³So Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king’s special guards, Nebushazban, a chief officer in the army of Babylon, Nergal-

dungeon A deep pit in the ground, like a cave, used as a prison.

Sharezer, a high official, and all the other officers of the army of Babylon sent for Jeremiah. ¹⁴Those men had Jeremiah taken out of the temple yard where he had been under the guard of the king of Judah. Those officers of the army of Babylon turned Jeremiah over to Gedaliah.* Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam. Ahikam was the son of Shaphan. Gedaliah had orders to take Jeremiah back home. So Jeremiah was taken home, and he stayed among his own people.

A Message from the Lord to Ebed-Melech

¹⁵While the guards were watching Jeremiah in the temple yard, a message from the Lord came to him. This was the message: ¹⁶“Jeremiah, go and tell Ebed-Melech,* the man from Ethiopia, this message: ‘This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of the people of Israel, says: Very soon I will make my messages about this city of Jerusalem come true. My messages will come true through disaster and not good things. You will see everything come true with your own eyes. ¹⁷But I will save you on that day, Ebed-Melech.’ This is the message of the Lord. ‘You won’t be given to the people you are afraid of. ¹⁸I will save you, Ebed-Melech. You won’t die from a sword, but you will escape and live. That will happen because you have trusted in me.’” This message is from the Lord.

Jeremiah Is Set Free

40 The message from the Lord came to Jeremiah after he was set free at the city of Ramah. Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king of Babylon’s special guards, found Jeremiah in Ramah. Jeremiah was bound with chains. He was with all the captives from Jerusalem and Judah. Those captives were being taken away in captivity to Babylon. ²When commander Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah, he spoke to him. He said, “Jeremiah, the Lord, your God, announced that this disaster would come to this place. ³And now the Lord has done everything just as he said he

would do. This disaster happened because you people of Judah sinned against the Lord. You people didn’t obey the Lord. ⁴But now, Jeremiah, I will set you free. I am taking the chains off your wrists. If you want to, come with me to Babylon, and I will take good care of you. But if you don’t want to come with me, then don’t come. Look, the whole country is open to you. Go anywhere you want. ⁵Or go back to Gedaliah* son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. The king of Babylon has chosen Gedaliah to be governor over the towns of Judah. Go and live with Gedaliah among the people. Or you can go anywhere you want.”

Then Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah some food and a present and let him go. ⁶So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. Jeremiah stayed with Gedaliah among the people that were left behind in the land of Judah.

The Short Rule of Gedaliah

⁷There were some soldiers from the army of Judah, officers and their men, still out in the open country when Jerusalem was destroyed. Those soldiers heard that the king of Babylon had put Gedaliah son of Ahikam in charge of the people that were left in the land. The people that were left were men, women, and children that were very poor and were not carried off to Babylon as captives. ⁸So those soldiers came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. Those soldiers were: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan, and his brother Jonathan, sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, sons of Ephai from Netophah, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and the men that were with them.

⁹Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, made an oath to make those soldiers and their men feel more secure. This is what Gedaliah said: “You soldiers, don’t be afraid to serve the Babylonian people. Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon. If you do this, things will go well for you. ¹⁰I, myself, will live in Mizpah. I will speak for you before the Chaldean people that come here. You people

Gedaliah Gedaliah was the man that Nebuchadnezzar appointed as his governor for the land of Judah.

Ebed-Melech See Jeremiah 38:7–13.

Or ... Gedaliah Or, “Before Gedaliah goes back, return to him ...”

leave that work to me. You should harvest the wine, the summer fruit, and the oil. Put what you harvest in your storage jars. Live in the towns that you have taken control of.”

¹¹All the people of Judah that were in the countries of Moab, Ammon, Edom, and all the other countries heard that the king of Babylon had left some people of Judah in the land. And they heard that the king of Babylon had chosen Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, to be governor over them. ¹²When those people of Judah heard that news, they came back to the land of Judah. They came back to Gedaliah at Mizpah from all the countries where they had been scattered. So they came back and gathered a large harvest of wine and summer fruit.

¹³Johanan son of Kareah and all the officers of the army of Judah that were still in the open country came to Gedaliah. Gedaliah was at the town of Mizpah. ¹⁴Johanan and those officers with him said to Gedaliah, “Do you know that Baalis, the king of the Ammonite people, wants to kill you? He has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to kill you.” But Gedaliah son of Ahikam didn’t believe them.

¹⁵Then Johanan son of Kareah spoke to Gedaliah in private at Mizpah. Johanan said to Gedaliah, “Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah. No person will know anything about it. We should not let Ishmael kill you. That would cause all the people of Judah that are gathered around you to be scattered to different countries again. And that would mean that the few survivors of Judah would be lost.”

¹⁶But Gedaliah son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah, “Don’t kill Ishmael. The things you are saying about Ishmael are not true.”

41 In the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah (the son of Elishama) came to Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael came with ten of his men. Those men came to the town of Mizpah. Ishmael was a member of the king’s family. He had been one of the officers of the king of Judah. Ishmael and his men ate a meal with Gedaliah. ²While they were eating together, Ishmael and his ten men got up and killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam with a sword. Gedaliah was the man that the king of

Babylon had chosen to be governor of Judah. ³Ishmael also killed all the men of Judah that were with Gedaliah at the town of Mizpah. Ishmael also killed the Babylonian soldiers that were there with Gedaliah.

⁴⁻⁵The day after Gedaliah was murdered, 80 men came to Mizpah. They were bringing grain offerings and incense* to the Lord’s temple.* Those 80 men had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes, and cut themselves.* They came from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. None of these men knew that Gedaliah had been murdered. ⁶Ishmael left Mizpah and went to meet those 80 men. He cried* while he walked out to meet them. Ishmael met those 80 men and said, “Come with me to meet with Gedaliah son of Ahikam.” ⁷⁻⁸As soon as they were in the city, Ishmael and the men with him began to kill the 80 men and throw them into a deep cistern!* But ten of the men said to Ishmael, “Don’t kill us! We have hidden some things in a field. We have wheat and barley, and oil and honey. [We will give those things to you!]” So Ishmael stopped and didn’t kill them with the others. ⁹(Ishmael threw the dead bodies into the cistern until it was full—and that cistern was very big! It had been built by a king of Judah named Asa. King Asa had made the cistern so that during war there would be water in the city.* Asa did this to protect his city from Baasha, the king of Israel.)

¹⁰Ishmael captured all the other people in the town of Mizpah and started to cross over to the country of the Ammonite people. (Those people included the king’s daughters, and all the other people that were left there. Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king of

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

shaved ... cut themselves The men did this to show that they were sad about the destruction of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem.

He cried Ishmael was acting like he was sad about the destruction of the temple.

cistern A deep hole in the ground used to store water.

King Asa ... city King Asa lived about 300 years before the time of Gedaliah. See 1 Kings 15:22 for the story about Asa building defenses for Mizpah.

Babylon's special guards, had chosen Gedaliah to watch over those people.)

¹¹Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers that were with him, heard about all the evil things Ishmael had done. ¹²So Johanan and the army officers with him took their men and went to fight Ishmael son of Nethaniah. They caught Ishmael near the big pool of water that is at the town of Gibeon. ¹³The captives* that Ishmael had taken captive saw Johanan and the army officers. Those people became very happy. ¹⁴Then all those people that Ishmael had taken captive at the town of Mizpah ran to Johanan son of Kareah. ¹⁵But Ishmael and eight of his men escaped from Johanan. They ran away to the Ammonite people.

¹⁶So Johanan son of Kareah and all his army officers rescued the captives.* Ishmael had murdered Gedaliah and then he had taken those people from Mizpah. Among the survivors* were soldiers, women, children, and court officials. Johanan brought them back from the town of Gibeon.

The Escape to Egypt

^{17–18}Johanan and the other army officers were afraid of the Chaldeans.* The king of Babylon had chosen Gedaliah to be governor of Judah. But Ishmael murdered Gedaliah, and Johanan was afraid that the Chaldeans would be angry. So they decided to run away to Egypt. On the way to Egypt, they stayed at Geruth Kimham. Geruth Kimham is near the town of Bethlehem.

42 While they were at Geruth Kimham, Johanan and a man named Jezaniah son of Hoshaiiah went to Jeremiah the prophet. All the army officers went with Johanan and Jezaniah. All the people, from the least important to the most important person, went to Jeremiah. ²All those people said to him, "Jeremiah, please listen to what we ask. Pray to the Lord your God for all these people that are

survivors* from the family of Judah. Jeremiah, you can see that there are not many of us left. At one time there were many of us. ³Jeremiah, pray that the Lord your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do."

⁴Then Jeremiah the prophet answered, "I understand the things you want me to do. I will pray to the Lord your God, like you asked me to do. I will tell you everything the Lord says. I will not hide anything from you."

⁵Then those people said to Jeremiah, "If we don't do everything the Lord your God tells us, then we hope the Lord will be a true and faithful witness against us. We know the Lord your God will send you to tell us what to do. ⁶It does not matter if we like the message or if we don't like the message. We will obey the Lord our God. We are sending you to the Lord for a message from him. We will obey what he says. Then good things will happen to us. Yes, we will obey the Lord our God."

⁷At the end of ten days, the message from the Lord came to Jeremiah. ⁸Then Jeremiah called together Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers that were with him. Jeremiah also called all the other people together, from the least important to the most important person. ⁹Then Jeremiah said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of the people of Israel, says. You sent me to him. I asked the Lord what you wanted me to ask. This is what the Lord says: ¹⁰If you people will stay in Judah, I will make you strong—I will not destroy you. I will plant you, and I will not pull you up. I will do this because I am sad about the terrible things that I made happen to you.

¹¹Now you are afraid of the king of Babylon. But don't be afraid of him. Don't be afraid of the king of Babylon,' this is the message of the Lord, 'because I am with you. I will save you. I will rescue you. He will not get his hands on you. ¹²I will be kind to you. And the king of Babylon will also treat you with mercy. And he will bring you back to your land.' ¹³But you might say, 'We will not stay in Judah.' If you say that, you will disobey the Lord your God. ¹⁴And you might say, 'No, we will go and live in Egypt. We will not be bothered with war in that place. We will not hear the trumpets of war. And in Egypt we will not be hungry.' ¹⁵If

captives People that were taken away like prisoners.

survivors People that escaped some disaster.

Chaldeans The Chaldeans were the family group to which King Nebuchadnezzar belonged. They were the group that controlled the land of Babylon at this time.

you say those things, then listen to the message of the Lord, you survivors* from Judah. This is what the Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘If you decide to go to live in Egypt, then these things will happen: ¹⁶You are afraid of the sword of war, but it will defeat you there. And you are worried about hunger, but you will be hungry in Egypt. You will die there. ¹⁷Every person that decides to go live in Egypt will die by a sword, or hunger, or terrible sickness. Not one person that goes to Egypt will survive. Not one of them will escape the terrible things that I will bring to them.’

¹⁸“The Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘I showed my anger against Jerusalem. I punished the people that lived in Jerusalem. In the same way, I will show my anger against every person that goes to Egypt. People will use you as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to other people. You will become like a curse word. People will be ashamed of you. People will insult you. And you will never see Judah again.’

¹⁹“Survivors* of Judah, the Lord told you: ‘Don’t go to Egypt.’ I warn you right now, ²⁰you people are making a mistake that will cause your deaths. You people sent me to the Lord your God. You said to me, ‘Pray to the Lord our God for us. Tell us everything the Lord says to do. We will obey the Lord.’ ²¹So today, I have told you the message from the Lord. But you have not obeyed the Lord your God. You have not done all that he sent me to tell you to do. ²²So now, be sure you understand this: You people want to go live in Egypt. But these things will happen to you in Egypt: You will die by a sword, or hunger, or terrible sickness.”

43 So Jeremiah finished telling the people the message from the Lord their God. Jeremiah told them everything that the Lord had sent him to tell the people.

²Azariah son of Hoshaiiah, Johanan son of Kareah, and some other men were proud and stubborn. Those people became angry at Jeremiah. Those men said to Jeremiah, “Jeremiah, you are lying! The Lord our God

didn’t send you to say to us, ‘You people must not go to Egypt to live there.’ ³Jeremiah, we think that Baruch son of Neriah is encouraging you to be against us. He wants you to give us to the Babylonian people. He wants you to do this so they can kill us. Or he wants you to do this so that they can make us captives* and carry us to Babylon.”

⁴So Johanan, the army officers, and all the people disobeyed the Lord’s command. The Lord had commanded them to stay in Judah. ⁵But instead of obeying the Lord, Johanan and the army officers took those survivors* from Judah to Egypt. In the past, the enemy had taken those survivors to other countries. But they had come back to Judah. ⁶Now, Johanan and all the army officers took all the men, women, and children and led them to Egypt. Among those people were the king’s daughters. (Nebuzaradan had put Gedaliah in charge of those people. Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king of Babylon’s special guards.) Johanan also took Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch son of Neriah. ⁷Those people didn’t listen to the Lord. So all those people went to Egypt. They went to the town of Tahpanhes.*

⁸In the town of Tahpanhes, Jeremiah received this message from the Lord: ⁹“Jeremiah, get some large stones. Take them and bury them in the clay and brick sidewalk in front of Pharaoh’s official building in Tahpanhes. Do this while the men of Judah are watching you. ¹⁰Then say to those men of Judah that are watching you: ‘This is what the Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: I will send for Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to come here. He is my servant. And I will set his throne over these stones I have buried here. Nebuchadnezzar will spread his canopy* above these stones. ¹¹Nebuchadnezzar will come here and attack Egypt. He will bring death to those that are to die. He will bring captivity to those that are to be taken captive. And he will bring the sword to those that are to

captives People that were taken away like prisoners.

Tahpanhes A town in northeastern Egypt.

canopy A temporary covering used for shade. It is like a tent without sides.

survivors People that escaped some disaster.

be killed with a sword. ¹²Nebuchadnezzar will start a fire in the temples of the false gods of Egypt. He will burn those temples and he will take those idols away. A shepherd picks the bugs and stickers off of his clothes to make them clean. In the same way, Nebuchadnezzar will pick Egypt clean. Then he will safely leave Egypt. ¹³Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the memorial stones* that are in the temple of the Sun God* in Egypt. And he will burn down the temples of the false gods of Egypt.”

The Lord's Messages to the People of Judah in Egypt

44 Jeremiah received a message from the Lord. This message was for all the people of Judah living in Egypt. The message was for the people of Judah living in the towns of Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis, and southern Egypt. This was the message: ²The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says, “You people saw the terrible happenings that I brought on the city of Jerusalem and on all the towns of Judah. Those towns are empty piles of stones today. ³Those places were destroyed because the people living in them did evil things. Those people gave sacrifices to other gods — and that made me angry! Your people and your ancestors* did not worship those gods in the past. ⁴I sent my prophets to those people again and again. Those prophets were my servants. Those prophets spoke my message and said to the people, ‘Don’t do this terrible thing. I hate for you to worship idols.’ ⁵But those people didn’t listen to the prophets. They didn’t pay attention to those prophets. Those people didn’t stop doing wicked things. They didn’t stop making sacrifices to other gods. ⁶So, I showed my anger against those people. I punished the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. My anger made Jerusalem and the towns of Judah the empty piles of stone they are today.”

memorial stones Stones that were set up to help people remember something special. In ancient Israel, people often set up stones as special places to worship false gods.

Sun God This was the most important god in Egypt.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

⁷So, the Lord God All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: “Why are you hurting yourselves by continuing to worship idols? You are separating the men and women, the children and babies from the family of Judah. And so you leave yourselves without any survivors* from the family of Judah. ⁸Why do you people want to make me angry by making idols? Now you are living in Egypt. And now you are making me angry by offering sacrifices to the false gods of Egypt. You people will destroy yourselves. It will be your own fault. You will make yourselves something that people of other nations will speak evil of. And all the other nations on the earth will make fun of you. ⁹Have you forgotten about the wicked things your ancestors* did? And have you forgotten about the wicked things the kings and queens of Judah did? Have you forgotten about the wicked things you and your wives did in Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁰Even to this day, the people of Judah have not made themselves humble. They have not shown any respect for me. And those people have not followed my teachings. They have not obeyed the laws I gave you and your ancestors.*”

¹¹So, this is what the Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: “I have decided to make terrible things happen to you. I will destroy the whole family of Judah. ¹²There were a few survivors* from Judah. Those people came here to Egypt. But I will destroy those few survivors from the family of Judah. They will be killed with swords or die from hunger. They will be something that people of other nations will speak evil about. Other nations will be afraid at what happened to those people. Those people will become a curse word. Other nations will insult those people of Judah. ¹³I will punish those people that have gone to live in Egypt. I will use swords, hunger, and terrible sicknesses to punish them. I will punish those people just like I punished the city of Jerusalem. ¹⁴Not one of the few survivors of Judah that have gone to live in Egypt will escape my punishment. None of them will survive to

survivors People that escaped some disaster.

come back to Judah. Those people want to come back to Judah and live there. But not one of those people will go back to Judah, except maybe a few people that escape.”

¹⁵Many of the women of Judah that lived in Egypt were making sacrifices to other gods. Their husbands knew it, but didn't stop them. There was a large group of people of Judah meeting together. They were the people of Judah that were living in southern Egypt. The husbands of those women that were making sacrifices to other gods said to Jeremiah, ¹⁶“We will not listen to the message from the Lord that you spoke to us. ¹⁷We promised to make sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven.* And we will do everything we promised. We will offer sacrifices and pour out drink offerings in worship to her. We did that in the past. And our ancestors, our kings, and our officials did that in the past. All of us did those things in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. At the time we worshiped the Queen of Heaven, we had plenty of food. We were successful. Nothing bad happened to us. ¹⁸But then we stopped making sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven. And we stopped pouring out drink offerings to her. Since we have stopped doing those things in worship to her, we have had problems. Our people have been killed by swords and hunger.”

¹⁹Then the women spoke up.* They said to Jeremiah, “Our husbands knew what we were doing. We had their permission to make sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven. We had their permission to pour out drink offerings to her. Our husbands also knew that we were making cakes that looked like her.”

²⁰Then Jeremiah spoke to all those men and women. He spoke to the people that had just said those things. ²¹Jeremiah said to those people, “The Lord remembered that you made sacrifices in the towns of Judah and in the

streets of Jerusalem. You and your ancestors,* your kings, your officials, and the people of the land did that. The Lord remembered what you had done, and thought about that. ²²Then the Lord could not be patient with you any longer. The Lord hated the terrible things you did. So the Lord made your country an empty desert. No person lives there now. Other people say bad things about that country. ²³All of those bad things happened to you because you made sacrifices to other gods. You sinned against the Lord. You didn't obey the Lord. You didn't follow his teachings or the laws he gave you. You didn't keep your part of the Agreement.”*

²⁴Then Jeremiah spoke to all those men and women. Jeremiah said, “All you people of Judah that are now in Egypt, listen to the message from the Lord: ²⁵The Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says: ‘You women did what you said you would do. You said, “We will keep the promises we made. We promised to make sacrifices and pour out drink offerings to the Queen of Heaven.”’ So, go ahead. Do the things you promised you would do. Keep your promises. ²⁶But, listen to the message from the Lord, all you people of Judah that are living in Egypt: ‘I use my great name and make this promise: I promise none of the people of Judah that are now living in Egypt will ever again use my name to make promises. They will never again say, “As surely as the Lord lives,”’ ²⁷I am watching over those people of Judah. But I am not watching over them to take care of them. I am watching over them to hurt them. The people of Judah that live in Egypt will die from hunger and be killed by swords. They will continue to die until they are finished. ²⁸Some people of Judah will escape being killed by the sword. They will come back to Judah from Egypt. But there will be very few people of Judah that escape. Then those survivors* of Judah that came to live in Egypt

Queen of Heaven Probably the false god Astarte. She was the goddess of sex and war. People in Mesopotamia worshiped her. They thought she was the planet Venus, which looks like a star in the sky.

Then the women spoke up This is from the ancient Greek translation. The Hebrew does not have this sentence.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

Agreement This is probably the Law of Moses, the Agreement between God and the people of Israel.

survivors People that escaped some disaster. Here this means the Jewish people that survived the destruction of Judah and Israel by its enemy armies.

will know whose word will come true. They will know whether my word or their word came true. ²⁹I will give you people proof”—this is the message of the Lord—“that I will punish you here in Egypt. Then you will know for sure that my promises to hurt you will really happen. ³⁰This will be your proof that I will do what I say.” This is what the Lord says: “Pharaoh Hophra is the king of Egypt. His enemies want to kill him. I will give Pharaoh Hophra to his enemies. Zedekiah was the king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar was Zedekiah’s enemy. And I gave Zedekiah to his enemy. In the same way, I will give Pharaoh Hophra to his enemy.”

A Message to Baruch

45 Jehoiakim was the son of Josiah. In the fourth year Jehoiakim was king of Judah,* Jeremiah the prophet told these things to Baruch son of Neriah. Baruch wrote these things on a scroll.* This is what Jeremiah said to Baruch: ²“This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to you: ³“Baruch, you have said: It is very bad for me. The Lord has given me sorrow along with my pain. I am very tired. I am worn out because of my suffering. I can’t find rest.” ⁴Jeremiah, say this to Baruch: “This is what the Lord says: I will tear down what I have built. And I will pull up what I have planted. I will do that everywhere in Judah. ⁵Baruch, you are looking for great things for yourself. But don’t look for those things. Don’t look for them, because I will make terrible things happen to all the people.” The Lord said these things. “You will have to go many places. But I will let you escape alive wherever you go.”

Messages from the Lord About the Nations

46 These messages came to Jeremiah the prophet. These messages are about different nations.

Messages About Egypt

²This message is about the nation of Egypt. This message is about the army of Pharaoh Neco. Neco was the king of Egypt. His army

was defeated at the town of Carchemish. Carchemish is on the Euphrates River. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated the army of Pharaoh Neco at Carchemish in the fourth year that Jehoiakim was king of Judah.* Jehoiakim was the son of King Josiah. This is the Lord’s message to Egypt:

- ³ “Get your large and small shields ready.
March out for battle.
- ⁴ Get the horses ready.
Soldiers, get on your horses.
Go to your places for battle.
Put your helmets on.
Sharpen your spears.
Put your armor on.
- ⁵ What do I see?
That army is scared.
The soldiers are running away.
Their brave soldiers are defeated.
They run away in a hurry.
They don’t look back.
There is danger all around.”
The Lord said these things.
- ⁶ “Fast men can’t run away.
Strong soldiers can’t escape.
They will all stumble and fall.
This will happen in the north,
by the Euphrates River.
- ⁷ Who is coming like the Nile River?
Who is coming like that strong, fast river?
- ⁸ It is Egypt that comes
like the rising Nile River.
It is Egypt that comes
like that strong, fast river.
Egypt says,
‘I will come and cover the earth.
I will destroy the cities
and the people in them.’
- ⁹ Horse soldiers, charge into battle.
Chariot drivers, drive fast.
March on, brave soldiers.
Soldiers from Cush and Put,
carry your shields.
Soldiers from Lydia,
use your bows.
- ¹⁰ “But at that time, our Master,
the Lord All-Powerful, will win.
At that time, he will give the punishment
that they deserve.

fourth year ... Judah This was about 605 B.C.

scroll A long roll of leather or papyrus (*paper*) used for writing books, letters, and legal documents.

- The Lord’s enemies will get the punishment
that they should have.
The sword will kill until it is finished.
The sword will kill until it satisfies
its thirst for blood.
This will happen because there is a sacrifice
for our Master, the Lord All-Powerful.
That sacrifice is [Egypt’s army]
in the land of the north,
by the Euphrates River.
- 11 “Egypt, go to Gilead and get some medicine.
You will make up many medicines,
but they will not help.
You will not be healed.
- 12 The nations will hear you crying.
Your cries will be heard all over the earth.
One ‘brave soldier’ will run into another
‘brave soldier.’
And both ‘brave soldiers’
will fall down together.”
- 13 This is the message the Lord spoke to
Jeremiah the prophet. This message is about
Nebuchadnezzar coming to attack Egypt.
- 14 “Announce this message in Egypt.
Tell it in the city of Migdol.
Tell it in Memphis and Tahpanhes.
‘Get ready for war.
Why? Because people all around you
are being killed with swords.’
- 15 Egypt, your strong soldiers will be killed.
They won’t be able to stand
because the Lord will push them down.
- 16 Those soldiers will stumble again and again.
They will fall over each other.
They will say,
‘Get up, let us go back to our own people.
Let us go back to our homeland.
Our enemy is defeating us.
We must get away.’
- 17 In their homelands, those soldiers will say,
‘Pharaoh king of Egypt is only
a lot of noise.
His time of glory is over.’”
- 18 This message is from the King.
The King is the Lord All-Powerful.
“I promise, as surely as I live,
a powerful leader_J will come.

- He will be great like Mount Tabor
and Mount Carmel near the sea.
- 19 People of Egypt, pack your things.
Get ready for captivity.
Why? Because Memphis will be
a ruined, empty land.
Those cities will be destroyed,
and no person will live there.
- 20 “Egypt is like a beautiful cow.
But a horsefly* is coming
from the north*
to bother her.
- 21 The hired soldiers in Egypt’s army
are like fat calves.
They will all turn and run away.
They will not stand strong
against the attack.
Their time of destruction is coming.
They will soon be punished.
- 22 Egypt is like a snake hissing
and trying to escape.
The enemy comes closer and closer,
and the Egyptian army is trying
to slither away (*escape*).
The enemy will attack Egypt with axes,
like men cutting down trees.”
- 23 The Lord says these things.
“They will chop down Egypt’s
forest (*army*).
There are many trees (*soldiers*)
in that forest (*army*)
but they will all be cut down.
There are more enemy soldiers
than locusts.*
There are so many soldiers,
that no person can count them.
- 24 Egypt will be ashamed.
The enemy from the north
will defeat her.

horsefly A large insect that often flies around and bites cows and horses.

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north to attack the nation of Judah.

locusts Insects like grasshoppers that could destroy a large crop very quickly.

²⁵The Lord All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: “Very soon I will punish Amon,* the god of Thebes. And I will punish Pharaoh, Egypt, and her gods. I will punish the kings of Egypt. And I will punish the people that depend on Pharaoh. ²⁶I will let all those people be defeated by their enemies—and those enemies want to kill them. I will give those people to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and his servants.”

Long ago, Egypt lived in peace. And after all these times of trouble, Egypt will live in peace again.” The Lord said these things.

A Message for North Israel

- ²⁷ “Jacob,* my servant, don’t be afraid.
Don’t be scared, Israel.
I will save you from those faraway places.
I will save your children from
the countries
where they are captives.*
Jacob will have peace and safety again.
And no person will make him afraid.”
- ²⁸ The Lord says these things.
“Jacob, my servant, don’t be afraid.
I am with you.
I sent you away to many different places.
But I will not destroy you completely.
But I will destroy all those nations.
You must be punished
for the bad things you did.
So I won’t let you escape your
punishment.
I will discipline you, but I will be fair.”

A Message About the Philistine People

47 This is the message from the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet. This message is about the Philistine people. This message came before Pharaoh attacked the city of Gaza.

Amon For many centuries Amon was the most important god of Egypt. At the time of this prophecy he was not worshiped as much in northern Egypt. But he was still the most important god in southern Egypt, especially around the old Egyptian capital city of Thebes.

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

captives People that were taken away like prisoners.

- ² The Lord says:
“Look, [the enemy soldiers
are meeting together] in the north.*
They will come like a fast river
spilling over its banks.
They will cover the whole country
like a flood.
They will cover the towns
and the people living in them.
Everyone living in that country
will cry for help.
- ³ They will hear the sound of running horses,
the noisy chariots, the rumbling wheels.
Fathers won’t be able to protect
their children.
They will be too weak to help.
- ⁴ Why? Because the time has come
to destroy all the Philistine people
The time has come to destroy
Tyre and Sidon’s remaining helpers.
The Lord will destroy the Philistine people.
He will destroy the survivors
from the Island of Crete.*
- ⁵ The people from Gaza will be sad
and shave their heads.
The people from Ashkelon will be silenced.
Survivors from the valley,
how long will you cut yourselves?*
- ⁶ “Sword of the Lord, you have not quit.
How long will you keep fighting?
Go back into your scabbard!*
- Stop! Be still!
- ⁷ But how can the sword of the Lord rest?
The Lord gave it a command.
The Lord commanded it to attack
the city of Ashkelon and the seacoast.”

north This refers to the army of Babylon coming from the north to attack the nation of Judah.

Island of Crete Literally, “Island of Caphtor.” Sometimes this means Crete, and sometimes it means Cyprus. The Bible says the Philistines originally came from Caphtor.

sad ... cut yourselves The people did these things to show their sadness.

scabbard A holder for a sword.

A Message About Moab

48 This message is about the country of Moab. This is what the Lord All-Powerful, the God of the people of Israel, says:*

- “It will be bad for Mount Nebo.*
 Mount Nebo will be ruined.
 The town of Kiriathaim will be humbled.
 It will be captured.
 The strong place will be humbled.
 It will be shattered.
- 2 Moab will not be praised again.
 Men in Heshbon will plan Moab’s defeat.
 They will say,
 ‘Come, let us put an end to that nation.’
 Madmenah, you will also be silenced.
 The sword will chase you.
- 3 Listen to the cries from Horonaim.
 They are cries of much confusion
 and destruction.
- 4 Moab will be destroyed.
 Her little children will cry for help.
- 5 Moab’s people go up the path to Luhith.
 They are crying bitterly as they go.
 On the road down to the town of Horonaim,
 Cries of pain and suffering can be heard.
- 6 Run away! Run for your lives!
 Run away like a tumbleweed*
 [blowing] through the desert.
- 7 You trust in the things you made
 and in your wealth.
 So you will be captured.
 The god Chemosh*
 will be taken into captivity.
 And his priests and officials
 will be taken with him.
- 8 The Destroyer will come against every town.
 Not one town will escape.
 The valley will be ruined.
 The high plain will be destroyed.
 The Lord said this would happen,
 so it will happen.

- 9 Spread salt* over the fields in Moab.
 The country will be an empty desert.
 Moab’s towns will become empty.
 No people will live in them.
- 10 If a person does not do what the Lord says,
 if he does not use his sword
 to kill those people,
 then bad things will happen
 to that person.
- 11 “Moab has never known trouble.
 Moab is like wine left to settle.
 Moab has never been poured
 from one jar to another.
 He has not been taken into captivity.
 So he tastes like he did before.
 And his smell has not changed.”
- 12 The Lord says these things.
 “But I will soon send men
 to pour you from your jars.*
 Then they will empty the jars
 and smash them to pieces.”
- 13 Then the people of Moab will be
 ashamed of their false god, Chemosh.* The
 people of Israel trusted that [false god] in
 Bethel.* And the people of Israel were
 embarrassed [when that false god did not help
 them]. Moab will be like that.
- 14 “You can’t say,
 ‘We are good soldiers.
 We are brave men in battle.’
- 15 The enemy will attack Moab.
 The enemy will enter those towns
 and destroy them.
 Her best young men will be killed
 in the slaughter.”
 This message is from the King.
 The King’s name is the Lord
 All Powerful.

This message ... says See Isa. 15 for a similar message.

Mount Nebo A mountain in Moab, a country east of Israel.

tumbleweed A small bush short roots that is easily blown away by the wind. In Hebrew this word is like the name “Aroer,” an important city in Moab.

Chemosh The god of the people of Moab.

salt This is a word play, and we are not sure of the exact meaning of this Hebrew word.

jars This probably means the cities in Moab.

in Bethel This means the temple that King Jeroboam built in the town of Bethel. See 1 Kings 12:28-33. It is not clear whether the people still worshiped the Lord there, but in a wrong way. Or whether they worshiped a false god, perhaps the Canaanite god El or Baal.

- 16 “The end of Moab is near.
Moab will soon be destroyed.
- 17 All of you people living around Moab
should cry for that country.
You people know how famous Moab is.
So cry for him.
Say,
‘The ruler’s power is broken.
Moab’s power and glory is gone.’
- 18 “You people living in Dibon,*
come down from your place of honor.
Sit on the ground in the dust.
Why? Because the Destroyer is coming.
And he will destroy your strong cities.
- 19 “You people living in Aroer,
stand next to the road and watch.
See the man running away.
See that woman running away.
Ask them what happened.
- 20 “Moab will be ruined and filled with shame.
Moab will cry and cry.
Announce at the Arnon River,*
that Moab is destroyed.
- 21 People on the high plain have been
punished.
Judgment has come to the towns of
Holon, Jahzah, and Mephaath,
- 22 Judgment has come to the towns of
Dibon, Nebo, and Beth Diblathaim,
- 23 Judgment has come to the towns of
Kiriathaim, Beth Gamul, and Beth Meon,
- 24 Judgment has come to the towns of
Kerioth and Bozrah.
Judgment has come to all the towns of
Moab, far and near.
- 25 Moab’s strength has been cut off.
Moab’s arm has been broken.”
The Lord said these things.
- 26 “Moab thought he was more important
than the Lord.
So punish Moab until he staggers
like a drunk person.
Moab will fall and roll around in his vomit.
People will make fun of Moab.
- 27 “Moab, you made fun of Israel.
Israel was caught by a gang of thieves.
Every time you spoke about Israel,
you shook your head and acted like you
were better than Israel.
- 28 People in Moab, leave your towns.
Go live among the rocks;
be like a dove that makes its nest
at the opening of a cave.”
- 29 “We have heard about Moab’s pride.
He was very proud.
He thought he was important.
He was always bragging.
He was very, very proud.”
- 30 The Lord says,
“I know that Moab becomes angry quickly
and brags about himself.
But his boasts are lies.
He can’t do the things he says.
- 31 So, I cry for Moab.
I cry for everyone in Moab.
I cry for the men from Kir Hareseth.
- 32 I cry with the people of Jazer for Jazer.
Sibmah, in the past your vines
spread all the way to the sea.
They reached as far as the town of Jazer.
But the Destroyer has taken your fruit
and grapes.
- 33 Joy and happiness are gone
from the large vineyards* of Moab.
I stopped the flow of wine
from the winepresses.*
There is no singing and dancing
from people walking on the grapes
to make wine.
There are no shouts of joy.
- 34“The people of the towns of Heshbon and
Elealeh are crying. Their cry is heard even as
far away as the town of Jahaz. Their cry is
heard from the town of Zoar, as far away as
the towns of Horonaim and Eglath
Shelishiyah. Even the waters of Nimrim are
dried. 35I will stop Moab from making burnt

Dibon A town in the country of Moab.

Arnon River An important river in Moab.

vineyards A garden for growing grapes.

winepresses A place for squeezing the juice from grapes.
Sometimes this was only a shallow hole in a large rock in
the ground.

offerings on the high places.* I will stop them from making sacrifices to their gods.” The Lord said those things.

³⁶“I am very sad for Moab. My hearts cries like the sad sound of a flute playing a funeral song. I am sad for the people from Kir Hareseth. Their money and riches have all been taken away. ³⁷Everyone has a shaved head. Everyone’s beard is cut off. Everyone’s hands are cut and bleeding.* Everyone is wearing their clothes of sadness around their waists. ³⁸People are crying for the dead everywhere in Moab—on every housetop and in every public square. There is sadness because I have broken Moab like an empty jar.” The Lord said these things.

³⁹“Moab is shattered. The people are crying. Moab surrendered. Now Moab is ashamed. People make fun of Moab—but the things that happened fill them with fear.”

- ⁴⁰ The Lord says, “Look!
An eagle is diving down from the sky.
It is spreading its wings over Moab.
- ⁴¹ The towns of Moab will be captured.
The strong hiding places will be defeated.
At that time, Moab’s soldiers will be scared,
like a woman that is having a baby.
- ⁴² The nation of Moab will be destroyed.
Why? Because they thought
that they were more important
than the Lord.”
- ⁴³ The Lord says these things:
“People of Moab,
fear, deep holes, and traps*
wait for you.
- ⁴⁴ People will be afraid and run away,
and they will fall into the deep holes.
If anyone climbs out of the deep holes,
he will be caught in the traps.
I will bring the year of punishment
to Moab.”
The Lord said these things.

high places Special places where the people worshiped false gods. These places were often on hilltops, but not always. Some ‘high places’ were in valleys.

Everyone ... cut and bleeding The people did these things to show their sadness for people that had died.

fear, deep holes, and traps This is a word play in Hebrew. The Hebrew words are: “Pahad, Pahat, and Pah.”

⁴⁵ “People have run from the powerful enemy.
They ran to safety in the town Heshbon.
[But there was no safety.]

A fire started in Heshbon.

That fire started in Sihon’s town*

And it is destroying the leaders of Moab.

It is destroying those proud people.

⁴⁶ It will be bad for you, Moab.

Chemosh’s* people are being destroyed.

Your sons and daughters

are being taken away

as prisoners and captives.*

⁴⁷“Moab’s people will be taken away as captives. But in days to come, I will bring Moab’s people back.” This message is from the Lord.

This ends the judgment on Moab.

A Message About Ammon

49 This message is about the Ammonite people. The Lord says:

“Ammonite people, do you think that
the people of Israel don’t have
children?

Do you think there are no children
to take the land when the parents die?

Maybe that is why Milcom*
took Gad’s* land?”

² The Lord says,

“The time will come in Rabbah of Ammon*
when people hear the sounds of battle.

Rabbah of Ammon will be destroyed.

It will be an empty hill

covered with destroyed buildings.

And the towns around it will be burned.

Those people forced the people of Israel

to leave their own land.

But later, Israel will force them to leave.”

The Lord said these things.

Sihon’s town This was Heshbon. See Numbers 21:25–30.

Chemosh The national god of the land of Moab, even though Milcom was the god of the Ammonite people.

captives People that were taken away like prisoners. Here this means the Moabite people.

Milcom The god of the Ammonite people.

Gad’s One of the family groups of Israel. Their land was on the east side of the Jordan River, near the country of Ammon.

Rabbah of Ammon The capital city of the Ammonite people.

- 3 “People in Heshbon, cry!
 Why? Because the town of Ai
 is destroyed.
 Women in Rabbah of Ammon, cry!
 Put on your clothes of sadness and cry.
 Run to the city for safety.
 Why? Because the enemy is coming.
 They take away the god, Milcom.*
 And they will take away Milcom’s
 priests and officials.
- 4 You brag about your strength.
 But you are losing your strength.
 You trust your money will save you.
 You think no one would even think of
 attacking you.”
- 5 But the Lord All-Powerful says this:
 “I will bring troubles to you
 from every side.
 You will all run away.
 And no one will be able
 to bring you together again.”

6 “The Ammonite people will be taken
 away as captives. But the time will come that
 I will bring the Ammonite people back.” This
 message is from the Lord.

A Message About Edom

- 7 This message is about Edom.
 The Lord All-Powerful says:
 “Is there no more wisdom in Teman*?
 Are the wise men of Edom
 not able to give good advice?
 Have they lost their wisdom?”
- 8 You people living in Dedan, run away!
 Hide! Why? Because I will punish
 Esau* for the bad things he did.
- 9 “Workers pick grapes from grapevines.
 But they leave a few grapes on the plants.
 If thieves come at night,
 they don’t take everything.
- 10 But I will take everything from Esau.*
 I will find all of his hiding places.
 He will not be able to hide from me.

Milcom The god of the Ammonite people.

Teman This town was in the northern part of Edom.

Esau Jacob’s twin brother. But here this means Edom whose
 people were descendants of Esau.

His children, relatives, and neighbors
 will all die.

- 11 No person will be left
 to care for his children.
 His wives will have no one to depend on.”

12 This is what the Lord says, “Some people
 don’t deserve to be punished—but they suffer.
 But Edom, you deserve to be punished—so
 you will really be punished. You will not
 escape the punishment you deserve. You will
 be punished.” 13 The Lord says, “By my own
 power, I make this promise: I promise that the
 city of Bozrah will be destroyed. That city
 will become a ruined pile of rocks. People
 will use that city as an example when they ask
 for bad things to happen to other cities.
 People will insult that city. And all the towns
 around Bozrah will become ruins forever.”

- 14 I heard a message from the Lord:
 The Lord sent a messenger to the
 nations. This is the message:
 “Gather your armies together!
 Get ready for battle!
 March against the nation of Edom!”
- 15 Edom, I will make you become not
 important.
 Every person will hate you.
- 16 Edom, you scared other nations.
 So you thought you were important.
 But your pride has fooled you.
 You live in those caves, high on the cliff.
 Your home is high in the hills.
 But even if you build your home
 as high as an eagle’s nest,
 I will bring you down from there.”
 The Lord said these things.
- 17 “Edom will be destroyed.
 People will be shocked
 to see the destroyed cities.
 People will whistle from amazement
 at the destroyed cities.
- 18 Edom will be destroyed
 like Sodom and Gomorrah*
 and the towns around them.
 No people will live there.”
 The Lord said these things.

Sodom and Gomorrah Two cities that God destroyed because
 the people were so evil.

19 “Sometimes a lion will come from the thick bushes near the Jordan River. And that lion will go into the fields where people put their sheep and cattle. I am like that lion. I will go to Edom. And I will scare those people. I will make them run away. None of their young men will stop me. No one is like me. No one will challenge me. None of their shepherds (*leaders*) will stand up against me.”

- 20 So listen to what the Lord has planned to do to the people of Edom.
Listen to what the Lord has decided to do to the people in Teman.*
The enemy will drag away the young kids of Edom’s flock (*people*).
Edom’s pastures will be empty because of what they did.
- 21 At the sound of Edom’s fall,
the earth will shake.
Their cry will be heard
all the way to the Red Sea.
- 22 The Lord will be like an eagle flying over the animal that it will attack.
The Lord will be like an eagle spreading its wings over Bozrah.
At that time, Edom’s soldiers will become very scared.
They will be crying from fear like a woman having a baby.

A Message About Damascus

23 This message is about the city of Damascus:

- “The towns of Hamath and Arpad are afraid.
They are afraid
because they heard the bad news.
They are discouraged.
They are worried and scared.
- 24 The city of Damascus has become weak.
The people want to run away.
The people are ready to panic.
The people feel pain and suffering like a woman having a baby.
- 25 “Damascus, is a happy city.
The people have not left that ‘fun city’ yet.

Teman This town was in the northern part of Edom.

- 26 So the young men will die
in the public squares of that city.
All of her soldiers will be killed
at that time.”
The Lord All-Powerful said these things.
- 27 “I will set the walls of Damascus on fire.
The fire will completely burn up
the strong forts of Ben-Hadad.”*

A Message About Kedar and Hazor

28 This message is about the family group of Kedar and the rulers of Hazor.*
Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, defeated them.

- The Lord says:
“Go and attack the family group of Kedar.
Destroy the people of the East.
- 29 Their tents and flocks will be taken away.
Their tent and all their riches
will be carried off.
Their enemy will take away the camels.
Men will shout this to them:
‘Terrible things are happening all around us.’
- 30 Run away quickly!
People in Hazor,
find a good place to hide.”
This message is from the Lord.
“Nebuchadnezzar made plans against you.
He thought of a smart plan to defeat you.
- 31 “There is a nation that feels safe.
That nation feels secure.
That nation does not have gates
or fences to protect it.
No people live near them.
- The Lord says,
‘Attack that nation!’
- 32 The enemy will steal their camels
and take their large herds of cattle.
The enemy will steal their large herds.
Those people cut the corners of
their beards.*

Ben-Hadad This was the name of several of the kings of Aram-Damascus.

family group of Kedar and the rulers of Hazor Kedar was the name of an Arab family group that lived in the desert southeast of the land of Judah.

corners of their beards The Jewish men did not cut their beards like the Arabs did.

Well, I will make them run away
to the far corners of the earth.
And I will bring terrible troubles to them
from everywhere.”

This message is from the Lord.

- 33 “The land of Hazor will become a place
where only wild dogs live.
No person will live there.
No person will live in that place.
It will become an empty desert forever.”

A Message About Elam

³⁴Early in the time when Zedekiah was
king of Judah, Jeremiah the prophet received
a message from the Lord. This message is
about the nation of Elam.*

- 35 The Lord All-Powerful says,
“I will break Elam’s bow very soon.
The bow is Elam’s strongest weapon.
36 I will bring the four winds against Elam.
I will bring them from
the four corners of the skies.
I will send the people of Elam
to every place on the earth
where the four winds blow.
Elam’s captives will be carried away
to every nation.
37 I will break Elam to pieces
while their enemies are watching.
I will break Elam in front of those people
that want to kill them.
I will bring terrible troubles to them.
I will show them how angry I am.”
This message is from the Lord.
“I will send a sword to chase Elam.
The sword will chase them
until I have killed them all.
38 I will show Elam that I am in control.
And I will destroy her king and
his officials.”
This message is from the Lord.
39 “But in the future, I will make good things
happen to Elam.”
This message is from the Lord.

Elam A nation east of Babylon.

A Message About Babylon

50 This is the message the Lord spoke
about the nation of Babylon and the
Babylonian people. The Lord spoke this
message through Jeremiah.

- 2 “Announce this to all nations!
Lift up a flag and announce the message!
Speak the whole message and say,
‘The nation of Babylon will be captured.
The god Bel* will be put to shame.
The god Marduk* will be very afraid.
Babylon’s idols will be put to shame.
Her idol gods will be filled with terror.’
3 A nation from the north will attack
Babylon.
That nation will make Babylon
like an empty desert.
No people will live there.
Both men and animals
will run away from there.”
4 The Lord says,
“At that time, the people of Israel
and the people of Judah will be together.
They will cry and cry together.
And together, they will go to look
for the Lord their God.
5 Those people will ask how to go to Zion.*
They will start to go in that direction.
The people will say,
‘Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord.
Let’s make an agreement
that will last forever.
Let’s make an agreement
that we will never forget.’
6 “My people have been like lost sheep.
Their shepherds (*leaders*)
led them the wrong way,
Their leaders made them wander around
in the mountains and hills.
They forgot where their resting place is.
7 Whoever found my people hurt them.
And those enemies said,
‘We did nothing wrong.’

Bel This is one of the names of the god Marduk, the most
important god of the Babylonians.

Marduk Marduk was the most important god of the
Babylonians.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

- Those people sinned against the Lord.
 The Lord was their true resting place.
 The Lord was the God
 that their fathers trusted in.
- 8 “Run away from Babylon.
 Leave the land of the Babylonian people.
 Be like the goats that lead the flock.
- 9 I will bring many nations together
 from the north.
 This group of nations will get ready
 for war
 against Babylon.
 Babylon will be captured by people
 from the north.
 Those nations will shoot many arrows
 at Babylon.
 Those arrows will be like soldiers
 that don’t come back from war
 with their hands empty.
- 10 The enemy will take all the wealth
 from the Chaldean people.
 Those soldiers will take all they want.”
 The Lord said these things.
- 11 “Babylon, you are excited and happy.
 You took my land.
 You dance around like a young cow
 that got into the grain.
 Your laughter is like the happy sounds
 that horses make.
- 12 Now your mother will be very ashamed.
 The woman that gave you birth
 will be embarrassed.
 Babylon will be the least important
 of all the nations.
 She will be an empty, dry desert.
- 13 The Lord will show his anger,
 so no people will live there.
 Babylon will be completely empty.
 Everyone that passes by Babylon
 will be afraid.
 They will shake their heads when they see
 how badly it has been destroyed.
- 14 “Prepare for war against Babylon.
 All you soldiers with bows,
 shoot your arrows at Babylon.
 Don’t save any of your arrows.
 Babylon has sinned against the Lord.
- 15 Soldiers around Babylon,
 shout the cry of victory!
 Babylon has surrendered!
 Her walls and towers
 have been pulled down!
 The Lord is giving those people
 the punishment they should have.
 You nations should give Babylon
 the punishment she deserves.
 Do to her what she has done
 to other nations.
- 16 Don’t let the people from Babylon
 plant their crops.
 Don’t let them gather the harvest.
 The soldiers of Babylon
 brought many prisoners to their city.
 Now the enemy soldiers have come,
 So those prisoners are going
 back home.
 Those prisoners are running back
 to their own countries.
- 17 “Israel is like a flock of sheep
 that were scattered all over the country.
 Israel is like sheep that were chased away
 by lions.
 The first lion to attack
 was the king of Assyria.
 The last lion to crush his bones
 was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.
- 18 So the Lord All-Powerful,
 the God of Israel, says:
 ‘I will soon punish the king of Babylon
 and his country.
 I will punish him
 like I punished the king of Assyria.
- 19 “I will bring Israel back to his own fields.
 He will eat food that grows
 on Mount Carmel
 and in the land of Bashan.
 He will eat and be full.
 He will eat on the hills
 in the lands of Ephraim and Gilead.”
- 20 The Lord says,
 “At that time, people will try hard
 to find Israel’s guilt.
 But there will be no guilt.
 People will try to find Judah’s sins,
 but no sins will be found.

- Why? Because I am saving a few survivors* from Israel and Judah. And I am forgiving them for all of their sins.”
- 21 The Lord says,
 “Attack the country of Merathaim!
 Attack the people living in Pekod!
 Attack them!
 Kill them and completely destroy them!
 Do everything I commanded you!
- 22 “The noise of battle can be heard
 all over the country.
 It is the noise of much destruction.
- 23 Babylon was called
 ‘The Hammer of the Whole Earth.’
 But now the ‘Hammer’ is shattered.
 Babylon is the most ruined
 of the nations.
- 24 Babylon, I set a trap for you.
 And you were caught before you
 knew it.
 You fought against the Lord,
 so you were found and captured.
- 25 The Lord has opened up his storeroom
 and brought out the weapons of his anger.
 The Lord God All-Powerful
 brought out those weapons
 because he has work to do
 in the land of the Chaldean people.
- 26 “Come against Babylon from far away.
 Break open the storehouses
 where she keeps her grain.
 Completely destroy Babylon.
 Don’t leave anyone alive.
 Pile her dead bodies like big piles of grain.
- 27 Kill all the young bulls (*men*) in Babylon.
 Let them be slaughtered.*
 The time has come for them to be defeated,
 so it will be very bad for them.
 It is time for them to be punished.
- 28 People are running out of Babylon.
 They are escaping from that country
 and coming to Zion*.
 They are telling everyone the good news
 about what the Lord is doing.
 The Lord is giving Babylon
 the punishment it deserves.
 The Lord is destroying Babylon,
 because it destroyed his temple!
- 29 “Call for the men that shoot arrows.
 Tell them to attack Babylon.
 Tell them to surround the city.
 Don’t let anyone escape.
 Pay her back for the bad things
 she has done.
 Do to her what she has done
 to other nations.
 Babylon did not respect the Lord.
 Babylon was very rude
 to the Holy One of Israel.
 So punish Babylon.
- 30 Babylon’s young men
 will be killed in the streets.
 All her soldiers will die on that day.”
- The Lord says these things.
- 31 “Babylon, you are too proud.
 And I am against you.”
 Our Master, the Lord All-Powerful,
 says these things.
 “I am against you,
 and the time has come
 for you to be punished.
- 32 Proud Babylon will stumble and fall.
 And no person will help her get up.
 I will start a fire in her towns.
 That fire will completely burn
 everyone around her.”
- 33 The Lord All-Powerful says:
 “The people of Israel and Judah are slaves.
 The enemy took them,
 and the enemy will not let Israel go.
- 34 But God will get those people back.
 His name is the Lord God
 All-Powerful.

survivors People that escaped some disaster. Here this means the Jewish people that survived the destruction of Judah and Israel by its enemy armies.

slaughter(ed) Usually, this word means to kill an animal and cut it into pieces of meat. But it often means to kill people like they are animals.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

- He will defend those people very strongly.
 He will defend them so that he can let
 that land rest.
 But there will be no rest
 for the people living in Babylon.”
- 35 The Lord says,
 “Sword, kill the people living in Babylon.
 Sword, kill the king’s officials
 and the wise men of Babylon.
- 36 Sword, kill the priests of Babylon.
 Those priests will be like foolish people.
 Sword, kill the soldiers of Babylon.
 Those soldiers will be full of terror.
- 37 Sword, kill the horses and chariots
 of Babylon.
 Sword, kill all the soldiers hired
 from other countries.
 Those soldiers will be
 like frightened women.
 Sword, destroy the treasures of Babylon.
 Those treasures will be taken away.
- 38 Sword, strike the waters of Babylon.
 Those waters will be dried up.
 Babylon has many, many idols.
 Those idols show
 that the people of Babylon
 are foolish.
 So bad things will happen to those people.
- 39 “Babylon will never again
 be filled with people.
 Wild dogs, ostriches,* and other desert
 animals will live there.
 But no people will live there ever again.
- 40 God completely destroyed
 Sodom and Gomorrah*
 and the towns around them.
 ¶And no person lives in those towns now.¶
 In the same way, no people
 will live in Babylon.
 And no people will ever go to live there.
- 41 “Look!
 There are people coming from the north.
 They come from a powerful nation.
 Many kings are coming together
 from all around the world.
- 42 Their armies have bows and spears.
 The soldiers are cruel.
 They have no mercy.
 The soldiers come riding on their horses,
 and the sound is loud like the roaring sea.
 They stand in their places, ready for battle.
 They are ready to attack you,
 city of Babylon.
- 43 The king of Babylon
 heard about those armies.
 And he became very scared.
 He is so afraid,
 his hands will not move.
 His fear makes his stomach hurt
 like a woman having a baby.”
- 44 ¶The Lord says,¶
 “Sometimes a lion will come from
 the thick bushes near the Jordan River.
 That lion will walk into the fields
 where people have their animals.
 ¶and the animals will all run away.¶
 I will be like that lion,
 I will chase Babylon from its land.
 Who should I choose to do this?
 There is no person like me.
 There is no person that can challenge me.
 ¶So I will do it.¶
 No shepherd will come to chase me away.
 I will chase away the people of Babylon.”
- 45 Listen to what the Lord has planned
 to do to Babylon.
 Listen to what the Lord has decided
 to do to the Babylonian people.
 “I swear (*promise*), an enemy will drag away
 the young kids of Babylon’s flock
 (people)
 and Babylon will become
 an empty pasture.
- 46 Babylon will fall,
 and that fall will shake the earth.
 People in all nations will hear about
 the destruction of Babylon.”
- 51** The Lord says, “
 I will cause a powerful, destructive
 wind to blow against Babylon
 and the Babylonian people.*

ostriches Large birds that live in the desert.

Sodom and Gomorrah Two cities that God destroyed because the people were so evil.

Babylonian people Literally, “Leb Kammai.” In Hebrew this was a secret way of writing “Chaldeans.”

- 2 I will send foreigners to winnow*
 Babylon,
 and they will take everything
 from the city.
 Armies will surround the city,
 and there will be terrible destruction.
- 3 The Babylonian soldiers will not get to use
 their bows and arrows.
 Those soldiers will not even put on
 their armor.
 Don't feel sorry for the soldiers of Babylon.
 Destroy her army completely!
- 4 Babylon's soldiers will be killed
 in the land of the Chaldeans.
 They will be badly wounded
 in the streets of Babylon."
- 5 The Lord All-Powerful
 did not leave Israel and Judah alone,
 like a woman whose husband has died.
 God did not leave those people.
 No! Those people are guilty
 of leaving the Holy One of Israel.
 They left him,
 but he has not left them.
- 6 Run away from Babylon.
 Run to save your lives!
 Don't stay and be killed
 because of Babylon's sins!
 It is time for the Lord to punish
 the people of Babylon
 for the bad things they did.
 Babylon will get the punishment
 that she should have.
- 7 Babylon was like a golden cup
 in the Lord's hand.
 Babylon made the whole world drunk.
 The nations drank Babylon's wine.
 So they went crazy.
- 8 But Babylon will suddenly fall
 and be broken.
 Cry for her!
 Get medicine for her pain!
 Maybe she can be healed!
- 9 We tried to heal Babylon,
 but she can't be healed.
 So let us leave her,
 and let each of us
 go to our own country.
 God in heaven will decide
 Babylon's punishment.
 He will decide what will happen to Babylon.
- 10 The Lord got even for us.
 Come, let's tell about that in Zion.*
 Let us tell about the things
 that the Lord our God has done.
- 11 Sharpen the arrows!
 Get your shields!
 The Lord stirred up the kings
 of the Medes.*
 He has stirred them up
 because he wants to destroy Babylon.
 The Lord will give the people of Babylon
 the punishment that they deserve.
 The army from Babylon destroyed
 the Lord's temple* in Jerusalem.
 So the Lord will give them
 the punishment they should have.
- 12 Lift up a flag against the walls of Babylon.
 Bring more guards.
 Put the watchmen in their places.
 Get ready for a secret attack.
 The Lord will do what he has planned.
 He will do what he said he would do
 against the people of Babylon.
- 13 Babylon, you live near much water.
 You are rich with treasures.
 But your end as a nation has come.
 It is time for you to be destroyed.
- 14 The Lord All-Powerful used his name
 to make this promise:
 "Babylon, I will fill you
 with many enemy soldiers.
 They will be like a swarm of locusts.*
 They will win their war against you.
 And they will stand over you
 and shout the cry of victory."

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
 Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

Medes People from the Medo-Persian Empire. This empire
 defeated the country Babylon.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

locusts Insects like grasshoppers that could destroy a large crop
 very quickly.

winnow To separate grain from the hulls around it. Farmers
 threw the grain with the hulls into the air. The wind blew the
 hulls away and left the good grain.

15 The Lord used his great power
and made the earth.
He used his wisdom to build the world.
He used his understanding
to stretch out the skies.

16 When he thunders,
the water in the skies roar.
He sends clouds all over the earth.
He sends lightning with the rain.
He brings out the wind
from his storehouses.

17 But people are so stupid.
They don't understand what God
has done.
Skilled workers make statues of false gods.
Those statues are only false gods.
They show how foolish that worker is.
Those statues are not alive.

18 Those idols are worthless.
People made those idols,
and they are nothing but a joke.
Their time of judgment will come,
and those idols will be destroyed.

19 But Jacob's Portion (*God*) is not like those
worthless statues.
People didn't make God,
God made his people.
God made everything.
His name is the Lord All-Powerful.

20 The Lord says,
"Babylon, you are my club.
I used you to smash nations.
I used you to destroy kingdoms.

21 I used you to smash horse and rider.
I used you to smash chariot and driver.

22 I used you to smash men and women.
I used you to smash men, old and young.
I used you to smash young men
and young women.

23 I used you to smash shepherds and flocks.
I used you to smash farmers and cows.
I used you to smash governors
and important officials.

24 But I will pay Babylon back.
I will pay all the Babylonian people back.
I will pay them back for all the bad things
that they did to Zion.*

I will pay them back so that you can see
it, Judah."
The Lord said those things.

25 The Lord says,
"Babylon, you are a destroying mountain,
and I am against you.
Babylon, you destroyed the whole country,
and I am against you.
I will put my hand out against you.
I will roll you off the cliffs.
I will make you into a burned-up
mountain.

26 People will not take any rocks from Babylon
to use for the foundation of a building.
People will not find any rocks
big enough for cornerstones.
Why? Because your city will be
a pile of broken rocks forever."
The Lord said these things.

27 "Lift up the war flag in the land!
Blow the trumpet in all the nations!
Prepare the nations for war against Babylon!
Call these kingdoms to come fight
against Babylon:
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz.
Choose a commander to lead the army
against her.
Send so many horses
that they are like a swarm of locusts.*

28 Get the nations ready for battle against her.
Get the kings of the Medes* ready.
Get their governors and all their important
officials ready.
Get all the countries they rule ready for
battle against Babylon.

29 The land shakes and moves like it is in pain.
It will shake when the Lord does what
he planned to Babylon.
The Lord's plan is to make the land of
Babylon into an empty desert.
No person will live there.

30 Babylon's soldiers have stopped fighting.
They stay in their forts.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

locusts Insects like grasshoppers that could destroy a large crop
very quickly.
Medes People from the Medo-Persian Empire. This empire
defeated the country Babylon.

- Their strength is gone.
 They have become like scared women.
 Babylon's houses are burning.
 The bars of her gates are broken.
- 31 One messenger follows another.
 Messenger follows messenger.
 They announce to the king of Babylon
 that his whole city has been captured.
- 32 The places where people cross the rivers
 have been captured.
 The swamplands are burning.
 All of Babylon's soldiers are afraid."
- 33 The Lord All-Powerful,
 the God of the people of Israel, says:
 "Babylon is like a threshing floor.*
 At harvest time, people beat grain
 to separate the good parts from
 the chaff.*
 And the time to beat Babylon
 is coming soon.
- 34 "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,
 destroyed us in the past.
 In the past, Nebuchadnezzar hurt us.
 In the past, he took our people away,
 and we became like an empty jar.
 He took the best we had.
 He was like a giant monster
 that ate everything until it was full.
 He took the best we had
 and threw us away.
- 35 Babylon did terrible things to hurt us.
 Now I want those things
 to happen to Babylon."
- The people living in Zion* said these things:
 "The people of Babylon are guilty
 of killing our people.
 Now they are being punished
 for the bad things they did."
 The city of Jerusalem said those things.
- 36 So the Lord says:
 "I will defend you, Judah.
- I will make sure
 that Babylon is punished.
 I will dry up Babylon's sea.
 And I will make her water springs
 become dry.
- 37 Babylon will become
 a pile of ruined buildings.
 Babylon will be a place for wild dogs
 to live.
 People will look at that pile of rocks
 and be amazed.
 People will shake their heads
 when they think about Babylon.
 Babylon will be a place
 where no people live.
- 38 "The people of Babylon
 are like roaring young lions.
 They growl like baby lions.
- 39 Those people are acting like powerful lions.
 I will give a party for them.
 I will make them drunk.
 They will laugh and have a good time.
 And then they will sleep forever.
 They will never wake up."
- The Lord said these things.
- 40 "Babylon will be like sheep, rams,
 and goats
 waiting to be killed.
 I will lead them to the slaughter.
- 41 "Sheshach* will be defeated.
 The best and proudest country
 of the whole earth
 will be taken captive.
 People from other nations
 will look at Babylon,
 and the things they see
 will make them afraid.
- 42 The sea will rise over Babylon.
 Its roaring waves will cover her.
- 43 Babylon will be like a dry, desert land.
 Its cities will be empty ruins.
 No people will live in those cities.
 No people will even travel through them.

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

chaff The seed coverings and stems separated from the seeds of plants like wheat or barley. Farmers saved the seeds but let the wind blow the useless chaff away.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

Sheshach Jeremiah used a special code to create this name. It is like the code an army might use. It is a secret word for Babylon.

- 44 I will punish the false god Bel* in Babylon.
 I will make him vomit out the people
 that he swallowed.
 The wall around Babylon will fall.
 And other nations will stop coming
 to Babylon.
- 45 Come out of the city of Babylon, my people.
 Run to save your lives.
 Run from the Lord’s great anger.
- 46 “Don’t be sad, my people.
 Rumors will spread, but don’t be afraid.
 One rumor comes this year.
 Another rumor will come next year.
 There will be rumors about terrible fighting
 in the country.
 There will be rumors about rulers fighting
 against other rulers.
- 47 The time will surely come—
 I will punish the false gods of Babylon.
 And the whole land of Babylon
 will be put to shame.
 There will be many, many dead people,
 lying in the streets of that city.
- 48 Then heaven and earth and all that is in them
 will shout with joy about Babylon.
 They will shout because
 an army came from the north
 and fought against Babylon.”
 The Lord said these things.
- 49 “Babylon killed people from Israel.
 Babylon killed people
 from every place on earth.
 So Babylon must fall!
- 50 You people escaped the swords.
 You must hurry and leave Babylon.
 Don’t wait!
 You are in a faraway land.
 But remember the Lord where you are.
 And remember Jerusalem.”
- 51 “We people of Judah are ashamed.
 We have been insulted.
 Why? Because strangers have gone into
 the Holy Places of the Lord’s temple.”
- 52 The Lord says,
 “The time is coming, when I will punish
 the idols of Babylon.
 At that time, wounded people will cry
 with pain everywhere in that country.
- 53 Babylon might grow
 until she touches the sky.
 Babylon might make her forts strong.
 But I will send people
 to fight against that city.
 And those people will destroy her.”
 The Lord said these things.
- 54 “We can hear people crying in Babylon.
 We hear the sound of people destroying
 things in the land of Babylon.
- 55 The Lord will destroy Babylon very soon.
 He will stop the loud noises in that city.
 Enemies will come roaring in
 like ocean waves.
 People all around will hear that roar.
- 56 The army will come and destroy Babylon.
 Babylon’s soldiers will be captured.
 Their bows will be broken.
 Why? Because the Lord punishes people
 for the bad things they do.
 The Lord gives them the full punishment
 that they deserve.
- 57 I will make Babylon’s wise men
 and important officials drunk.
 I will make the governors, officers,
 and soldiers drunk too.
 Then they will sleep forever.
 They will never wake up.”
 The King said these things.
 His name is the Lord All-Powerful.
- 58 The Lord All-Powerful says:
 “Babylon’s thick, strong wall
 will be pulled down.
 Her high gates will be burned.
 The people of Babylon will work hard,
 but it will not help.
 They will become very tired
 trying to save the city.
 But they will only become fuel
 for the flames.”

Bel This is one of the names of the god Marduk, the most important god of the Babylonians.

Jeremiah Sends a Message to Babylon

⁵⁹This is the message that Jeremiah gave to the officer Seraiah.* Seraiah was the son of Neriah. Neriah was the son of Mahseiah. Seraiah went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah. This happened in the fourth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah.* At that time, Jeremiah gave this message to Seraiah, the officer. ⁶⁰Jeremiah had written on a scroll* all the terrible things that would happen to Babylon. He had written all these things about Babylon.

⁶¹Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “Seraiah, go to Babylon. Be sure to read this message so all the people can hear you. ⁶²Then say, ‘Lord, you have said that you will destroy this place, Babylon. You will destroy it so that no people or animals will live in it. This place will be an empty ruin forever.’ ⁶³After you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it. Then throw this scroll* into the Euphrates River. ⁶⁴Then say, ‘In the same way, Babylon will sink. Babylon will rise no more. Babylon will sink because of the terrible things that I will make happen here.’”

The words of Jeremiah end here.

The Fall of Jerusalem

52 Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king of Judah. Zedekiah ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother’s name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah.* Hamutal’s family was from the town of Libnah. ²Zedekiah did evil things, just like King Jehoiakim had done. The Lord did not like Zedekiah doing those evil things. ³Terrible things happened to Jerusalem and Judah because the Lord was angry with them. Finally, the Lord threw the people of Jerusalem and Judah away from his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ⁴So, in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s rule, on the tenth day of the tenth month*

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, marched against Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar had his whole army with him. The army of Babylon set up their camp outside of Jerusalem. Then they built ramps all around the city walls [so they could get over those walls]. ⁵The city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the army of Babylon until the eleventh year that Zedekiah was king.* ⁶By the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, the hunger in the city was very bad. There was no food left for the people in the city to eat. ⁷On that day, the army of Babylon broke into Jerusalem. The soldiers of Jerusalem ran away. They left the city at night. They went through the gate between the two walls. That gate was near the king’s garden. Even though the army of Babylon had surrounded the city, the soldiers of Jerusalem still ran away. They ran away toward the desert.

⁸But the Babylonian army chased King Zedekiah. They caught him on the plains of Jericho. All of Zedekiah’s soldiers ran away. ⁹The army of Babylon captured King Zedekiah. They took him to the king of Babylon at the city of Riblah. Riblah is in the land of Hamath. At Riblah the king of Babylon announced his judgment on King Zedekiah. ¹⁰There at the city of Riblah, the king of Babylon killed Zedekiah’s sons. Zedekiah was forced to watch his sons being killed. The king of Babylon also killed all the king’s officials of Judah. ¹¹Then the king of Babylon tore out Zedekiah’s eyes. He put bronze chains on him. Then he carried Zedekiah away to Babylon. In Babylon he put Zedekiah into prison. Zedekiah stayed in prison until the day he died.

¹²Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king of Babylon’s special guard, came to Jerusalem. This was on the tenth day of the fifth month, in the 19th year that Nebuchadnezzar was king.* Nebuzaradan was an important leader in Babylon. ¹³Nebuzaradan burned the Lord’s temple. He also burned down the king’s house and all the houses of Jerusalem. He burned down every important building in Jerusalem.

Seraiah Seraiah was a brother of Baruch, Jeremiah’s secretary.

fourth year ... king of Judah That is, 594 B.C.

scroll A long roll of leather or papyrus (*paper*) used for writing books, letters, and legal documents.

Jeremiah This is not Jeremiah the prophet, but a different man with the same name.

ninth year ... tenth month That is, January of 588 B.C.

eleventh year ... king That is, 587 B.C.

19th year ... king That is, 587 B.C.

¹⁴The whole Babylonian army broke down the walls around Jerusalem. That army was under the commander of the king's special guard. ¹⁵Nebuzaradan, the commander, took the rest of the people that were still in Jerusalem* into captivity. He also carried away those that had surrendered to the king of Babylon earlier. He also carried away the skilled craftsmen that were left in Jerusalem. ¹⁶But Nebuzaradan left some of the poorest people behind in the land. He left those people to work in the vineyards and the fields.

¹⁷The Babylonian army broke up the bronze columns of the temple. They also broke up the stands and the Bronze Tank* that were in the Lord's temple. They carried all that bronze away to Babylon. ¹⁸The army of Babylon also took these things from the temple: pots, shovels, wick trimmers, large bowls, pans, and all the bronze things that were used in the temple service. ¹⁹The commander of the king's special guards took these things away: basins, firepans, large bowls, pots, lampstands, pans, and bowls used for drink offerings. He took everything that was made of gold or silver. ²⁰The two pillars, the Sea and the twelve bronze bulls under it, and the moveable stands were very heavy. King Solomon had made those things for the Lord's temple. The bronze that those things were made of was so heavy it could not be weighed.

²¹Each of the bronze pillars was 27 feet* high. Each pillar was 18 feet* around. Each pillar was hollow. The walls of each pillar was 4 inches* thick. ²²The bronze capital on top of the first pillar was 7 1/2 feet* high. It was decorated with a net design and bronze pomegranates* all around it. The other pillar had

pomegranates too. It was like the first pillar. ²³There were 96 pomegranates on the sides of the pillars. All together, there were 100 pomegranates above the net design that went around the pillars.

²⁴The commander of the king's special guards took Seraiah and Zephaniah as prisoners. Seraiah was the high priest, and Zephaniah was the next highest priest. The three doorkeepers were also taken as prisoners. ²⁵The commander of the king's special guards also took the officer in charge of the fighting men. He also took seven of the king's advisers as prisoners. Those men were still there in Jerusalem. He also took the scribe* that was in charge of putting people in the army. And he took 60 of the ordinary people that were there in the city. ^{26–27}Nebuzaradan, the commander, took all those officials. He brought them to the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon was at the city of Riblah. Riblah is in the country of Hamath. There at the city of Riblah, the king ordered all those officials to be killed.

So the people of Judah were taken from their country. ²⁸This is how many people Nebuchadnezzar carried into captivity:

In Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year* as king of Babylon, 3,023 men were taken from Judah.

²⁹In Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year* as king of Babylon, 832 people were taken from Jerusalem.

³⁰In Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year* as king, Nebuzaradan took 745 men of Judah into captivity. Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king's special guards.

In all, 4,600 people were taken captive.

the rest ... Jerusalem This is from the ancient Greek translation. The Hebrew adds, "some of the poorest people" before this line. This seems to have been accidentally copied from the next verse.

bronze columns ... Bronze Tank These verses list the things that the Babylonian army took away from the Lord's temple. For a description of the temple furniture, see 1 Kings 7:13-26.

27 feet Literally, "18 cubits."

18 feet Literally, "12 cubits."

4 inches Literally, "4 fingers."

7 1/2 feet Literally, "7 cubits."

pomegranate(s) A red fruit containing many tiny seeds covered with a soft, juicy part of the fruit.

scribe A man that wrote down and copied books and letters. He often become an expert at the meaning of those writings (*Scriptures*).

Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year That is from the middle of 598 B.C. to the middle of 597 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year That is from the middle of 588 B.C. to the middle of 587 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year That is from the middle of 582 B.C. to the middle of 581 B.C.

Jehoiachin Is Set Free

³¹Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, was in prison in Babylon for 37 years. In the 37th year of his imprisonment,* Evil-Merodach, the king of Babylon, was very kind to Jehoiachin. He let Jehoiachin out of prison in that year. This was the same year that Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon. Evil-Merodach set Jehoiachin free from prison on the 25th day of

the 12th month. ³²Evil-Merodach spoke in a kind way to Jehoiachin. He gave Jehoiachin a place of honor higher than the other kings that were with him in Babylon. ³³So Jehoiachin took his prison clothes off. For the rest of his life, he ate regularly at the king's table. ³⁴Every day the king of Babylon gave Jehoiachin an allowance. This continued until Jehoiachin died.

37th year of his imprisonment That is, 561 B.C.

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