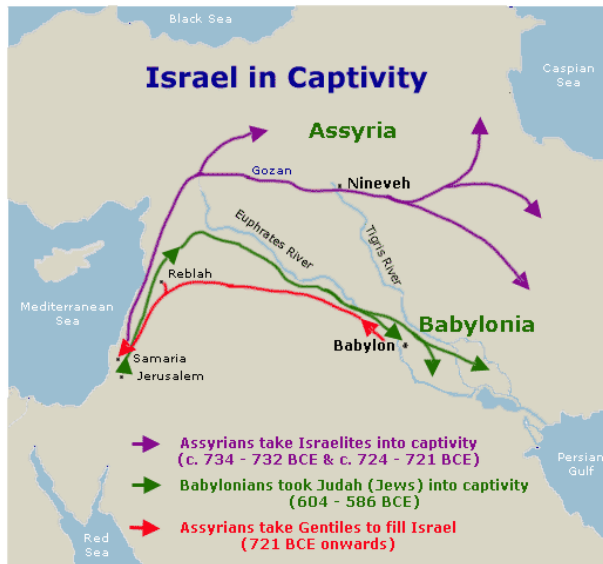


## Read the Bible in A Year: Chronological

### Readings for August 9-15, 2020

We continue the events in Israel and Judah during this time in their history. If you recall, the people of Israel had been exiled to Assyria (see the purple lines on the map below), and the King of Assyria had repopulated the cities of Israel (Samaria) with gentiles from other lands (see red line below). Judah continues to be threatened by Babylon, and the first wave of captives have been taken from Judah to Babylon. Jeremiah continues to prophecy in Judah with words of judgment and promise from God.



## Jeremiah 12-18, 35, 49

### Jeremiah's Complaint to God

You are always righteous, LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. You are always on their lips but far from their hearts. Yet you know me, LORD; you see me and test my thoughts about you. Drag them off like sheep to be butchered! Set them apart for the day of slaughter! How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, "He will not see what happens to us."

### God's Answer

"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? Your relatives, members of your own family—even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you. "I will forsake my house, abandon my inheritance; I will give the one I love into the hands of her enemies. My inheritance has become to me like a lion in the

forest. She roars at me; therefore, I hate her. Has not my inheritance become to me like a speckled bird of prey that other birds of prey surround and attack? Go and gather all the wild beasts; bring them to devour. Many shepherds will ruin my vineyard and trample down my field; they will turn my pleasant field into a desolate wasteland. It will be made a wasteland, parched and desolate before me; the whole land will be laid waste because there is no one who cares. Over all the barren heights in the desert destroyers will swarm, for the sword of the LORD will devour from one end of the land to the other; no one will be safe. They will sow wheat but reap thorns; they will wear themselves out but gain nothing. They will bear the shame of their harvest because of the LORD's fierce anger."

This is what the LORD says: "As for all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands and I will uproot the people of Judah from among them. But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to their own inheritance and their own country. And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives'—even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal—then they will be established among my people. But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it," declares the LORD.

### **A Linen Belt**

This is what the LORD said to me: "Go and buy a linen belt and put it around your waist, but do not let it touch water." So I bought a belt, as the LORD directed, and put it around my waist. Then the word of the LORD came to me a second time: "Take the belt you bought and are wearing around your waist, and go now to Perath and hide it there in a crevice in the rocks." So I went and hid it at Perath, as the LORD told me. Many days later the LORD said to me, "Go now to Perath and get the belt I told you to hide there." So I went to Perath and dug up the belt and took it from the place where I had hidden it, but now it was ruined and completely useless.

Then the word of the LORD came to me: "This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. These wicked people, who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them, will be like this belt—completely useless! For as a belt is bound around the waist, so I bound all the people of Israel and all the people of Judah to me,' declares the LORD, 'to be my people for my renown and praise and honor. But they have not listened.'

### **Wineskins**

"Say to them: 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Every wineskin should be filled with wine.' And if they say to you, 'Don't we know that every wineskin should be filled with wine?' then tell them, 'This is what the LORD says: I am going to fill with drunkenness all who live in this land, including the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets and all those living in Jerusalem. I will smash them one against the other, parents and children alike, declares the LORD. I will allow no pity or mercy or compassion to keep me from destroying them.'"

### **Threat of Captivity**

Hear and pay attention, do not be arrogant, for the LORD has spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings the darkness before your feet stumble on the darkening hills. You hope for light, but he will turn it to utter darkness and change it to deep gloom. If you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the LORD's flock will be taken captive.

Say to the king and to the queen mother, "Come down from your thrones, for your glorious crowns will fall from your heads." The cities in the Negev will be shut up, and there will be no one to open them. All Judah will be carried into exile, carried completely away.

Look up and see those who are coming from the north. Where is the flock that was entrusted to you, the sheep of which you boasted? What will you say when the LORD sets over you those you cultivated as your special allies? Will not pain grip you like that of a woman in labor? And if you ask yourself, “Why has this happened to me?”— it is because of your many sins that your skirts have been torn off and your body mistreated. Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

“I will scatter you like chaff driven by the desert wind. This is your lot, the portion I have decreed for you,” declares the LORD, “because you have forgotten me and trusted in false gods. I will pull up your skirts over your face that your shame may be seen— your adulteries and lustful neighings, your shameless prostitution! I have seen your detestable acts on the hills and in the fields. Woe to you, Jerusalem! How long will you be unclean?”

### **Drought, Famine, Sword**

This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought: “Judah mourns, her cities languish; they wail for the land, and a cry goes up from Jerusalem. The nobles send their servants for water; they go to the cisterns but find no water. They return with their jars unfilled; dismayed and despairing, they cover their heads. The ground is cracked because there is no rain in the land; the farmers are dismayed and cover their heads. Even the doe in the field deserts her newborn fawn because there is no grass. Wild donkeys stand on the barren heights and pant like jackals; their eyes fail for lack of food.”

Although our sins testify against us, do something, LORD, for the sake of your name. For we have often rebelled; we have sinned against you. You who are the hope of Israel, its Savior in times of distress, why are you like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who stays only a night? Why are you like a man taken by surprise, like a warrior powerless to save? You are among us, LORD, and we bear your name; do not forsake us!

This is what the LORD says about this people: “They greatly love to wander; they do not restrain their feet. So the LORD does not accept them; he will now remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins.”

Then the LORD said to me, “Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague.”

But I said, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! The prophets keep telling them, ‘You will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place.’”

Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries, and the delusions of their own minds. Therefore, this is what the LORD says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. And the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them, their wives, their sons and their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.

“Speak this word to them: “Let my eyes overflow with tears night and day without ceasing; for the Virgin Daughter, my people, has suffered a grievous wound, a crushing blow. If I go into the country, I see those slain by the sword; if I go into the city, I see the ravages of famine. Both prophet and priest have gone to a land they know not.”

Have you rejected Judah completely? Do you despise Zion? Why have you afflicted us so that we cannot be healed? We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there is only terror. We

acknowledge our wickedness, LORD, and the guilt of our ancestors; we have indeed sinned against you. For the sake of your name do not despise us; do not dishonor your glorious throne. Remember your covenant with us and do not break it. Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies themselves send down showers? No, it is you, LORD our God. Therefore, our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this.

Then the LORD said to me: “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ tell them, ‘This is what the LORD says: “Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity.’”

“I will send four kinds of destroyers against them,” declares the LORD, “the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds and the wild animals to devour and destroy. I will make them abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem.

“Who will have pity on you, Jerusalem? Who will mourn for you? Who will stop to ask how you are? You have rejected me,” declares the LORD. “You keep on backsliding. So I will reach out and destroy you; I am tired of holding back. I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the city gates of the land. I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people, for they have not changed their ways. I will make their widows more numerous than the sand of the sea. At midday I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of their young men; suddenly I will bring down on them anguish and terror. The mother of seven will grow faint and breathe her last. Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated. I will put the survivors to the sword before their enemies,” declares the LORD.

Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends! I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me.

The LORD said, “Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose; surely I will make your enemies plead with you in times of disaster and times of distress.

“Can a man break iron—iron from the north—or bronze?”

“Your wealth and your treasures I will give as plunder, without charge, because of all your sins throughout your country. I will enslave you to your enemies in a land you do not know, for my anger will kindle a fire that will burn against you.”

LORD, you understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering—do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake. When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty. I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails.

Therefore this is what the LORD says: “If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you,” declares the LORD. “I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.”

### **Day of Disaster**

Then the word of the LORD came to me: “You must not marry and have sons or daughters in this place.” For this is what the LORD says about the sons and daughters born in this land and about the women who are their mothers and the men who are their fathers: “They will die of deadly diseases. They will not be mourned or buried but will be like dung lying on the ground. They will perish by sword and famine, and their dead bodies will become food for the birds and the wild animals.”

For this is what the LORD says: “Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy, because I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people,” declares the LORD. “Both high and low will die in this land. They will not be buried or mourned, and no one will cut themselves or shave their head for the dead. No one will offer food to comfort those who mourn for the dead—not even for a father or a mother—nor will anyone give them a drink to console them.

“And do not enter a house where there is feasting and sit down to eat and drink. For this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Before your eyes and in your days I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in this place.

“When you tell these people all this and they ask you, ‘Why has the LORD decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?’ then say to them, ‘It is because your ancestors forsook me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. But you have behaved more wickedly than your ancestors. See how all of you are following the stubbornness of your evil hearts instead of obeying me. So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.’

“However, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’<sup>15</sup> but it will be said, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors.

“But now I will send for many fishermen,” declares the LORD, “and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks. My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols.”

LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress, to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, “Our ancestors possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good. Do people make their own gods? Yes, but they are not gods!”

“Therefore, I will teach them—this time I will teach them my power and might. Then they will know that my name is the LORD.

“Judah’s sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars. Even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles beside the spreading trees and on the high hills. My mountain in the land and your wealth and all your treasures I will give away as plunder, together with your high places, because of sin throughout your country. Through your own fault you will lose the inheritance I gave you. I will enslave you to your enemies in a land you do not know, for you have kindled my anger, and it will burn forever.”

This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."

Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay are those who gain riches by unjust means. When their lives are half gone, their riches will desert them, and in the end they will prove to be fools.

A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. LORD, you are the hope of Israel; all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.

Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise. They keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it now be fulfilled!" I have not run away from being your shepherd; you know I have not desired the day of despair. What passes my lips is open before you. Do not be a terror to me; you are my refuge in the day of disaster. Let my persecutors be put to shame, but keep me from shame; let them be terrified, but keep me from terror. Bring on them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction.

### **Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy**

This is what the LORD said to me: "Go and stand at the Gate of the People, through which the kings of Judah go in and out; stand also at all the other gates of Jerusalem. Say to them, 'Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah and all people of Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem who come through these gates. This is what the LORD says: Be careful not to carry a load on the Sabbath day or bring it through the gates of Jerusalem. Do not bring a load out of your houses or do any work on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors. Yet they did not listen or pay attention; they were stiff-necked and would not listen or respond to discipline. But if you are careful to obey me, declares the LORD, and bring no load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy by not doing any work on it, then kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this city with their officials. They and their officials will come riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by the men of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. People will come from the towns of Judah and the villages around Jerusalem, from the territory of Benjamin and the western foothills, from the hill country and the Negev, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the LORD. But if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses.'"

### **At the Potter's House**

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

Then the word of the LORD came to me. He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

"Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil

ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.' But they will reply, 'It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts.'"

Therefore this is what the LORD says: "Inquire among the nations: Who has ever heard anything like this? A most horrible thing has been done by Virgin Israel. Does the snow of Lebanon ever vanish from its rocky slopes? Do its cool waters from distant sources ever stop flowing? Yet my people have forgotten me; they burn incense to worthless idols, which made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths. They made them walk in byways, on roads not built up. Their land will be an object of horror and of lasting scorn; all who pass by will be appalled and will shake their heads. Like a wind from the east, I will scatter them before their enemies; I will show them my back and not my face in the day of their disaster."

They said, "Come, let's make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not cease, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets. So come, let's attack him with our tongues and pay no attention to anything he says."

Listen to me, LORD; hear what my accusers are saying! Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit for me. Remember that I stood before you and spoke in their behalf to turn your wrath away from them. So give their children over to famine; hand them over to the power of the sword. Let their wives be made childless and widows; let their men be put to death, their young men slain by the sword in battle. Let a cry be heard from their houses when you suddenly bring invaders against them, for they have dug a pit to capture me and have hidden snares for my feet. But you, LORD, know all their plots to kill me. Do not forgive their crimes or blot out their sins from your sight. Let them be overthrown before you; deal with them in the time of your anger.

### **Judgment on Ammon**

Concerning the Ammonites: Thus says the LORD: Does Israel have no sons? Or has he no heirs? Why then does their king inherit Gad and his people dwell in his cities? Therefore, surely the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it will be a desolate heap, and her towns will be burned with fire. Then Israel will be heir to those who were his heirs, says the LORD. Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai has been devastated! Cry out, O daughters of Rabbah, gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament, and run to and fro inside the walls; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his officials together. Why do you glory in the valleys, your flowing valley, O backsliding daughter who trusts in her treasures, saying, "Who shall come against me?" I will bring a fear upon you, says the Lord GOD of Hosts, from all those who are around you; and each of you will be driven out headlong, and no one will gather together the fugitives. Yet afterward I will restore the fortunes of the sons of Ammon, says the LORD.

### **Judgment on Edom**

Concerning Edom. Thus says the LORD of Hosts: Is there no more wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished? Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Dedan. For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I punish him. If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? If thieves came by night, they would destroy until they had enough. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places so that he will not be able to hide himself. His seed is devastated, and his brothers, and his neighbors, and he is no more. Leave your fatherless children behind. I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me.

For thus says the LORD: They whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunk. And are you the one who shall go unpunished altogether? You will not go unpunished, but you will surely drink of it. For I have sworn by Myself, says the LORD, that Bozrah will become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse. And all the cities will become perpetual wastes.

I have heard a message from the LORD, and an ambassador has been sent to the nations: “Gather together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle!” For I will make you small among the nations, and despised among men. As for the terror of you, the pride of your heart has deceived you, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there, says the LORD. Also Edom will become a desolation; everyone who goes by it will be astonished, and will hiss at all its wounds. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities, says the LORD, no man will abide there, nor will a son of man dwell in it. He will come up like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan against the perpetually watered meadow; but I will suddenly make him run away from her. And I will appoint over her whomever I choose. For who is like Me? And who will summon Me *into court*? Who is the shepherd who can stand against Me? Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that He has planned against Edom, and His purposes that He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock will drag them out; surely He will make their habitations desolate because of them. The earth has shaken at the noise of their fall; there is an outcry. Its noise has been heard at the Red Sea. He will mount up and fly as the eagle and spread his wings against Bozrah; and in that day the hearts of the mighty men of Edom will be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

### **Judgment on Damascus**

Concerning Damascus: Hamath and Arpad have been humiliated, for they have heard bad news. They are faint-hearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quieted. Damascus has become helpless; she has turned away to flee, and panic has seized her. Anguish and sorrows have seized her as a woman in labor. How the city of praise has not been deserted, the city of My joy! Therefore her young men will fall in her streets, and all the men of war will be cut off in that day, says the LORD of Hosts. I will kindle a fire to the wall of Damascus, and it will consume the palaces of Ben-Hadad.

### **Judgment on Kedar and Hazor**

Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated: Thus says the LORD: Arise, go up to Kedar, and destroy the men of the East. Their tents and their flocks they will take away. They will carry away their curtains for themselves, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they will call out to one another, “Terror is on every side!”

Flee, go far away, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Hazor, says the LORD. For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has taken counsel against you, and has conceived a purpose against you. Arise, go up to the nation at ease, that dwells securely, says the LORD. It has neither gates nor bars, they dwell alone. Their camels will become plunder, and the multitude of their cattle booty. And I will scatter into all winds those who cut the corners *of their hair*, and I will bring their calamity from all sides, says the LORD. Hazor will become a dwelling for jackals and a desolation forever. No man will abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

**We continue with the narrative account of what was happening in Judah during this time. Jehoakim had been placed on the throne in Judah by the King of Egypt which had attacked Judah. (Readings from 2 Kings will be in regular text, those from 2 Chronicles will be in italics).**

*Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jehoiakim and bound him in bronze chains to lead him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also brought out some of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his temple in Babylon.*



The king of Egypt did not come again from his land, for the king of Babylon had taken over from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates all that belonged to the king of Egypt.

Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

*The remainder of the acts of Jehoiakim, the detestable things that he did and were found against him, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.*

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king. He reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

*Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he was king in Jerusalem for three months and ten days. He did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD.*

**And Jeremiah continued to prophecy in Judah during this time...**

### **Jeremiah 22-24, 29-31, 49-51**

As I live, says the LORD, though Koniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet on My right hand, yet would I pluck you from there. And I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life and into the hand of those whose face you fear, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans. I will cast you and your mother that bore you out into another country where you were not born, and there you shall die. But to the land where they desire to return, they will not return there.

Is this man Koniah a despised broken jar? Is he a vessel in which is no desire? Why are he and his seed cast out and thrown into a land which they had not known? O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the LORD: Write down this man childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah.

### **The Righteous Branch**

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds that feed My people: You have scattered My flock and driven them away and have not visited them. I am about to punish you for the evil of your deeds, says the LORD. I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries wherever I have driven them and bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will also set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they will fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor will they be missing, says the LORD.

The days are coming, says the LORD, that I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely. And this is the name by which he will be called:

### **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Therefore, surely the days are coming, says the LORD, when they will no more say, "As the LORD lives who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt," but, "As the LORD lives who brought up

and led the descendants of the house of Israel out of the north country and from all countries where I had driven them.” Then they will dwell in their own land.

### **Lying Prophets**

My heart is broken within me, because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD, and because of His holy words. For the land is full of adulterers; for the land mourns because of the curse. The pleasant places of the wilderness have dried up. And their course is evil, and their might is not right.

For both prophet and priest are profane; indeed, in My house I have found their wickedness, says the LORD. Therefore their way will be as slippery ways to them; they shall be driven into the darkness and fall in it; for I will bring disaster upon them, even the year of their punishment, says the LORD.

In addition, I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria. They prophesied by Baal and caused My people Israel to err. I have seen also among the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing. They commit adultery and walk in lies. They also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one repents from his wickedness. All of them are as Sodom to Me and her inhabitants as Gomorrah.

Therefore, thus says the LORD of Hosts concerning the prophets: “I will feed them with wormwood and make them drink the water of gall, for from the prophets of Jerusalem profaneness has gone out into all the land.”

Thus, says the LORD of Hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They lead you into vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They still say to those who despise Me, “The LORD has said, ‘You will have peace’”; and they say to everyone who walks after the imagination of his own heart, “No evil will come upon you.” For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD and has perceived and heard His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened to it? Look, a whirlwind of the LORD has gone forth in fury, a tempestuous whirlwind. It will fall tempestuously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds.

Am I a God who is near, says the LORD, and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I do not see him? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD.

I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, “I had a dream, I had a dream!” How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who plan to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams, which they tell to their neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten My name for Baal. The prophet who has a dream, let him tell his dream. And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the LORD. Is not My word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

See, therefore I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who steal My words, each from his neighbor. See, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who use their tongues and say, “The LORD says.” See, I am against those who prophesy false dreams, says the LORD, and recount them and cause My people to err by their lies and reckless boasting. Yet I sent them not nor commanded them. Therefore, they shall not profit this people at all, says the LORD.

### **False Prophecy**

When this people or the prophet or a priest asks you, saying, "What is the oracle of the LORD?" you shall then say to them, "What oracle? I will forsake you, says the LORD." As for the prophet and the priest and the people who say, "The oracle of the LORD," I will punish that man and his house. Thus each of you will say to his neighbor and to his brother, "What has the LORD answered?" and, "What has the LORD spoken?" And the oracle of the LORD you shall mention no more, for every man's word will be his oracle. For you have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of Hosts our God. Thus you will say to that prophet, "What has the LORD answered you?" and, "What has the LORD spoken?" But if you say, "The oracle of the LORD"; therefore thus says the LORD: Because you say this word, "The oracle of the LORD," I have also sent to you, saying, You shall not say, "The oracle of the LORD." Therefore, surely, I, even I, will utterly forget you and cast you and the city that I gave you and your fathers out of My presence. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you and perpetual shame which shall not be forgotten.

### **The Good and Bad Figs**

The LORD showed me two baskets of figs that were set before the temple of the LORD after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the officials of Judah with the carpenters and smiths from Jerusalem and brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe, and the other basket had very rotten figs, which were so rotten they could not be eaten. Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good. And the rotten, very rotten, that are so rotten they cannot be eaten."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying: Thus says the LORD the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will acknowledge those who are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set My eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land. And I will build them up and not pull them down. And I will plant them and not pluck them up. <sup>7</sup>I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

But as the rotten figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so rotten, says the LORD, so I will forsake Zedekiah the king of Judah and his officials, and the rest of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. And I will make them a horror and an evil to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places wherever I shall drive them. I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them until they are consumed from off the land that I gave to them and to their fathers.

### **Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles**

Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the captivity, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. (This was after Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, and the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) It was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah (whom Zedekiah, king of Judah, sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), saying:

Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, to all who have been carried away captive whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters; so that you may increase there and not diminish. Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. For thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and

your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name. I have not sent them, says the LORD.

For thus says the LORD: When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you, says the LORD, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you shall call upon Me, and you shall come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You shall seek Me and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will turn away your captivity and gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back into the place from where I caused you to be carried away captive.

Because you have said, “The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon,” thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your brothers who did not go out with you into exile, thus says the LORD of Hosts: I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs that cannot be eaten, they are so rotten. I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence; and will make them a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and an astonishment, a hissing and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, because they have not listened to My words, says the LORD, which I sent to them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them. But you would not listen, says the LORD.

Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all you in captivity whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy a lie to you in My name: I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes. And because of them a curse shall be taken up by all the captives of Judah who are in Babylon, saying, “May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,” because they have committed folly in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives, and have spoken lying words in My name, which I have not commanded them. Indeed, I know and am a witness, says the LORD.

**A Message to Shemaiah:** Thus you shall also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying: Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have sent letters in your name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, that you should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad and makes himself a prophet, that you should put him in the stocks and in prison. Now therefore why have you not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth who prophesies to you? For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, “*This captivity* will be long; build houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat their fruit.”

Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: Send to all the captives, saying, Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you though I did not send, and he caused you to trust in a lie, therefore thus says the LORD: I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his seed. He will not have a man to dwell among this people, nor will he see the good that I will do for My people, says the LORD, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD.

## **Israel and Judah Will Be Restored**

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: Thus, says the LORD God of Israel: Write all the words that I have spoken to you in a book. For surely the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah. The LORD says, I also will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

These are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. For thus says the LORD: I have heard a sound of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, can a male labor with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! for that day is great, so that no one is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I shall break his yoke from off their neck and tear away their bonds, and strangers shall no longer make them their slaves. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob, says the LORD, nor be dismayed, O Israel; for I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. And Jacob shall return and shall be in rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you. Although I make a full end of all nations wherever I have scattered you, yet I will not make a full end of you. But I will correct you in measure and will not leave you altogether unpunished.

For thus says the LORD: Your bruise is incurable, and your wound is severe. There is no one to plead your cause that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins are numerous. Why do you cry because of your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins are numerous, I have done these things to you.

Therefore all who devour you will be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity. And those who plunder you will become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will give for prey. For I will restore health to you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the LORD, because they called you an outcast, saying, "This is Zion whom no man cares for."

Thus says the LORD: I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city will be built upon her own heap, and the palace will remain on its rightful place. Out of them will proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry; and I will multiply them, and they will not be few. I will also glorify them, and they will not be small. Their children also will be as before, and their congregation will be established before Me; and I will punish all who oppress them. Their leader shall be one of them, and their ruler shall proceed from their midst; and I will cause him to draw near and he will approach Me; for who is this that dares to approach Me? says the LORD. You shall be My people, and I will be your God.

Look, the whirlwind of the LORD goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it will fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return until He has done it and until He has performed the intentions of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it.

## **The Exiles Return**

At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.

Thus, says the LORD: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness, when I went to give Israel rest.

The LORD has appeared to him from afar, saying: Indeed, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you and you will be built, O virgin of Israel. You will again be adorned with your tambourines and shall go forth in the dances of those who make merry. You will yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria; the planters will plant and will enjoy them. For there will be a day when the watchmen on the hills of Ephraim will proclaim, "Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God."

For thus says the LORD: Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; publish, praise, and say, "O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel." See, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the remote parts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her who is in labor with child, together; a great company will return here. They will come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble. For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far off, and say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock." For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he. Therefore they will come and sing in the height of Zion, and will be joyful over the goodness of the LORD, for wheat and for wine and for oil and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their souls will be as a watered garden. And they will not sorrow any more at all. Then the virgin shall rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD.

Thus says the LORD: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.

Thus says the LORD: Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, says the LORD, that your children will come back to their own border.

I have surely heard Ephraim pleading: "You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as an untrained calf; turn me back and I will be turned, for you are the LORD my God. Surely after I turned back, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck myself on my thigh; I was ashamed and even humiliated because I bore the reproach of my youth." Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I *surely do* remember him *still*; therefore My heart longs for him. I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD.

Set up road marks, place guideposts. Set your heart toward the highway, even the way by which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities. How long will you go about, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth: A woman shall obtain a man.

Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: Once again they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities when I restore their fortunes: "May the LORD bless you, O habitation of righteousness and mountain of holiness!" And Judah and all its cities will dwell there, the farmer and those who go out with the flocks. For I satiate the weary souls and I replenish every languishing soul.

Upon this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was sweet to me.

Surely, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast. It shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them, to build, and to plant, says the LORD. In those days they will say no more: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But everyone will die for his own iniquity. Every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth will be set on edge.

### **A New Covenant**

Surely, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, because they broke My covenant, although I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law within them and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirs up the sea so that the waves roar, the LORD of Hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.

Thus says the LORD: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.

Surely, the days are coming, says the LORD, when the city will be built to the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. The measuring line shall stretch out straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah. The whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields to the Kidron Valley, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, will be holy to the LORD. It will not be plucked up nor thrown down any more forever.

### **Judgment on Elam**

The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying: Thus says the LORD of Hosts: I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. Upon Elam I will bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven and will scatter them toward all those winds. And there will be no nation where the outcasts of Elam will not go. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before those who seek their life. And I will bring disaster upon them, even My fierce anger, says the LORD; and I will send the sword after them until I have consumed them. And I will set My throne in Elam and will destroy from there the king and the officials, says the LORD. But it will come to pass in the latter days that I will restore the fortunes of Elam, says the LORD.

### **Judgment on Babylon**

The word that the LORD spoke against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet: Declare among the nations and publish, and set up a standard; do not conceal it, but say,

Babylon has been captured. Bel has been humiliated. Marduk has been broken in pieces; her idols have been humiliated; her images have been broken in pieces. For out of the north there comes up a nation against her, which will make her land desolate, and no one will dwell in it. They will wander away; they will depart, both man and beast.

In those days and at that time, says the LORD, the sons of Israel will come, they and the children of Judah together. They will go along weeping as they go, and seek the LORD their God. They will ask for the way to Zion with their faces in its direction. They will come that they may join themselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten.

My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill and have forgotten their resting place. All who found them have devoured them, and their adversaries said, "We are not guilty, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers."

Wander away out of the midst of Babylon, and go out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the male goats before the flocks. For I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country. And they shall set themselves in array against her; from there she shall be taken captive. Their arrows *will be* like *those* of a skilled warrior; no one shall return empty-handed. Chaldea will become plunder; all who destroy her will be satisfied, says the LORD.

Because you were glad, because you rejoiced, O you destroyers of My heritage, because you have grown fat as the heifer at the grass, and bellow as bulls, your mother will be sorely humiliated; she who bore you will be ashamed. She will be the least of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. Because of the wrath of the LORD she will not be inhabited, but shall be wholly desolate. Everyone who goes by Babylon will be astonished and hiss at all her wounds.

Put yourselves in battle array against Babylon all around, all you who bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the LORD. Shout against her all around; she has given herself up, her foundations have fallen, her walls have been thrown down. For this is the vengeance of the LORD. Take vengeance on her; as she has done, do to her. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him who handles the sickle in the time of harvest. For fear of the oppressing sword everyone will turn to his people, and everyone will flee to his own land.

Israel is a scattered flock. The lions have driven him away. First the king of Assyria devoured him; and this last one who has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he will feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul will be satisfied upon Mount Ephraim and Gilead. In those days and at that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel will be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.

Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod. Slay and utterly destroy them, says the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded you. A noise of battle is in the land, and great destruction. How the hammer of the whole earth has been cut asunder and broken! How Babylon has become a desolation among the nations! I have laid a snare for you, and you were also caught, O Babylon, and you were not aware. You have been found, and also caught, because you have striven against the LORD. The LORD has opened His armory and has brought out the weapons of His indignation, for this is the work of the Lord GOD of Hosts in the land of the Chaldeans. Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses; cast her up as heaps and destroy her utterly; let nothing of her be left. Slay all her bulls, let them go down to the slaughter. Woe to them! For their day has come, the time of their punishment. There is the sound of those who flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of His temple.



Call together the archers against Babylon. All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around; let no one escape. Recompense her according to her work; according to all that she has done, do to her, for she has been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel. Therefore her young men shall fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, says the LORD. I am against you, O most proud, says the Lord GOD of Hosts, for your day has come, the time when I will punish you. The most proud will stumble and fall, and no one will raise him up; and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it will devour all all around him.

Thus says the LORD of Hosts: The sons of Israel and the sons of Judah were oppressed together; and all who took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go. Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of Hosts is His name. He will thoroughly plead their case, that He may give rest to the land, but disquiet to the inhabitants of Babylon. A sword is against the Chaldeans, says the LORD, and against the inhabitants of Babylon, and against her officials, and against her wise men. A sword is against the oracle priests, and they will become fools. A sword is against her mighty men, and they shall be dismayed. A sword is against their horses, and against their chariots, and against all the foreigners who are in her midst; and they will become as women. A sword is against her treasures, and they will be robbed. A drought is against her waters, and they will be dried up. For it is the land of graven images, and they are mad over their idols.

Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands will dwell there, and the ostriches will dwell in it. It will be inhabited no more forever, nor will it be lived in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities, says the LORD, so no man will abide there, nor will any son of man dwell in it.

Look! A people shall come from the north and a great nation, and many kings will be raised up from the remote parts of the earth. They will hold the bow and the lance; they are cruel and will not show mercy. Their voice shall roar like the sea; and they shall ride on horses, everyone put in array, like a man to the battle, against you, O daughter of Babylon. The king of Babylon has heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble. Anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in labor. He will come up like a lion from the thicket of the Jordan to the perpetually watered meadow. But I will make them suddenly run away from it, and whoever is chosen I will appoint over it. For who is like Me? And who will summon Me *into court?* And who is the shepherd that can stand before Me?

Therefore, hear the counsel of the LORD that He has planned against Babylon, and His purposes that He has purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock will drag them out. Surely He will make their habitation desolate because of them. At the shout, "Babylon has been seized!" the earth is shaken, and the outcry is heard among the nations.

### **The Destruction of Babylon**

Thus, says the LORD:

I will raise up against Babylon, and against those who dwell in Leb Kamai, the spirit of a destroyer. And I will send foreigners to Babylon that they may winnow her and empty her land. For in the day of trouble they will be against her all around. Let not him who bends his bow bend it and let him not rise up in his scale-armor, and do not spare her young men; utterly destroy all her host. Thus, the slain will fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and those who are thrust through in her streets. For Israel has not been forsaken, nor Judah, by his God, the LORD of Hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.

Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and each of you deliver his soul! Do not be cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of the vengeance of the LORD; He will render to her a recompense. Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, that made all the earth drunk. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed. Howl for her. Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed.

We applied healing to Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us each go into his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.

The LORD has brought forth our righteousness. Come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

Sharpen the arrows. Gather the shields. The LORD has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of His temple. Set up the standard against the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes. For the LORD has both devised and done that which He spoke against the inhabitants of Babylon. O you who dwell by many waters, abundant in treasures, your end has come, and the measure of your end. The LORD of Hosts has sworn by Himself, saying: Surely, I will fill you with men, as with locusts, and they will lift up shouts of victory against you.

He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom and has stretched out the heaven by His understanding. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causes the clouds to ascend from the remote parts of the earth; He makes lightning with rain, and brings out the wind from His storehouses.

Every man is ignorant by His knowledge; every founder is humiliated by the graven image, for his molded image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, the work of errors; in the time of their punishment they will perish. The portion of Jacob is not like them, for He is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of His inheritance. The LORD of Hosts is His name.

*He says:* You are My battle-ax and weapon of war: for with you I will break in pieces the nations, and with you I will destroy kingdoms; and with you I will break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with you I will break in pieces the chariot and his rider. With you also I will break in pieces man and woman; and with you I will break in pieces old and young; and with you I will break in pieces the young man and the young woman. I will also break in pieces with you the shepherd and his flock; and with you I will break in pieces the farmer and his yoke of oxen; and with you I will break in pieces captains and rulers.

I will render to Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, says the LORD. I am against you, O destroying mountain, says the LORD, who destroys all the earth. And I will stretch out My hand against you, and roll you down from the rocks, and will make you a burned mountain. They will not take of you a stone for a corner, or a stone for foundations, but you will be desolate forever, says the LORD.

Set up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz; appoint a captain against her. Cause the horses to come up as the rough locusts. Prepare against her the nations, the kings of the Medes, the captains, and all the rulers, and every land of their dominion. So the land trembles and sorrows, for the purposes of the LORD will be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting; they have remained in their strongholds. Their might has failed; they became as women. They have burned her dwelling places; the bars of her gates are broken. One courier will run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city has been captured from end *to end*, and the passages have been seized, and they have burned the reeds with fire, and the men of war are terrified.

For thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come. "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me and crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel. He has swallowed

me up like a dragon; he has filled his belly with my delicacies, he has cast me out. May the violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon,” the inhabitant of Zion will say; and, “May my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea,” Jerusalem will say.

Therefore, thus says the LORD: I will plead your cause, and take vengeance for you. And I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. Babylon will become heaps, a dwelling place for jackals, an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant. They will roar together like young lions; they will growl as lions’ whelps. When they become heated up, I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunk, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake, says the LORD. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with male goats.

How Sheshak has been captured! And how the praise of the whole earth has been seized! How Babylon has become an astonishment among the nations! The sea has come up over Babylon; she has been covered with the multitude of the waves. Her cities have become a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness, a land in which no man dwells, through which no son of man passes. I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth from his mouth what he has swallowed up; and the nations will not flow together any more to him. Indeed, the wall of Babylon will fall.

My people, go out of her midst, and deliver every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD, lest your heart grows faint, and you are afraid for the report that will be heard in the land—for the report will come one year, and after that in another year will come another report, and violence will be in the land, ruler against ruler—therefore the days are coming when I will punish the graven images of Babylon; and her whole land will be humiliated, and all her slain will fall in her midst. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is in it, shall sing for joy over Babylon; for the destroyers will come to her from the north, says the LORD.

As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon the slain of all the earth will fall. You who have escaped the sword, go away, do not stand still. Remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

We are humiliated because we have heard reproach. Shame has covered our faces, for strangers have come into the holy places of the house of the LORD.

Therefore, surely the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will punish her graven images, and the mortally wounded shall groan through all her land. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from Me will destroyers come to her, says the LORD.

A sound of an outcry comes from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans, because the LORD has devastated Babylon, and destroyed the great voice out of her. When her waves roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered. Because the destroyer is coming against her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men will be captured, every one of their bows are broken. For the LORD is a God of recompense; He will completely repay. I will make her officials drunk, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they will sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake, says the King whose name is the LORD of Hosts.

Thus says the LORD of Hosts: The broad wall of Babylon will be utterly broken, and her high gates will be burned with fire; and the peoples will labor in vain, and the nations become exhausted only for fire.

**We return to the narrative account from 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles as the full takeover of Judah and Jerusalem by Babylon and the great exile begins...**

At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was under siege. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to the city while his servants were besieging it, and Jehoiachin king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his eunuchs. The king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. He brought out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the implements of gold in the temple of the LORD, which Solomon king of Israel had made, just as the LORD had spoken. He exiled all Jerusalem, all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. No one remained, except the poorest people of the land. He exiled Jehoiachin in Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his eunuchs, and the elite of the land he took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the fighting men, seven thousand, the craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all those strong and fit for war the king of Babylon brought them into exile in Babylon. The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, the uncle of Jehoiachin, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.

*In the spring of that year King Nebuchadnezzar sent for Jehoiachin and brought him to Babylon with the precious items from the house of the LORD. Then Zedekiah his brother was king over Judah and Jerusalem.*

**The Kings of Judah:** Solomon's son was Rehoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, Jehoram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, Amon his son, Josiah his son. The sons of Josiah: Johanan the firstborn, Jehoiakim the second son, Zedekiah the third, Shallum the fourth. The successors of Jehoiakim: Jehoiachin his son, and Zedekiah.

**Zedekiah, King of Judah:** Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he was king in Jerusalem for eleven years. He did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the LORD. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by an oath by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel. Even the officials over the priests and the people increased in their unfaithfulness in all the detestable practices of the nations, and they defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king. He reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. Because of the anger of the LORD this happened in Jerusalem and Judah until He threw them out from His presence. But Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. He did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. Through the anger of the LORD this came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah until He had cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. (Jeremiah 52:1-3)

And King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Koniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the LORD, which He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah. But Zedekiah the king sent Jehukal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Please pray to the LORD our God for us."

Now Jeremiah was still coming in and going out among the people, for they had not yet put him into prison. At that time Pharaoh's army had come out of Egypt, and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

Then the word of the LORD came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Thus you shall say to the king of Judah who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: Pharaoh's army which has come out to help you shall return to Egypt, to its own land. The Chaldeans will come again and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. Thus says the LORD: Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The Chaldeans will surely depart from us," for they will not depart. "For though you had struck the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you and there remained but wounded men among them, yet every man would rise up in his tent and burn this city with fire."

**Jeremiah Imprisoned:** Now when the army of the Chaldeans had withdrawn from Jerusalem at the approach of Pharaoh's army, Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to take possession of his property there among the people. When he was in the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard was there whose name was Irijah the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah. And he seized Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "You are falling away to the Chaldeans!"

But Jeremiah said, "It is false! I am not falling away to the Chaldeans," but he did not listen to him. So Irijah seized Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. Therefore the officials were wrathful with Jeremiah, and struck him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison. For Jeremiah had entered the dungeon, that is, the vaulted cell, and Jeremiah had remained there many days. Then Zedekiah the king sent and took him out; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, "Is there any word from the LORD?" And Jeremiah said, "There is!" Then he said, "You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon." Moreover Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, "How have I sinned against you or against your servants or against this people that you have put me in prison? Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, 'The king of Babylon will not come against you, nor against this land'? Therefore now please listen, O my lord the king. Please let my supplication be accepted before you, that you not cause me to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there." Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison and give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was finished. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

**Jeremiah Thrown Into a Cistern:** Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jukal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malkijah heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying: Thus says the LORD: He who remains in this city will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. But he who goes out to the Chaldeans shall live, for he shall have his life as plunder, and shall live. Thus says the LORD: This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, and he will capture it. Therefore the officials said to the king, "We beseech you, let this man be put to death, for he thus weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words to them; for this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm." Then Zedekiah the king said, "Here he is; he is in your hand; for the king cannot do anything against you."

Then they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malkijah the son of Hammelech that was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with cords. And in the cistern there was no water, only

mud, so Jeremiah sank in the mud. Now Ebed-Melek the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the cistern. Now the king was sitting in the Gate of Benjamin. Ebed-Melek went forth out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying, "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet whom they have cast into the cistern. And he will die by hunger in the place where he is, for there is no more bread in the city." Then the king commanded Ebed-Melek the Ethiopian, saying, "Take thirty men with you from here and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies." So Ebed-Melek took the men under his authority and went into the house of the king under the storeroom and took from there worn-out clothes and worn-out rags and let them down by cords into the cistern to Jeremiah. Then Ebed-Melek the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, "Now put these worn-out clothes and worn-out rags under your armpits under the cords," so Jeremiah did accordingly. Then they drew Jeremiah up with cords and took him up out of the cistern, and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

**Jeremiah Warns Zedekiah Again:** Then Zedekiah the king sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance that is in the house of the LORD. And the king said to Jeremiah, "I will ask you something; hide nothing from me." Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I declare it to you, shall you not surely put me to death? And if I give you counsel, you will not listen to me." So Zedekiah the king swore secretly to Jeremiah, saying, "As the LORD lives, who made our souls, I surely will not put you to death, nor will I give you into the hand of these men who seek your life." Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Hosts, the God of Israel: If you will surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, then your soul will live and this city will not be burned with fire. Thus you and your household will live. But if you do not surrender to the king of Babylon's officials, then this city will be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they will burn it with fire, and you will not escape out of their hand." Then Zedekiah the king said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews who have fallen over to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand and mock me." But Jeremiah said, "They will not deliver you. Please obey the voice of the LORD which I speak to you, so it will be well with you and your soul will live. But if you refuse to surrender, this is the word that the LORD has shown me: Then all the women who are left in the house of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon; and those women shall say: 'Your friends have misled and prevailed against you; while your feet were sunk in the mud, they turned back.'

"So they will bring out all your wives and your children to the Chaldeans. And you will not escape out of their hand, but will be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon; and you will cause this city to be burned with fire." Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Let no man know of these words, and you will not die. But if the officials hear that I have talked with you and they come to you and say to you, 'Declare to us now what you said to the king and what the king said to you; do not hide it from us and we will not put you to death,' then you will say to them, 'I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to the house of Jonathan, to die there.'" Then all the officials came to Jeremiah and asked him. And he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded; so they stopped speaking with him, for the matter was not overheard. So Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was captured.