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## Jeremiah

The book of Jeremiah is a collection of sermons, poems, stories and even dreams. Jeremiah's servant Baruch wrote these down. He also wrote some other stories about Jeremiah's life. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. This is because he had the unhappy job of warning his people in Judah of bad times to come.

Jeremiah's message from God was not good news. He said the nation would suffer defeat by the Babylonian army. And he said the people would be taken away as captives. This message sounded strange to the people. Times were good in Judah. A wise king named Josiah was on the throne. He had made many good changes to help his people learn to do what God wanted. And Judah's enemy to the north, the Assyrian Empire, was losing power at that time. Nineveh, its capital city, had been defeated. So it seemed that all was going well for Judah. But God told Jeremiah that everything was about to change.

The Assyrians were no longer a problem for Judah. But Judah faced new dangers. A struggle began between Egypt and Babylon for control of the land between them. So Judah was caught in the middle of two great powers. Egypt was to the south and west. And Babylon was to the north and east.

King Josiah chose to side with Babylon, and he died fighting against the Egyptians in 605 BC. After him, Jehoahaz was king of Judah for three months. Then the Egyptians removed him and

put Jehoiakim on the throne. He led the people of Judah away from God and made a treaty with Egypt. Instead of trusting God, Jehoiakim put his trust in Egypt to protect Judah from invasion. But in 598 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took the king of Judah to Babylon. He then made Zedekiah king of Judah. Again in 588 BC, Nebuchadnezzar returned and destroyed any cities strong enough to defend Judah. Two years later, he destroyed Jerusalem. Then the people of Judah and their king were taken as captives to Babylon.

It was during this time that Jeremiah brought God's message to the people of Judah. He warned them to remain faithful to the agreement God had made with them. If the people did not listen, they would be taken as captives to a foreign country. They would end up far away from the homeland God had given them.

Jeremiah was faithful in speaking God's message to his people, who time and again rejected his message. Jeremiah's life was marked by sorrow. But he found comfort in his relationship with God. He was given a vision of a better time, a day when God would make a new agreement with his people. No one among God's people would have to be taught about God because they would all know him. His teachings would be written on their hearts. In that day, God said, "I will not remember their sins." (31:31-34)

In the book of Jeremiah, God's plan is...

Jeremiah's calling as a prophet (1:1-19)

Punishment and captivity for God's people (2:1 – 35:19)

Persecution for Jeremiah (36:1 – 38:28)

The fall of Jerusalem and painful times to follow (39:1 – 45:5)

Destruction for the other nations (46:1 – 52:11)

Military invasion for Jerusalem (52:12-34)

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

### God Calls Jeremiah

<sup>4</sup>The LORD's message came to me:

<sup>5</sup>"Before I made you in your mother's womb, I knew you.

Before you were born, I chose you for a special work.

I chose you to be a prophet to the nations."

<sup>6</sup>Then I said, "But, Lord GOD, I don't know how to speak. I am too young."

<sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to me, "Don't say, 'I am too young.' You must go to every-

one I send you to and say everything I tell you to say. <sup>8</sup>Don't be afraid of anyone. I am with you, and I will protect you." This message is from the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD reached out with his hand and touched my mouth. He said to me:

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

<sup>10</sup>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

<sup>11</sup>The LORD's message came to me: "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

I answered, "I see a stick made from almond wood."

<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to me, "You have seen very well, and I am watching<sup>‡</sup> to make sure that my message to you comes true."

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD asked me again: "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

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

<sup>14</sup>The LORD said to me, "Something terrible will come from the north. It will happen to all the people who live in this country. <sup>15</sup>In a short time, I will call for all the people in the northern kingdoms to come to Jerusalem." This is what the LORD says.

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

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

<sup>†</sup>**1:2 the thirteenth year** That is, 627 BC.

<sup>‡</sup>**1:12 watching** This is a wordplay. *Shaqed* is the Hebrew word for "almond wood", and *shoqed* means "watching".

They will attack the city walls of Jerusalem.

They will attack all the cities in Judah.

<sup>16</sup>And I will announce judgement against my people, because they are evil and have turned away from me.

They offered sacrifices to other gods and worshipped idols they made with their own hands.

<sup>17</sup>“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, or I will give you good reason to be afraid of them.

<sup>18</sup>As for me, today I will make you like a strong city, an iron pillar, a bronze wall.

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

<sup>19</sup>All those people will fight against you, but they will not defeat you, because I am with you, and I will save you.”

This message is from the LORD.

### Judah Was Not Faithful

**2** The LORD gave me this message: <sup>2</sup>“Jeremiah, go and speak to the people of Jerusalem. Tell them that this is what the LORD says:

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

You loved me like a young bride.

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

<sup>3</sup>The people of Israel were a holy gift to the LORD, like the first part of the harvest.

All who took for themselves what belonged to him were judged guilty and were punished severely.”

This message is from the LORD.

<sup>4</sup>Descendants of Jacob, hear the LORD's message. Tribes of Israel, listen.

<sup>5</sup>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 worshipped worthless idols,

and they became worthless themselves.

<sup>6</sup>They did not seek my help and ask,

‘How can we find the LORD again?’

He is the one who brought us out of Egypt.

He led us safely through the desert, a land of dry sands and pits, a dark and dangerous place, where no one lives or even travels.’

<sup>7</sup>“I brought you to a land of gardens to enjoy its fruit and other good things. Instead, you went in and made my land filthy with your sin.

You made my gift to you a disgusting place.

<sup>8</sup>The priests did not ask,

‘How can we find the LORD again?’

The teachers of my law did not know me. The leaders of my people turned against me.

The prophets spoke for the false god Baal,

seeking the help of worthless idols.”

<sup>9</sup>This is what the LORD says:

“So now I will accuse you again,

and I will also accuse your grandchildren.

<sup>10</sup>Go west across the sea to the island of Cyprus.

Send someone east to the land of Kedar.

Look very carefully.

See if anyone has ever done anything like this.

<sup>11</sup> Has any nation ever stopped worshipping their old gods so that they could worship new gods? No! And their gods are not really gods at all!

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

<sup>12</sup> “Skies, be shocked at what happened! Shake with great fear!” says the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> “My people have done two evil things: they have turned away from me, the only one who can give them life;<sup>¶</sup> and they have made gods for themselves that can give them nothing.<sup>§</sup>

<sup>14</sup> “People of Israel, you are not slaves, are you?

You were not born slaves, were you? Then why did the enemy carry you away as captives?

<sup>15</sup> Like a lion, the enemy has roared at the people of Israel.

They have destroyed Israel’s land.

The cities have been burned, and no one is left in them.

<sup>16</sup> People of Israel, armies from Memphis and Tahpanhes\*\*

have smashed the top of your head.

<sup>17</sup> This trouble is your own fault.

The LORD your God was leading you the right way,<sup>††</sup>

but you turned away from him.

<sup>18</sup> People of Israel, think about this:

How did it help you to go to Egypt and drink from the Nile River?

How did it help you to go to Assyria and drink from the Euphrates River?

<sup>19</sup> You have done wrong,

and that will only bring punishment to you.

Trouble will come to you, and it will teach you a lesson.

Think about it and understand how bad it is to turn away from the LORD your God.

It is wrong not to fear and respect me.” This message is from the Lord GOD All-Powerful.

<sup>20</sup> “Judah, long ago you broke free from me,

like an ox that breaks its yoke and the ropes holding it.

You said to me, ‘I will not serve you!’

On every high hill and under every green tree

you offered your body in the worship of false gods.

<sup>21</sup> Judah, I planted you like a special vine.

You were all from good seed.

How did you turn into a different vine that grows bad fruit?

<sup>22</sup> Even if you wash yourself with lye and use plenty of soap,

I can still see the stain of your guilt,” says the Lord GOD.

<sup>23</sup> “Judah, how can you say to me, ‘I am not guilty

because I have not worshipped the Baal idols’?

Think about what you did in the valley.

Think about what you have done.

You are like a young camel

that runs from place to place.

<sup>24</sup> You are like a wild donkey that lives in the desert.

At mating time, she sniffs the wind.

No one can control her desire for a mate.

<sup>¶</sup>2:13 *the only one ... life* Literally, “the spring of living water”.

<sup>§</sup>2:13 *and they ... nothing* Literally, “and they have dug their own wells that are cracked and cannot hold water”.

\*\*2:16 *Memphis and Tahpanhes* Two cities in Egypt.

<sup>††</sup>2:17 *was leading ... way* This is not in the ancient Greek version.

Every male that wants her will get her.  
She is easy to find.

<sup>25</sup> Judah, stop chasing after idols!  
Stop wanting those other gods.  
But you say, 'It is no use! I cannot stop!  
I love those other gods.  
I can't stop chasing them.'

<sup>26</sup> "A thief is ashamed  
when people catch him stealing.  
The people of Israel should be ashamed  
too  
and so should their kings and leaders,  
priests and prophets.

<sup>27</sup> They say to pieces of wood,  
'You are my father.'  
They say to a rock,  
'You gave birth to me.'  
All these people will be ashamed.  
They have turned their backs on me.  
But when the people of Judah get into  
trouble,

they say to me, 'Come and save us!'  
<sup>28</sup> But where are the idols you made for  
yourselves?  
Let's see if they come and save you when  
you are in trouble!

People of Judah, you have as many idols  
as you have cities!

<sup>29</sup> "Why do you blame me for your  
troubles?

You have all turned against me."  
This message was from the LORD.

<sup>30</sup> "I punished you people of Judah,  
but it did not help.  
You did not come back  
when you were punished.

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

Like a dangerous lion, you killed them."

<sup>31</sup> People of this generation,  
pay attention to the LORD's message:  
"Have I been like a desert to the people  
of Israel?

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

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

We will not come back to you!'

Why do they say these things?

<sup>32</sup> A young woman does not forget her  
jewellery.

A bride does not forget to wear her wed-  
ding dress.

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

<sup>33</sup> "Judah, you have become so good at  
finding lovers.

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

<sup>34</sup> You have blood on your hands!  
It is the blood of poor, innocent people.  
You did not catch them breaking into  
your house.

You killed them for no reason!

<sup>35</sup> But still, you say, 'I am innocent.

God is not angry with me.'

So I will also judge you guilty of lying,  
because you say,

'I have done nothing wrong.'

<sup>36</sup> You go from one place to another  
looking for help,

always changing your mind.

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

<sup>37</sup> So you will be led away from here,  
and you will hide your face in shame.

The LORD has rejected those nations you  
trusted,

so they cannot help you.

**3** "If a man divorces his wife  
and she goes and marries someone  
else,

the first husband cannot take her back.

If he did,<sup>‡‡</sup> it would make the land  
unclean.

<sup>‡‡</sup>**3:1** *If he did* It was against the Law of Moses for a man to marry a woman he had divorced if that woman had become another man's wife. See Deut. 24:1-4.

Judah, you and all your false gods are like a prostitute with many lovers! So why do you think you can come back to me?"

says the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> "Look up to the bare hilltops, Judah.

Is there anywhere that you have not had sex with your lovers?

You sat by the road waiting for lovers, like a robber in the desert waiting for travellers.

You polluted the land with the evil sin you committed by leaving me for other gods.

<sup>3</sup> You sinned, so the rain has not come. There has not been any springtime rains. But like a prostitute, there is no shame on your face.

You refuse to be ashamed.

<sup>4</sup> But didn't you just call me 'Father'? Didn't you say, 'You have been my friend since I was a child'?

<sup>5</sup> You also said, 'God will not always be angry with me.

His anger will not continue forever.'

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

### **The Two Bad Sisters: Israel and Judah**

<sup>6</sup> During the time King Josiah was ruling the nation of Judah, the LORD spoke to me: "Jeremiah, you saw the bad things Israel<sup>f</sup> did! You saw how she turned away from me. She was unfaithful to me with every idol on every hill and under every green tree. <sup>7</sup> I said to myself, 'Israel will come back to me after she has finished doing these evil things.' But she did not come back to me. And Israel's unfaithful sister Judah saw what she did. <sup>8</sup> Judah knew why I sent Israel away. I divorced her because she committed the sin of adultery. But that

did not make her unfaithful sister Judah afraid. She also went out and acted like a prostitute. <sup>9</sup> And that did not bother her at all. Like a prostitute she committed adultery by worshipping idols made from stone and wood. She polluted the whole country with her sin. <sup>10</sup> Israel's unfaithful sister did not come back to me with her whole heart. She only pretended to come back." This message is from the LORD.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD said to me: "Israel was not faithful to me, but she had a better excuse than unfaithful Judah. <sup>12</sup> So go and speak to my people in the north. This is what I, the LORD, want you to say:

"Come back to me, you faithless people of Israel.

Come, and I will stop frowning at you.

I am full of mercy," says the LORD.

"I will not be angry with you forever.

<sup>13</sup> But you must confess your sin.

You turned against the LORD your God. You worshipped the idols of other nations.

You worshipped them under every green tree.

You did not obey me,"

says the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> The LORD says, "You people are unfaithful, but come back to me because I am your master. I will take one person from every city and two people from every family and bring you to Zion.

<sup>15</sup> Then I will give you new rulers who will be faithful to me. They will lead you with knowledge and understanding.

<sup>16</sup> 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

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<sup>f</sup>**3:6 Israel** Here, the name Israel means the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians about 100 years before Jeremiah's time.

the Box of the LORD's Agreement.' They will not even think about the Holy Box any more. They will not even remember it. They will not miss it or ever make another one. <sup>17</sup>The city of Jerusalem will be called The LORD's Throne. All nations will come together in the city of Jerusalem to give honour to the name of the LORD. They will not follow their stubborn, evil hearts any more. <sup>18</sup>In those days the people of Judah will join the people of Israel. They will come together from a land in the north to the land I gave to their ancestors."

<sup>19-20</sup>This message is from the LORD:

"I want to treat you like my own children.

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

I thought you would call me Father.  
I thought you would always follow me.  
But you have been unfaithful to me, people of Israel!  
You have been like an unfaithful wife who leaves her husband."

<sup>21</sup>You can hear crying on the bare hills.  
The people of Israel are crying and praying for mercy.

They have taken the wrong path.  
They have forgotten the LORD their God.

<sup>22</sup>"My children, you have been unfaithful,  
but I want you to come back to me.  
Come back and I will show you the way to be faithful.

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

<sup>23</sup>It was useless for us to worship idols on the hills.

The wild celebrations we had there were foolish.

Surely the salvation of Israel comes only from the LORD our God.

<sup>24</sup>For as long as we can remember, that shameful god Baal has eaten everything our fathers owned. He took their sheep and cattle, their sons and daughters.

<sup>25</sup>Let us lie down in our shame. Let disgrace 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 to me,

then come back.  
Throw away your disgusting idols.  
Don't wander farther away from me.

<sup>2</sup>If you do these things, then you will be able to use my name to make a promise.

You will be able to say,  
'As surely as the LORD lives.'  
You will be able to use these words in a truthful, honest and right way.

If you do these things, the Lord will bless the nations. They will boast about what the Lord has done."

<sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and to Jerusalem:  
"Your fields have not been ploughed. Plough those fields!

Don't plant seeds among the thorns.

<sup>4</sup>Become the LORD's people.

Change your hearts.<sup>§§</sup>

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 it will burn you up.

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

No one will be able to put out that fire because of the evil you have done.”

### Disaster From the North

<sup>5</sup> Give this message to the people of Judah:

“Tell everyone in the city of Jerusalem: ‘Blow the trumpet all over the country.’ Shout out loud and say, ‘Come together!

Let us all escape to the strong cities for protection.’

<sup>6</sup> Raise the signal flag pointing people to Zion.

Run for your lives! Don’t wait!

Do this because I am bringing disaster from the north.\*

I am bringing terrible destruction.”

<sup>7</sup> A lion has come out of his cave.

A destroyer of nations has begun to march.

He has left his home to destroy your land.

Your towns will be destroyed.

There will be no one left to live in them.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is angry with us, so put on rags for mourning and cry loudly!

<sup>9</sup> “When this happens,” says the LORD, “the king and his officers will lose their courage.

The priests will be filled with fear, and the prophets will be shocked.”

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

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

<sup>11</sup> At that time this message will be given to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: “A hot wind blows from the bare hills. It comes from the desert to my people. It is not like the gentle wind that is used to separate the grain from the chaff. <sup>12</sup> It is a stronger wind than that, and it comes from me. Now I will announce my judgement against the people of Judah.”

<sup>13</sup> Look! The enemy rises up like a cloud. His chariots look like a windstorm.

His horses are faster than eagles.

It will be very bad for us!

We are ruined!

<sup>14</sup> People of Jerusalem, wash the evil from your hearts.

Make your hearts pure so that you can be saved.

Don’t continue making evil plans.

<sup>15</sup> Listen! The voice of a messenger from the land of Dan<sup>†</sup> is speaking.

Someone is bringing bad news from the hill country of Ephraim:<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “Report it to this nation.<sup>¶</sup>

Spread the news to the people in Jerusalem.

Enemies are coming from a faraway country.

They are shouting words of war against the cities of Judah.

<sup>17</sup> The enemy has surrounded Jerusalem like men guarding a field.

Judah, you turned against me, so the enemy is coming against you.”

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

<sup>†</sup>**4:15 land of Dan** The people from the tribe of Dan lived near the border in the northern part of Israel. They would be the first to be attacked by an enemy from the north.

<sup>‡</sup>**4:15 hill country of Ephraim** This was the central part of the land that had been the northern kingdom of Israel.

<sup>¶</sup>**4:16 Report ... nation** The Hebrew text is not clear.

This message is from the LORD.

<sup>18</sup>“The way you have lived and the things you have done have 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

<sup>19</sup>My sadness and worry is making my stomach hurt.

I am bent over in pain.

I am so afraid.

My heart is pounding inside me.

I cannot keep quiet, because I have heard the trumpet blow.

The trumpet is calling the army to war.

<sup>20</sup>Disaster follows disaster.

The whole country is destroyed!

Suddenly my tents are destroyed.

My curtains are torn down.

<sup>21</sup>How long must I see the enemy’s flags and hear the trumpet’s call to battle?

<sup>22</sup>The LORD says:

“My people are foolish.

They don’t know me.

They are stupid children.

They don’t understand.

They are skilful at doing evil,

but they don’t know how to do good.”

### Disaster Is Coming

<sup>23</sup>I looked at the earth.

It was empty and useless.

I looked at the sky,

and its light was gone.<sup>§</sup>

<sup>24</sup>I looked at the mountains,

and they were shaking.

All the hills were trembling.

<sup>25</sup>I looked, but there were no people.

All the birds of the sky had flown away.

<sup>26</sup>I looked, and the good land had become a desert.

All the cities in that land had been destroyed

by the LORD and his great anger.

<sup>27</sup>This is what the LORD says:

“The whole land will be ruined, but I will not completely destroy it.

<sup>28</sup>It will be a time of sorrow for the earth,

and the sky will turn dark.

I have said what I will do,

and I will do it.

I have made a decision,

and I will not change my mind.”

<sup>29</sup>The people of Judah will hear the sound

of the horsemen and the archers,

and the people will run away!

Some of them will hide in caves;<sup>\*\*</sup>

some will hide in the bushes;

some will climb up into the rocks.

All the cities of Judah will be empty.

No one will live in them.

<sup>30</sup>Jerusalem, you are about to be destroyed.

So what are you doing now?

The nations that were your lovers hate you.

They want to kill you.

It’s too late to make them want you again.

So why are you trying to make yourself look pretty?

Why are you wearing your fancy dress

and putting on gold jewellery?

Why are you putting make-up on your eyes?

It’s a waste of time.

<sup>31</sup>I hear a cry like a woman in labour, a scream like a woman giving birth to her first baby.

<sup>§</sup>4:23 *the earth ... gone* Jeremiah is comparing his country to the time before people were put on the earth. See Gen. 1:1.

<sup>\*\*</sup>4:29 *hide in caves* This is from the ancient Greek version.

It is the cry of Daughter Zion.<sup>††</sup>  
 She is lifting her hands in prayer, saying,  
 “Oh! I am about to faint!  
 Murderers are all around me!”

### The Evil of the People of Judah

**5** The LORD says:  
 “Walk the streets of Jerusalem.  
 Look around and think about these things.

Search the public squares of the city.  
 See if you can find one good person,  
 one who does honest things and who  
 searches for the truth.

If you find one good person,  
 I will forgive Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>The people make promises and say, ‘As  
 surely as the LORD lives.’

But they don’t really mean it!”

<sup>3</sup>LORD, I know that you want people  
 to be loyal to you.

You struck 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 had done.

<sup>4</sup>But I said to myself,  
 “It must be only the poor who are so  
 foolish.

They have not learned the way of the  
 LORD.

They don’t know the teachings of their  
 God.

<sup>5</sup>So I will go to the leaders of Judah.  
 I will talk to them.

Surely they know the way of the LORD,  
 the law of their God.”

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

<sup>6</sup>So a lion from the forest will attack  
 them.

A wolf from the desert will kill them.  
 A leopard is hiding near their cities,  
 to tear to pieces anyone who comes out.  
 That’s because the people have sinned  
 again and again.

Many times they have wandered away  
 from God.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD asks:

“People of Judah, why should I forgive  
 you?

Your children have turned away from  
 me.

They made promises to gods that are not  
 real!

I gave them everything they needed,  
 but they were still unfaithful to me!

They spent all their time with  
 prostitutes.

<sup>8</sup>Like stallions, they ate and were ready  
 to mate,

eager for sex with their neighbour’s wife.

<sup>9</sup>Should I not punish them for doing  
 these things?”

says the LORD.

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

I should give it the punishment it  
 deserves.

<sup>10</sup>“Go along the rows of Judah’s  
 grapevines and cut down the vines,  
 but don’t completely destroy them.

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

<sup>11</sup>The people of Israel and Judah  
 have been unfaithful to me in every  
 way,”

says the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>Those people lied about the LORD.

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

Nothing bad will happen to us.

We will never see an army attack us.

We will never starve.”

<sup>††</sup>4:31 *Daughter Zion* Another name for Jerusalem. See Zion in the Word List.

<sup>13</sup>The prophets are only empty wind.<sup>‡‡</sup>  
The word of God is not in them.<sup>¶¶</sup>  
Bad things will happen to them.

<sup>14</sup>This is what the LORD God All-Powerful says:

“The people said I would not punish them.

So, Jeremiah, the words I give you will be like fire,  
and these people will be like wood that burns up completely.”

<sup>15</sup>People of Israel, this message is from the LORD:

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

It is an ancient nation that has lasted a long time.

Its people speak a language you do not know,

so you cannot understand what they say.

<sup>16</sup>They are all mighty warriors who carry bags full of deadly arrows.

<sup>17</sup>They will eat the crops that you have gathered;

they will eat all your food.

They will destroy your sons and daughters.

They will eat your flocks and your herds; they will eat your grapes and your figs.

They have weapons to destroy the strong cities

that you trust to protect you.”

<sup>18</sup>This message is from the LORD:

“But even when these terrible days come, I will not fully destroy you, Judah. <sup>19</sup>And the people will ask, ‘Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?’ Give them this answer from me:

‘You people of Judah left me, and you served foreign idols in your own land.

Because you did this, you will now serve

foreigners in a land that does not belong to you.’

<sup>20</sup>“Tell this message to the descendants of Jacob,

and tell it in the nation of Judah.

<sup>21</sup>Hear this message,

you foolish people who have no sense.

You have eyes, but you don’t see!

You have ears, but you don’t listen!

<sup>22</sup>Surely you are afraid of me,”

says the LORD.

“You should shake with fear before me.

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

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

The waves may pound the beach,

but they will not destroy it.

The waves may roar as they come in,

but they cannot go beyond the beach.

<sup>23</sup>But the people of Judah are stubborn.

They are always planning ways to turn against me.

They turned away from me and left me.

<sup>24</sup>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 a good harvest time.’

<sup>25</sup>You don’t have these blessings because you have done wrong.

Your sins have kept these good things away from you.

<sup>26</sup>Among my people are those who are evil.

They are like men who make nets for catching birds.<sup>§§</sup>

They set their traps,

but they catch people instead of birds.

<sup>‡‡</sup>5:13 *wind* This is a wordplay. The Hebrew word for wind is like the word for spirit.

<sup>¶¶</sup>5:13 *The word ... them* Literally, “And the ‘He said’ is not in them.”

<sup>§§</sup>5:26 *men ... birds* The Hebrew text is not clear.

<sup>27</sup> Like a cage full of birds,  
their lives are full of evil lies.  
Their cheating has made them rich and  
powerful.

<sup>28</sup> They are well fed and well dressed.  
There is no end to the evil they do.  
They don't care what happens to  
orphans,  
and they don't help the poor get what  
they need.

<sup>29</sup> Should I punish the people of Judah  
for these things?"  
says the LORD.

"A nation like this should get the pun-  
ishment it deserves.

<sup>30</sup> "A terrible and shocking thing  
has happened in the land of Judah.

<sup>31</sup> 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 Jerusalem!  
Blow the war trumpet in Tekoa!  
Send up a smoke signal at Beth  
Hakkerem!

Disaster is coming from the north.†

Terrible destruction is coming to you.

<sup>2</sup> Jerusalem,‡ you are like a beautiful  
meadow,¶

but I will destroy you!

<sup>3</sup> Enemy shepherds will surround you  
with all their flocks.  
They will set up their tents all around  
you,  
and each one will let his sheep eat the  
grass."

<sup>4</sup> They say:  
"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.  
<sup>5</sup> So get up! We will attack the city at  
night!

Let's destroy the strong walls that are  
around Jerusalem."

<sup>6</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful  
says:

"Cut down the trees around Jerusalem.  
Build ramps up against the walls.  
This city should be punished  
because there is no justice here—only  
slavery.

<sup>7</sup> As a well keeps its water fresh,  
so Jerusalem keeps its wickedness fresh.  
I hear about the robbing and violence in  
this city all the time.

All the people I see are sick or in pain.

<sup>8</sup> Listen to this warning, Jerusalem,  
or I will turn my back on you.

I will make your land an empty desert.  
No one will be able to live there."

<sup>9</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful  
says:

"Gather<sup>§</sup> the people of Israel who were  
left on their land.

\*<sup>5:31</sup> *priests ... were chosen to do* The Hebrew text is not clear.

†<sup>6:1</sup> *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.

‡<sup>6:2</sup> *Jerusalem* Literally, "Daughter Zion". Also in verse 23. See Zion in the Word List.

¶<sup>6:2</sup> *you are like a beautiful meadow* The Hebrew text is not clear.

§<sup>6:9</sup> *Gather* Or "glean". There was a law that a farmer must leave some grain in his field during harvest so poor people and immigrants could find something to eat. See Lev. 19:9; 23:22.

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

Check each vine again,  
like the workers when they pick the grapes.”

<sup>10</sup> Who can I speak to?

Who can I warn?

Who will listen to me?

The people of Israel have closed their ears,

so they cannot hear my warnings.

They don't like the LORD's teachings.

They don't want to hear his message.

<sup>11</sup> But I am full of the LORD's anger,  
and I am tired of holding it in!

“Pour out my anger on the children playing in the streets  
and on the young soldiers gathered there as well.

A man and his wife will both be captured as well as all the old people.

<sup>12</sup> Their houses will be given to others.

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

I will reach out  
and punish the people of Judah,”  
says the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> “All the people of Israel want more and more money.

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

Even the prophets and priests tell lies.

<sup>14</sup> They should bandage the wounds my people have suffered,  
but they treat their wounds like small scratches.

They say, ‘It's all right, everything is all right.’

But it is not all right!

<sup>15</sup> They should be ashamed of the disgusting things they do,

but they are not ashamed at all.

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

So they will be punished with everyone else.

They will be thrown to the ground when I punish the people,”  
says the LORD.

<sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“Stand at the crossroads and look.

Ask where the old road is.

Ask for the road that will lead the right way,

and walk on that road.

If you do, you will find rest for yourselves.

But you said, ‘We will not walk on the good road.’

<sup>17</sup> 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!’

<sup>18</sup> So listen, all you nations,  
and pay attention, you people in those countries.††

<sup>19</sup> Hear this, people of the earth:

I am going to bring disaster to the people of Judah

because of all the evil they planned,

and because they ignored my messages.

They refused to obey my law.

<sup>20</sup> Why do you bring me incense from the country of Sheba?‡‡

Why do you bring me sweet-smelling cane from a faraway country?

Your burnt offerings don't make me happy.

Your sacrifices don't please me.”

<sup>21</sup> So this is what the LORD says:

\*\***6:17 watchmen** Here, this means the prophets, who were like guards on the city walls. They watched for danger and called out instructions to the people.

††**6:18 pay ... countries** The Hebrew text is not clear.

‡‡**6:20 Sheba** A land south of Israel, located where part of Saudi Arabia is today. Sheba controlled the spice trade in the time of Jeremiah.

“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 neighbours will die.”

<sup>22</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“An army is coming from the north.”<sup>¶</sup>

A great nation is coming from faraway places on the earth.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

It is coming to attack you, Jerusalem.”

<sup>24</sup> We have heard the news about that army,

and we are paralysed with fear.

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

<sup>25</sup> Don't go out into the fields.

Don't go on the roads

because the enemy has swords, and there is terror all around us.

<sup>26</sup> My people, put on rags

and roll in the dirt.<sup>§§</sup>

Mourn for the dead.

Cry as if you had lost an only son.

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

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

You will test my people

and watch how they live.

<sup>28</sup> My people have turned against me

and refuse to change, hard as bronze and iron.

They tell lies about people and cheat everyone they deal with.

<sup>29</sup> They are like silver that cannot be made pure,

even in the hottest fire.

Every effort to purify them is useless.

Nothing has worked to get rid of the evil.

<sup>30</sup> My people will be called ‘Rejected Silver’,

because I, the LORD, did not accept them.”

### Jeremiah Speaks at the Temple

**7** This is the LORD's message to Jeremiah: <sup>2</sup>“Jeremiah, stand at the gate of the LORD's house. Teach this message at the gate:

“Hear the message from the LORD, all you people of the nation of Judah. All you who come through these gates to worship the LORD, hear this message. <sup>3</sup> The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: Change your lives and do what is right. Then I will let you live in this place. \* <sup>4</sup> Don't trust the lies that some people tell. They say, “This is the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD!”<sup>†</sup> <sup>5</sup> If you change your lives and do what is right, I will let you live in this place. You must be fair to each other. <sup>6</sup> You must not take advantage of widows, orphans or immigrants living in your land. Don't kill innocent people in this place! And don't follow other gods, because they will only ruin your lives. <sup>7</sup> If you obey

<sup>¶</sup>**6:22 north** The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

<sup>§§</sup>**6:26 roll in the dirt** This is one way people showed that they were sad or crying for a dead person.

<sup>\*</sup>**7:3 I will ... place** This can also mean “I will live with you.”

<sup>†</sup>**7:4 This is ... LORD** Many people in Jerusalem thought the Lord would always protect the city where his Temple was, so it didn't matter how evil they were.

me, I will let you live in this place. I gave this land to your ancestors for them to keep forever.

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

<sup>12</sup>“You people of Judah, go to Shiloh and see what I did there. That’s the place where I first made a house for my name. Go there and see what I did to that place because of the evil my people Israel did.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>13</sup>You people of Judah were doing all these evil things too. 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. <sup>14</sup>So I will destroy the house called by my name in Jerusalem. I will destroy that Temple as I destroyed Shiloh. And that house in Jerusalem that is called by my name is the Temple you trust in. I gave that place to you and to your ancestors. <sup>15</sup>I will throw you away from me just as I threw away all your brothers from Ephraim.

<sup>16</sup>“As for you, Jeremiah, don’t pray for these people of Judah. Don’t beg for them or pray for them. Don’t beg me to help them. I will not listen to your prayer for them. <sup>17</sup>I know you see what they are

doing in the towns of Judah. You can see what they are doing in the streets of the city of Jerusalem. <sup>18</sup>This is what the people of Judah are doing: the children gather wood. The fathers use the wood to make a fire. The women make the dough and then make cakes of bread to offer to the Queen of Heaven. The people of Judah pour out drink offerings to worship other gods. They do this to make me angry. <sup>19</sup>But I am not the one they are really hurting. This message is from the LORD. They are only hurting themselves. They are bringing shame on themselves.”

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

### Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

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

<sup>24</sup>“But your ancestors did not listen to me. They did not pay attention to me. They were stubborn and did what they wanted to do. They did not become good. They became even more evil—they went backwards, not

<sup>‡</sup>7:12 *Go ... Israel did* Shiloh was probably destroyed by the Philistines in the time of Eli and Samuel. See 1 Sam. 4.

forwards. <sup>25</sup>From the day that your ancestors left Egypt to this day, I have sent my servants to you. My servants are the prophets. I sent them to you again and again. <sup>26</sup>But your ancestors did not listen to me. They did not pay attention to me. They were very stubborn and did even more evil than their fathers did.

<sup>27</sup>“Jeremiah, you will tell these things to the people of Judah. But they will not listen to you. You will call to them, but they will not answer you. <sup>28</sup>So you must tell them these things: “This is the nation whose people did not obey the LORD their God. They did not listen to his teachings. Even after being punished, they refused to change. They are no longer faithful to God. They don’t even claim to be true to him.’

### The Valley of Slaughter

<sup>29</sup>“Jeremiah, cut off your hair and throw it away. <sup>¶</sup>Go up to the bare hilltop and cry, because the LORD has rejected this generation of people. He has turned his back on these people. And in anger he will punish them. <sup>30</sup>Do this because I have seen the people of Judah doing evil things. This message is from the LORD. They have set up their disgusting idols in the Temple that is called by my name. They have polluted my house with their false gods! <sup>31</sup>The people of Judah have built places of worship at Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom where they kill their own sons and daughters and burn them as sacrifices. This is something I never commanded. The thought of such a terrible thing never entered my mind! <sup>32</sup>So I warn you, says the LORD, the days are coming when people will not call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom any more. No, they 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. <sup>33</sup>Then the bodies of the dead people will become food for the birds. Wild animals will eat the bodies of those people. There will be no one left alive to chase the birds or animals away. <sup>34</sup>I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and happiness in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. The happy voices of brides and bridegrooms will no longer be heard in Judah or Jerusalem. The land will become an empty desert.”

**8** This message is from the LORD: “At that time the enemy will take the bones of the kings and important rulers of Judah from their tombs. They will also take the bones of the priests and prophets and all who lived in Jerusalem from their tombs. <sup>2</sup>They will spread the bones on the ground under the sun, moon and stars, which the people of Jerusalem loved and served. Yes, my people followed them like gods, looked to them for help and worshipped them. No one will gather their bones to bury again. They will be left scattered on the ground like manure.

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

### Sin and Punishment

<sup>4</sup>“Jeremiah, tell the people of Judah that this is what the LORD says: “You know if a man falls down, he gets up again. And if a man goes the wrong way, he turns around and comes back.

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<sup>¶</sup>7:29 *cut ... away* This showed that Jeremiah was sad.

<sup>5</sup>The people of Judah went the wrong way.

Why then do the people of Jerusalem continue going the wrong way?

They believe their own lies and refuse to turn around and come back.

<sup>6</sup>I have listened to them very carefully, but they don't say what is right.

They are not sorry for their sins. They don't think about the evil they have done.

They do things without thinking.

They are like horses running into a battle.

<sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>"You keep saying, 'We are wise because we have the LORD's teachings!'

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

<sup>9</sup>These wise people refused to listen to the LORD's teachings.

So they are not really wise at all.

These wise people will be trapped.

They will be shocked and ashamed.

<sup>10</sup>So I will give their wives to other men.

I will give their fields to new owners.

All the people of Israel want more and more money.

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

Even the prophets and priests tell lies.

<sup>11</sup>They should bandage the wounds my people have suffered,

but they treat their wounds like small scratches.

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

But it is not all right!

<sup>12</sup>They should be ashamed of the disgusting things they do,

but they are not ashamed at all.

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

So they will be punished with everyone else.

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

says the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>"I will take away their fruit and their crops

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

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

Even the leaves will become dry and die. I will take away the things I gave them."<sup>§</sup>

<sup>14</sup>"They will say, 'Why are we just sitting here?'

Come, let's run to the strong cities.

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

then let's die there.

We have sinned against the LORD,

so he has given us poisoned water to drink.

<sup>15</sup>We hoped to have peace,

but nothing good has come.

We hoped that he would heal us,

but only disaster has come.

<sup>16</sup>From the land of the tribe 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 who live there.'

<sup>§</sup>8:13 *I will take away ... gave them* The Hebrew text is not clear.

\*\*8:16 *snorting* The sound caused by forcing breath very hard through the nose.

<sup>17</sup> “People of Judah, I am sending poisonous snakes<sup>††</sup> to attack you. These snakes cannot be controlled. They will bite you,” says the LORD.

### Jeremiah Cries Out to God

<sup>18</sup> There is no relief for my sadness. I am sick with sorrow.

<sup>19</sup> Listen to my poor people. Everywhere in this land they are crying for help:

“Is the LORD still at Zion?  
Is Zion’s King still there?”  
And God says, “Why did my people make me angry by worshipping idols, their useless false gods?”

<sup>20</sup> The people cry out,  
“Summer is over.  
The time for harvest is past,  
and still no one has come to save us.”

<sup>21</sup> I hurt because my people are hurting. I am filled with sorrow, too sad to speak.

<sup>22</sup> There must be some medicine in the land of Gilead.

There must be a doctor there.  
So why are my people still hurting?  
Why has no one healed them?

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

<sup>2</sup> If only I had a place in the desert—  
a house where travellers spend the night—

so I could leave my people.  
I could go away from them,  
because they are all unfaithful to God.  
They have all turned against him.

This is what the LORD says:  
<sup>3</sup> “They use their tongues like a bow;  
lies fly from their mouths like arrows.  
Lies, not truth,

have grown strong in this land.  
They go from one sin to another.  
They don’t know me.

<sup>4</sup> “Watch your neighbours!  
Don’t trust your own brothers,  
because every brother is a cheat.  
Every neighbour talks behind your back.  
<sup>5</sup> Everyone lies to their neighbour;  
no one tells the truth.

The people of Judah have taught their tongues to lie.  
They sinned until they were too tired to come back.

<sup>6</sup> One bad thing followed after another,  
and lies followed lies.  
The people refused to know me,”  
says the LORD.

<sup>7</sup> So the LORD All-Powerful says:  
“A worker heats metal in a fire to test it  
and see if it is pure.

I will test the people of Judah like that.  
I have no other choice.  
My people have sinned.

<sup>8</sup> The people of Judah have tongues like deadly arrows.

Their mouths speak lies.  
They all speak kindly to their neighbours,  
but they are secretly planning ways to attack them.

<sup>9</sup> Should I punish the people of Judah for doing these things?  
You know I should punish a nation such as this.

I should give it the punishment it deserves,”  
says the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> I, Jeremiah, will cry for the mountains.

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

No one goes there any more.

<sup>††</sup>8:17 *poisonous snakes* This probably means one of Judah’s enemies.

The sounds of cattle cannot be heard.  
The birds have flown away,  
and the animals are gone.

<sup>11</sup> “I will make the city of Jerusalem a  
pile of ruins.

It will be a home for jackals.

I will destroy the cities in the land of  
Judah,

so no one will live there.”

<sup>12</sup> Is anyone wise enough to under-  
stand this picture of our land? Why is it  
ruined and as empty as a desert that no  
one can cross? Does anyone have an ex-  
planation from the LORD that they can  
tell us?

<sup>13</sup> The LORD answered: “This has hap-  
pened because the people of Judah  
stopped following the teachings I gave  
them. They refused to listen to me, and  
they have not done what I told them to  
do. <sup>14</sup> They were stubborn and decided  
to worship the false god Baal, as they  
learned to do from their ancestors.” <sup>15</sup> So  
the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Is-  
rael, says: “I will soon make the peo-  
ple of Judah eat bitter food and drink  
poisoned water. <sup>16</sup> I will scatter them  
through other nations that they and their  
ancestors knew nothing about. I will  
send an army with swords to chase them  
down until they have all been killed.”

<sup>17</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful  
says:

“Now think about these things!

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

Send for the people who are good at that  
job.”

<sup>18</sup> The people say:

“Let those women come quickly  
and cry for us.

Then our eyes will fill with tears  
until they stream down our faces.”

<sup>19</sup> The sound of loud crying is heard from  
Zion:

“We are ruined!

We are so ashamed!

We must leave our land,  
because our houses have been torn  
down.”

<sup>20</sup> Now, women of Judah, listen to the  
message from the LORD.

Pay attention to what he says.

Teach your daughters how to mourn.

Teach each other this funeral song:

<sup>21</sup> “Death has climbed in through our  
windows

and has come into our palaces.

Death has come to our children who play  
in the streets

and to the young men who meet in the  
public places.”

<sup>22</sup> Tell everyone that this is what the  
LORD says:

“Dead bodies will lie in the fields like  
piles of animal waste.

They will look like bundles of grain a  
farmer has cut,

but no one will gather them.”

<sup>23</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“The wise must not boast

about their wisdom.

The strong must not boast

about their strength.

The rich must not boast

about their wealth.

<sup>24</sup> But if someone wants to boast,

they should boast that they know and  
understand me.

I am the LORD who acts with faithful  
love

and always does what is right and fair on  
earth.

These are the things that please me,”

says the LORD.

<sup>25</sup> This is what the LORD says: “The  
time is coming when I will punish all  
those who are circumcised only in the  
body. <sup>26</sup> I am talking about the people of  
the nations of Egypt, Judah, Edom, Am-  
mon, Moab and all those who live in the  
desert. Their circumcision is not the kind

the Lord wants. But the people of Israel are not really circumcised either. They are not circumcised in their hearts.”<sup>‡‡</sup>

### The Lord and the Idols

**10** People of Israel, listen to the LORD! He is speaking to you.

<sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD says:

“Don’t live like people from other nations.

Don’t be afraid of special signs in the sky.”<sup>¶</sup>

The other nations are afraid of what they see in the sky,

but you must not be afraid of them.

<sup>3</sup>The customs of other people are worth nothing.

Their idols are nothing but wood from the forest,

made by workers with their chisels.<sup>§§</sup>

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>The idols of the other nations are like a scarecrow in a cucumber field.

They cannot talk.

They cannot walk, so people must carry them.

So don’t be afraid of their idols.

They cannot hurt you,

and they cannot help you either.”

<sup>6</sup>LORD, there is no one like you.

You are great!

Your name is great and powerful!

<sup>7</sup>Everyone should respect you, King of all the nations.

You deserve their respect.

There are many wise men among the nations,

but not one of them is as wise as you.

<sup>8</sup>They are all stupid and foolish.

The only teaching they get is from the useless wooden idols they worship!

<sup>9</sup>These idols are covered with silver from Tarshish

and gold from the city of Uphaz.

They are the work of craftsmen and goldsmiths.

They are dressed in royal blue and purple robes,

all made by skilled workers.

<sup>10</sup>But the LORD is the only true God.

He is the only God who is alive.

He is the King who rules forever.

The earth shakes when he is angry.

The people of the nations cannot stop his anger.

<sup>11</sup>Tell them this message: “These false gods did not make heaven and earth.

They will be destroyed and disappear from heaven and earth.”\*

<sup>12</sup>God is the one who used his power to make the earth.

He used his wisdom to create the world.

With his understanding

he stretched the sky over the earth.

<sup>13</sup>When he speaks, it sounds like thunder.

The waters in the sky roar.

He makes clouds appear from far away.

He sends lightning with the rain.

<sup>‡‡</sup>9:26 *circumcised in their hearts* See the note at Jer. 4:4.

<sup>¶</sup>10:2 *special signs in the sky* People believed that such things as comets, meteors or eclipses of the sun and moon could be used to learn what was going to happen in the future.

<sup>§§</sup>10:3 *chisels* Sharp tools used to carve wood or stone.

\*10:11 *Tell them 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. See Aramaic in the Word List.

He brings out the wind from his storehouses.

<sup>14</sup> But people are too stupid to understand God's power. Goldsmiths make idols that bring them shame, because the idols they make are false gods.

They have no life in them.

<sup>15</sup> These worthless idols are nothing but a joke.

When it is time for judgement, they will be destroyed.

<sup>16</sup> But Jacob's God<sup>†</sup> is not like those idols.

He is the one who created everything.

And Israel is the family that he chose to be his own people.

His name is the LORD All-Powerful.

### Destruction Is Coming

<sup>17</sup> Get everything you own and prepare to leave.

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

<sup>18</sup> This is what the LORD says:

"Now I will throw out all who live in this land.

I will bring pain and trouble to them.

I will do this so that they will learn their lesson."<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Jerusalem says: "I am hurt badly.

I am injured and cannot be healed.

But I told myself, 'This is my sickness; I must suffer through it.'

<sup>20</sup> My tent is ruined.

All its ropes are broken.

My children have left me.

They are gone.

No one is left to put up my tent.

No one is left to set up a shelter for me."<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The shepherds are stupid.

They don't try to find the LORD.

They are not wise,

so their flocks are scattered and lost.

<sup>22</sup> Listen! A loud noise!

The noise is coming from the north.<sup>¶</sup>

It will destroy the cities of Judah.

Judah will become an empty desert.

It will be a home for jackals.

<sup>23</sup> LORD, I know that our lives do not belong to us.

We have no control over what happens.

<sup>24</sup> So correct us, LORD!

But please be fair.

Don't punish us in anger, or you will destroy us!

<sup>25</sup> If you are angry, then punish the other nations.

They don't know or respect you.

They don't worship you.

Those nations destroyed Jacob's family.

They destroyed Israel completely;

they destroyed Israel's homeland.

### The Agreement Is Broken

**11** This is the message from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "Jeremiah, listen to the words of this agreement and tell them to the people living in Jerusalem and the rest of Judah. <sup>3</sup> Tell them that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Bad things will happen to anyone who does not obey the commands of this agreement. <sup>4</sup> I am talking about the agreement I made with your ancestors when I brought them out of that fur-

<sup>†</sup>10:16 *Jacob's God* Literally, "Jacob's share". This means that God and Jacob (the people of Israel) had a special relationship—God belonged to Israel, and Israel belonged to God.

<sup>‡</sup>10:18 *they will learn their lesson* The Hebrew text is not clear.

<sup>¶</sup>10:22 *north* The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

nace<sup>§</sup> called Egypt.’ At that time I told them, ‘Listen to me and obey all the commands I give you. Then you will be my people, and I will be your God.’

<sup>5</sup>“I did this to keep the promise that I had made to your ancestors. I promised to give them a very rich land—a land filled with many good things.\*\* And you are living in that country today.”

I answered, “Amen, LORD.”

<sup>6</sup>The LORD said to me: “Jeremiah, tell this message in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: ‘Listen to the words of this agreement, and do everything it commands. <sup>7</sup>I gave a warning to your ancestors at the time I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I have warned them again and again to this day. I told them to obey me. <sup>8</sup>But your ancestors did not listen to me. They were stubborn and did what their own evil hearts wanted. So I made them suffer all the bad things described in the agreement as punishment for those who do not obey its commands.’”

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

<sup>11</sup>So this is what the LORD says: “I will soon make something terrible happen to the people of Judah. They will not be

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

<sup>13</sup>“People of Judah, you have many idols—there are as many idols as there are towns in Judah. You have built many altars for worshipping that shameful god Baal—there are as many altars as there are streets in Jerusalem.

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

<sup>15</sup>“Judah is the one I love, but why is she in my Temple?

She has done too many evil things.

Judah, do you think vows and sacrifices will keep you from being destroyed? Will I then allow you to enjoy your evil ways?

<sup>16</sup>I, the LORD, gave you a name.

I called you, ‘A green olive tree, beautiful to look at’.

But with a powerful storm, I will set that tree on fire,

and its branches will be burned up.††

<sup>17</sup>“I, the LORD All-Powerful, planted you and said that disaster will come to you. That is because the people of Israel and Judah have done evil things. They offered sacrifices to Baal, and that made me angry!”

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

\*\*11:5 *land ... things* Literally, “land flowing with milk and honey”.

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

### Evil Plans Against Jeremiah

<sup>18</sup> The LORD showed me that the men of Anathoth<sup>‡</sup> were making plans against me. He showed me what they were doing, so I knew they were against me.

<sup>19</sup> Before he showed me this, I was like a gentle lamb waiting to be butchered. I did not understand that they were against me. They were saying this about me:

“Let us destroy the tree and its fruit!  
Let us kill him!

Then people will forget him.”

<sup>20</sup> So I prayed, “LORD All-Powerful, you are a fair judge.

You know how to test people’s hearts and minds.

I trust you to defend me.

So I wait to see you give them the punishment they deserve.”

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

### 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 who cannot be trusted  
have such easy lives?

<sup>2</sup> You have put these wicked people here  
like plants with strong roots.

They grow and produce fruit.

With their mouths they say that you are  
near and dear to them,  
but in their hearts they are really far  
away from you.

<sup>3</sup> But you know my heart, LORD.

You see me and test my mind.

Drag the evil people away like sheep to  
be killed.

Choose them for the day of slaughter.

<sup>4</sup> How much longer will the land be dry?

How long will the grass be dry and dead?

The birds and the animals of this land  
have all died,

and it is the fault of the wicked.

But they are saying,

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

### God’s Answer to Jeremiah

<sup>5</sup> “Jeremiah, if running a race against  
men makes you tired,

how will you race against horses?

If you trip and fall in an open field,  
what will you do in the thorn bushes by  
the Jordan River?

<sup>6</sup> These men are your own brothers.

Members of your own family are making  
plans against you.

People from your own family are shout-  
ing at you.

Don’t trust them,

even when they speak to you like  
friends.

### The Lord Rejects Judah

<sup>7</sup> “I have abandoned my house.

I have left my own property.”<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>‡</sup>11:18 *men of Anathoth* Anathoth was Jeremiah’s home town. The people who were plotting against him included his own relatives. See Jer. 12:6.

<sup>¶</sup>12:7 *house ... my own property* That is, the people of Judah.

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

<sup>8</sup>My own people turned against me like  
a wild lion.

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

<sup>9</sup>My own people have become like  
a dying animal surrounded by vultures.  
These birds are circling around her.

Come on, wild animals.  
Come get something to eat.

<sup>10</sup>Many shepherds have ruined my  
vineyard.

They have trampled the plants in my  
field.

They have made my beautiful field a  
desert.

<sup>11</sup>They have turned it into an empty  
desert.

It is dry and dead.

The whole land has been ruined,  
and no one is left to care for it.

<sup>12</sup>The empty hills are covered with  
soldiers

who have come to destroy everything.  
The LORD is using them to punish that  
land from one end to the other.

No one is safe.

<sup>13</sup>The people will plant wheat,  
but they will harvest only thorns.  
They will work hard until they are very  
tired,  
but they will get nothing for all their  
work.

They will be ashamed of their crop.  
The LORD's anger caused this."

### The Lord's Promise to Israel's Neighbours

<sup>14</sup>This is what the LORD says: "I will  
tell you what I will do for all those who

live around the land of Israel. They are  
very wicked. They have destroyed the  
land I gave to the people of Israel. I  
will pull the evil people up and throw  
them out of their land, and I will pull  
the people of Judah up with them. <sup>15</sup>But  
after I pull them up out of their land,  
I will feel sorry for them. I will bring  
each family home to their own land. <sup>16</sup>I  
want them to learn the ways of my peo-  
ple. They once taught my people to use  
Baal's name to make promises. Now I  
want them to begin a promise by say-  
ing, 'As surely as the LORD lives'. Then I  
will make them successful as a part of my  
people. <sup>17</sup>But if a nation does not listen  
to my message, I will completely destroy  
it. I will pull it up like a dead plant." This  
message is from the LORD.

### The Sign of the Loincloth

**13** This is what the LORD said to me:  
"Jeremiah, go and buy a linen  
loincloth.<sup>§§</sup> Then put it around your  
waist. Don't let it get wet."

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

<sup>5</sup>So I went to Perath and hid the loin-  
cloth there, just as the LORD told me  
to do. <sup>6</sup>Many days later the LORD said  
to me, "Now, Jeremiah, go to Perath.  
Get the loincloth that I told you to hide  
there."

<sup>7</sup>So I went to Perath and dug up the  
loincloth. I took it out of the crack in the

§§**13:1 loincloth** A common undergarment in ancient Judah. It was a short skirt that was wrapped around the hips. It reached about halfway down the thighs.

\***13:4 Perath** Probably a village near Jerusalem. This town is called Parah in the list of the cities of the land of Benjamin in Josh. 18:23. But this name also means the Euphrates River.

rocks where I had hidden it. But now I could not wear the loincloth, because it was ruined. It was good for nothing.

<sup>8</sup>Then the message from the LORD came to me. <sup>9</sup>This is what the LORD said: “That loincloth shows how I will ruin the proud people of Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>They refuse to listen to me. They are stubborn and do only what they want to do. They follow and worship other gods. They will be like this linen loincloth. They will be ruined and good for nothing. <sup>11</sup>Just as a loincloth is wrapped around a man’s waist, I wrapped the people of Israel and Judah around me, says the LORD. I did this because I wanted them to be my people and bring me fame, praise and honour. But they did not listen to me.

### Warnings to Judah

<sup>12</sup>“Jeremiah, say to the people of Judah: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Every wine jar should be filled with wine.’ They will laugh and say to you, ‘Of course, we know that every wine jar should be filled with wine.’ <sup>13</sup>Then you will say to them, ‘This is what the LORD says: I will make everyone who lives in this land as helpless as a drunk. I am talking about the kings who sit on David’s throne. I am also talking about the priests, the prophets and all the people who live in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>I will smash them against each other like jars, even the fathers and sons.’ This message is from the LORD. ‘I will not feel sorry for them or have mercy on them. I will not allow my pity for them to stop me from destroying the people of Judah.’”

<sup>15</sup>Listen and pay attention.

The LORD has spoken to you.  
Do not be proud.

<sup>16</sup>Honour the LORD your God.

Praise him or he will bring darkness.

Praise him before you fall on the dark hills.

You people of Judah are hoping for light, but the Lord will turn the light into thick darkness.

He will change it into the deepest gloom.

<sup>17</sup>If you people will not listen to him, I will cry alone because of your pride.

My eyes will overflow with tears, because the LORD’s flock<sup>†</sup> will be taken away as captives.

<sup>18</sup>Tell these things to the king and his mother:

“Come down from your thrones.

Your beautiful crowns have fallen from your heads.”

<sup>19</sup>The cities in the Negev are locked.

No one can open them.

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

They were carried away as prisoners.

<sup>20</sup>Jerusalem, look!

The enemy is coming from the north!<sup>‡</sup>

What will happen to the cities of Judah?

They were put under your care like a beautiful flock of sheep.

Where are they now?

<sup>21</sup>I will let your enemies become your rulers—

people you once trusted with your secrets.

What will you say then?

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

<sup>22</sup>You might ask yourself,

<sup>†</sup>**13:17 the 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.

<sup>‡</sup>**13:20 north** The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

“Why has this bad thing happened to me?”

It happened because of your many sins.  
That’s why they were allowed to tear off  
your clothes  
and take advantage of you.

<sup>23</sup> A black man cannot change the colour  
of his skin,

and a leopard cannot change its spots.  
And you, Jerusalem, who always do  
what is evil,

cannot change and do good.

<sup>24</sup> “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.

<sup>25</sup> This is what will happen to you.

This is your part in my plans.”

This message is from the LORD.

“Why will this happen?

Because you forgot me.

You trusted false gods.

<sup>26</sup> Jerusalem, I will pull your skirt up  
over your face.

Everyone will see you,

and you will be ashamed.

<sup>27</sup> I have seen the disgusting things you  
have done.<sup>f</sup>

I have seen you laughing and having sex  
with your lovers.

I have seen your disgraceful worship of  
other gods

on the hills and in the fields.

It will be very bad for you, Jerusalem!

How long will you continue your filthy  
sins?”

### Drought and False Prophets

**14** This is the LORD’s message to  
Jeremiah about the time of no  
rain:

<sup>2</sup> “The nation of Judah cries for people  
who have died.

The people in the cities grow weaker and  
weaker.

They lie on the ground in their sorrow.

The people in Jerusalem cry out to God  
for help.

<sup>3</sup> The leaders send their servants to get  
water.

The servants go to the water wells,  
but they find them empty.

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

They cover their heads from shame.

<sup>4</sup> No one prepares the ground for crops.<sup>§</sup>  
No rain falls on the land.

The farmers are depressed.

So they cover their heads from shame.

<sup>5</sup> Even the mother deer in the field leaves  
her newborn fawn alone,

because there is no grass.

<sup>6</sup> Wild donkeys stand on the bare hills.

They sniff the wind like jackals.

But their eyes cannot find any food,  
because there are no plants to eat.”

<sup>7</sup> We know that this is our fault.

We are now suffering because of our  
sins.

LORD, do something to help us for the  
good of your name.

We admit that we have left you many  
times.

We have sinned against you.

<sup>8</sup> God, you are the hope of Israel!

You save Israel in times of trouble.

But now it seems like you are a stranger  
in the land,

like a traveller who only stays one night.

<sup>9</sup> You seem like a man who has been  
taken by surprise,

like a soldier who does not have the  
power to save anyone.

<sup>f</sup>13:27 *I have seen ... done* Probably the worship of false gods. Part of that worship was having sex with temple prostitutes.

<sup>§</sup>14:4 *No one ... crops* This follows the ancient Greek version. The Hebrew text is not clear.

But, LORD, you are with us.  
We are called by your name,  
so don't leave us without help!

<sup>10</sup>This is what the LORD says about the people of Judah: "The people of Judah love nothing more than to wander away from me. They don't hesitate to leave me. So now the LORD will not accept them. Now he will remember the evil they do. He will punish them for their sins."

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

<sup>13</sup>But I said, "Lord GOD, the prophets were telling the people something different. They were telling the people of Judah, 'You will not suffer from war or from hunger. The Lord will give you peace in this land.'"

<sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to me: "Jeremiah, those prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them, order them to speak or tell them what to say. Their prophecies come from false visions, useless fortune-telling and their own imagination. <sup>15</sup>So this is what I, the LORD, say about the prophets who are speaking in my name. I did not send them. But they say, 'No enemy will ever attack this country. There will never be a famine in this land.' So those prophets will die from hunger or by an enemy's sword. <sup>16</sup>And the people they spoke to will be thrown into the streets. The people will die from hunger and

from an enemy's sword. I will punish them, and no one will be there to bury them, their wives, their sons or their daughters. <sup>17</sup>Now, Jeremiah, take this message to the people of Judah:

My eyes fill with tears  
night and day without stopping.  
I will cry for my dear people,\*\*  
because someone struck them and  
crushed them.

They have been hurt very badly.

<sup>18</sup>If I go into the country,  
I see the bodies of those killed in war.  
If I go into the city,  
I see people starving to death.  
The priests and prophets continue their  
work,  
but they don't understand what is  
happening."

<sup>19</sup>Lord, have you completely rejected  
the nation of Judah?

Do you hate Zion?  
You hurt us so badly that we cannot be  
made well again.

Why did you do that?  
We were hoping for peace,  
but nothing good has come.  
We were hoping for a time of healing,  
but only terror came.

<sup>20</sup>LORD, we know that we are wicked.  
We know that our ancestors did evil  
things.

Yes, we sinned against you.

<sup>21</sup>For the good of your name, don't push  
us away.

Don't take away the honour from your  
glorious throne.

Remember your agreement with us  
and do not break it.

<sup>22</sup>Do foreign idols have the power to  
bring rain?

Does the sky have the power to send  
down showers?

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\*\*14:17 *my dear people* Literally, "virgin daughter, my people".

You, the LORD our God, are our only hope.

You are the one who does 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 them. Send the people of Judah away from me! Tell them to go! <sup>2</sup>If they ask you, ‘Where will we go?’ Tell them that this is what the LORD says:

“I have chosen some people to die. They will die.

I have chosen some to be killed with swords.

They will be killed with swords.

I have chosen some to die from hunger.

They will die from hunger.

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

They will be prisoners there.

<sup>3</sup>“I will send four kinds of destroyers against them,” says 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 and wild animals to eat and destroy their bodies. <sup>4</sup>I will make what happens to the people of Judah something horrible for all the nations on earth to see or hear about. I will do this because of what Hezekiah’s son Manasseh,<sup>††</sup> king of Judah, did in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>“No one will feel sorry for you, city of Jerusalem.

No one will be sad and cry for you.

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

<sup>6</sup>Jerusalem, you left me,”

says the LORD.

“Again and again you left me!

So I will punish and destroy you.

I am tired of being patient with you.

<sup>7</sup>In every city throughout the land, I will scatter my people like chaff in the wind.

They have not changed the way they live,

so I will destroy them.

I will take away their children.

<sup>8</sup>There will be more widows in Judah than grains of sand on the seashore.

In full daylight an attack will come against the young men

that will cause their mothers to suffer.

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

It will come upon them suddenly.

<sup>9</sup>A mother of seven children will lose them.

She will cry until she becomes too weak to breathe.

She will be upset and confused,

because her bright day has become dark.

I will let the enemy soldiers kill all who are left alive,”

says the LORD.

### Jeremiah Complains Again

<sup>10</sup>Mother, I am sorry that you gave birth to me.

Everyone argues with me.

The whole country is against me.

I have not lent or borrowed anything, but everyone curses me.

<sup>11</sup>Surely, LORD,<sup>‡‡</sup> I have served you well.

In times of disaster and trouble,

I prayed to you for my enemies.

### God Answers Jeremiah

<sup>12</sup>“Judah is like ordinary iron

<sup>††</sup>**15:4** *Manasseh* Manasseh was the most evil king of Judah according to 2 Kgs 21:1-16. He worshipped many gods.

<sup>‡‡</sup>**15:11** *Surely, LORD* This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has “The LORD said”.

that cannot break that stronger iron  
from the north.<sup>¶</sup>

And it cannot break you, a bronze wall.<sup>§§</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The people of Judah have many  
treasures.

I will give these riches to other people.

They will not have to buy them,  
because Judah has many sins.

The people sinned in every part of  
Judah.

<sup>14</sup>People of Judah, I will make you  
slaves of your enemies.

You will be slaves in a land that you  
never knew.

I am very angry.

My anger is like a hot fire,  
and you will be burned.”

<sup>15</sup>LORD, you understand me.

Think about me and take care of me.

People are hurting me.

Give them the punishment they deserve.

You are being patient with them,  
but don't destroy me while you remain  
patient with them.

Think about me

and the pain I suffer for you.

<sup>16</sup>Your words came to me, and I ate  
them up.

They made me very happy.

I was glad to be called by your name,  
LORD God All-Powerful.

<sup>17</sup>I never sat with the crowd  
as they laughed and had fun.

I sat by myself because I am under your  
control.

You filled me with anger at the evil  
around me.

<sup>18</sup>I don't understand why I am still  
suffering.

Why is my wound still hurting and not  
healing?

I'm not sure I can depend on you.

Are you like a stream that dries up  
or a spring that stops flowing?

<sup>19</sup>Then the LORD said:

“Jeremiah, if you change and come back  
to me,

I will not punish you.

If you change and come back to me,  
then you may serve me.

If you speak important things, not  
worthless words,

then you may speak for me.

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

but don't you change and be like them.

<sup>20</sup>I will make you strong.

To them you will be a bronze wall.

The people of Judah will fight against  
you,

but they will not defeat you.

They will not defeat you,

because I am with you.

I will help you,

and I will save you,”

says the LORD.

<sup>21</sup>“I will save you from these evil people.

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

### The Day of Disaster

**16** The LORD's message came to me:  
<sup>2</sup>“Jeremiah, you must not get  
married. You must not have sons or  
daughters in this place.”

<sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD says about the  
sons and daughters who are born in the  
land of Judah and about their mothers  
and fathers: <sup>4</sup>“They will die from ter-  
rible diseases. And no one will cry for  
them or bury them. Their bodies will lie  
scattered on the ground like manure. Or  
they will die in war, or they will starve  
to death. Their dead bodies will be food

<sup>¶</sup>**15:12 north** This may refer to the direction from which the Babylonian army came to attack Judah and Israel.

<sup>§§</sup>**15:12** See verse 20, where God calls Jeremiah “a bronze wall”. See also 1:18.

for the birds of the sky and the wild animals of the earth.”

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

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

<sup>8</sup>“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. <sup>9</sup>This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel says: I will soon stop the sounds of people having fun. I will stop the happy sounds of people enjoying a wedding party. This will happen during your lifetime. I will do these things very soon.

<sup>10</sup>“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?’ <sup>11</sup>You must tell them: ‘Terrible things will happen to you because your ancestors stopped following me.’ This message is from the LORD. ‘They stopped following me and began to follow and serve other gods. They worshipped those other gods. Your ancestors left me and stopped obeying

my law. <sup>12</sup>But you people have sinned more than your ancestors. You are very stubborn, and you are doing only what you want to do. You are not obeying me. Because you do only what you want to do, <sup>13</sup>I will throw you out of this country. I will force you to go to a foreign land. You will go to a land that you and your ancestors never knew. There you can serve false gods all you want to. I will not help you or show you any favours.’

<sup>14</sup>“The LORD says that the time is coming when people will not begin their promises by saying, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, the one who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.’ <sup>15</sup>Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, the one who brought the Israelites out of the northern land and out of all the countries where he had sent them.’ They will say that because I will bring the Israelites back to the land I gave to their ancestors.

<sup>16</sup>“I will soon send for many fishermen to come to this land.” This message is from the LORD. “They will catch the people of Judah. After that happens, I will send for many hunters\* to come to this land. They will hunt the people of Judah on every mountain and hill and in the cracks of the rocks. <sup>17</sup>I see everything they do. The people of Judah cannot hide the things they do. Their sin is not hidden from me. <sup>18</sup>I will pay the people of Judah back for the evil things they have done. I will punish them two times for every sin because they have spoiled my land with the lifeless forms of their disgusting idols. They have filled my own land with their sickening false gods.”

<sup>19</sup>LORD, you are my strength and my protection.

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

You are a safe place to run when I am in trouble.

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

They will say, "Our fathers had false gods.

They worshipped those worthless idols, but the idols did not help them.

<sup>20</sup>Can people make real gods for themselves?

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

<sup>21</sup>The LORD says:

"So I will teach those who make idols.

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

Then they will know that I am the LORD.

### Guilt Written on the Heart

**17** "The sins of Judah's people cannot be erased.

They are written on their hearts like words carved into stone with an iron chisel or a diamond point.

Their sins are written on the horns of their altars.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Even their children remember the altars

that were built to worship false gods.

They remember the wooden poles

that were set up to honour Asherah.

Those objects of worship were everywhere,

under the green trees and on the hills

<sup>3</sup>and on the mountains and in the fields.

So, because of this sin throughout your land,

I will let your enemies take your wealth and treasures.

<sup>4</sup>Because of what you have done,

you will lose the land I gave you.

And I will let your enemies take you to be slaves

in a land you do not know.

This is because you have made me angry, and my anger is like a hot fire that will burn forever."

### Trusting in People and Trusting in God

<sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD says:

"Bad things will happen to those who put their trust in people.

Bad things will happen to those who depend on human strength.

That is because they have stopped trusting the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>They are like a bush in a desert where no one lives.

It is in a hot and dry land.

It is in bad soil.

That bush does not know

about the good things that God can give.

<sup>7</sup>"But those who trust in the LORD will be blessed.

They know that the LORD will do what he says.

<sup>8</sup>They will be strong like trees planted near a stream

that send out roots to the water.

They have nothing to fear when the days get hot.

Their leaves are always green.

They never worry, even in a year that has no rain.

They always produce fruit.

<sup>9</sup>"Nothing can hide its evil as well as the human mind.

So there is no way to make it better.

You can't see what is wrong with it.

<sup>10</sup>But I, the LORD, can look into people's hearts.

I can see what they are really thinking.

So I can reward them for how they live.

I know what payment is fair.

<sup>11</sup>"Sometimes a bird will hatch an egg

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

that it did not lay.  
 Those who cheat to get money  
 are like that bird.  
 But when their lives are half finished,  
 they will lose the money.  
 At the end of their lives, it will be clear  
 that they were fools.”  
<sup>12</sup> From the very beginning, our Temple  
 has been a glorious throne for God.  
 It is a very important place.  
<sup>13</sup> LORD, you are the hope of Israel.  
 You are like a spring of living water.  
 Those who stop following the LORD  
 will have a very short life.<sup>‡</sup>

### Jeremiah's Third Complaint

<sup>14</sup> LORD, if you heal me, I surely will be  
 healed.  
 Save me, and I surely will be saved.  
 Lord, I praise you!  
<sup>15</sup> 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.”  
<sup>16</sup> Lord, I did not run away from you.  
 I followed you.  
 I became the shepherd<sup>¶</sup> you wanted.  
 I did not want the terrible day to come.  
 You know what I said.  
 You see all that is happening.  
<sup>17</sup> Please don't make me afraid of you.  
 I depend on you in times of trouble.  
<sup>18</sup> Bring shame on those who are making  
 me suffer,  
 but keep me from being shamed.  
 Let them be filled with fear,  
 but don't give me any reason to fear.  
 Give my enemies a day of disaster.

Destroy them completely!

### Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

<sup>19</sup> This is what the LORD said to me:  
 “Jeremiah, go and stand at the People's  
 Gate,<sup>§</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> Say to the  
 people: ‘Listen to this message from the  
 LORD. Listen, kings of Judah. Listen, all  
 you people of Judah. All you who come  
 through these gates into Jerusalem, lis-  
 ten to me! <sup>21</sup> This is what the LORD says:  
 Be careful that you don't carry a load on  
 the Sabbath day. And don't bring a load  
 through the gates of Jerusalem on that  
 day. <sup>22</sup> Don't bring a load out of your  
 houses on the Sabbath day. Don't do any  
 work on that day. You must make the  
 Sabbath day a holy day. I gave this same  
 command to your ancestors, <sup>23</sup> but they  
 did not obey me. They did not pay at-  
 tention to me. Your ancestors were very  
 stubborn. I punished them, but it did  
 not do any good. They did not listen to  
 me. <sup>24</sup> But you must be careful to obey  
 me, says the LORD. You must not bring  
 a load through the gates of Jerusalem  
 on the Sabbath day. You must make the  
 Sabbath day a holy day. You will do this  
 by not doing any work on that day.

<sup>25</sup> “If you do this, then those who rule  
 Judah as kings will continue to be from  
 David's family. They and their officials  
 will come riding through the gates of  
 this city on horses or in chariots. The  
 people of Judah and Jerusalem will join  
 them. And Jerusalem will always have

<sup>‡</sup>17:13 *will have a very short life* Literally, “will be written in the dirt”. This might mean that a person's name was recorded on a list of people who would soon die, or that a person's life will soon be gone—like a name written in the sand.

<sup>¶</sup>17:16 *shepherd* God's people are sometimes called his “sheep”, and the person who takes care of them is called the “shepherd”.

<sup>§</sup>17:19 *People's Gate* This might be one of the gates into Jerusalem or perhaps one of the southern gates into the Temple area used by those who were not priests.

people living in it. <sup>26</sup> People will come to Jerusalem from the towns and villages of Judah, from the land where the tribe of Benjamin lives,\*\* from the western foothills, from the hill country and from the Negev. All these people will bring burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, incense and offerings of thanksgiving to the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem.

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

### The Potter and the Clay

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

<sup>3</sup> So I went down to the potter’s house and saw him working with clay on a potter’s wheel. <sup>4</sup> He was shaping the clay into a pot. But something went wrong with this pot. So he used the same clay to make another pot. With his hands he shaped the pot the way he wanted it to be.

<sup>5</sup> Then this message from the LORD came to me: <sup>6</sup> “People of Israel, you know that I can do the same thing with you. You are like the clay in the potter’s hands, and I am the potter.” This message is from the LORD. <sup>7</sup> “There may be times when I will announce my plans to completely destroy a nation or a kingdom. I may say that I am going to pull it up by its roots. <sup>8</sup> But if the people of

that nation change their hearts and lives and stop doing evil things, I will change my mind. I will not bring on them the disaster I planned. <sup>9</sup> There may be other times when I will announce my plans to build up a nation or a kingdom and make it strong. <sup>10</sup> But if I see that nation doing evil things and refusing to obey me, I will change my mind about the good I had planned to do for them.

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

<sup>13</sup> Listen to what the LORD says: “Ask the other nations this question: ‘Have you ever heard of anything so bad?’

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

<sup>14</sup> It is like seeing Lebanon’s mountains without any snow!  
It is like seeing the streams that flow from there run out of water.  
This never happens!

<sup>15</sup> But my people have forgotten me. They burn offerings to worthless idols. They have left the right way that their ancestors followed,  
and they stumble on the path they have chosen.

Instead of staying on the good road I showed them,

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

they prefer to walk on bumpy paths.

<sup>16</sup> So their land will become a horrible sight,  
a place for people from now on to pity.  
All who pass by there will be shocked by  
what has happened.

They will just shake their heads at what  
they see.

<sup>17</sup> Like a strong east wind, I will scatter  
my people.

I will use their enemies to scatter them  
like dust.

When disaster comes upon them,  
they will see me leaving, not coming to  
help.”

### The People Plan Evil and Jeremiah Prays

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

<sup>19</sup> LORD, listen to me!

Listen to what my enemies are saying.

<sup>20</sup> I have done only good to them.

It is not right for them to pay me back  
with evil,  
but they are preparing a death trap for  
me!

Remember that I begged you to help  
them.

I asked only good for them.

I tried to keep you from punishing them  
in anger.

<sup>21</sup> So now make their children starve to  
death!

Let their enemies kill them with swords.

Let their wives lose their children and  
husbands.

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

<sup>22</sup> They dug a pit for me to fall into.

They hid traps for me to step in.

So let them cry out in their houses  
when you suddenly bring an enemy  
against them.

<sup>23</sup> LORD, you know about their plans to  
kill me.

So don’t forgive their crimes or erase  
their sins.

Make them fall down in defeat.

Punish them in your anger!

### The Broken Jar

**19** This is what the LORD said to me:  
“Jeremiah, go and buy a clay jar  
from a potter. Take some of the lead-  
ers of the people and some of the lead-  
ing priests with you. <sup>2</sup> Go out to the Val-  
ley of Ben Hinnom, near the front of the  
Potsherd Gate.†† Tell everyone there the  
message I give you. <sup>3</sup> Say to them, ‘Kings  
of Judah and people of Jerusalem, lis-  
ten to this message from the LORD! This  
is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God  
of Israel, says: I will soon make a terri-  
ble thing happen to this place! Everyone  
who hears about it will be amazed and  
full of fear. <sup>4</sup> I will do these things be-  
cause the people of Judah have turned  
away from me. They have polluted this  
place by offering sacrifices to foreign  
gods. They know nothing about these  
gods. And none of their ancestors or  
any of the kings of Judah knew any-  
thing about them. They have filled this  
place with the blood of innocent chil-  
dren. <sup>5</sup> They have built altars to hon-  
our the god Baal, and they use them to

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

burn their sons in the fire as sacrifices. I never commanded them to do such a terrible thing. I never had such a thought. <sup>6</sup>Now 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. <sup>7</sup>At this place, I will ruin the plans of the people of Judah and Jerusalem. The enemy will chase them, and I will let the people of Judah be killed with swords. I will make their dead bodies food for the birds and wild animals. <sup>8</sup>I will completely destroy this city. People will whistle and shake their heads when they pass by Jerusalem. They will be shocked when they see how the city was destroyed. <sup>9</sup>The enemy will bring its army around the city. That army will not let people go out to get food, so the people in the city will begin to starve. They will become so hungry that they will eat the bodies of their own sons and daughters, and then they will begin to eat each other.’

<sup>10</sup>“Jeremiah, tell this to the people, and while they are watching, break the jar. <sup>11</sup>Then say to them: ‘The LORD All-Powerful says: I will break the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, just like someone breaking a clay jar! And like a broken jar, the nation of Judah cannot be put back together again. People will be buried here in Topheth until it is filled with dead bodies. <sup>12</sup>I will do the same thing to the city of Jerusalem and its people. The whole city will be polluted with dead bodies like Topheth.’ This message is from the LORD. <sup>13</sup>‘The houses in Jerusalem, including the palaces of the kings of Judah, will be polluted like Topheth. This

will happen because the people worshipped false gods on the roofs of their houses.<sup>‡‡</sup> They worshipped the stars and burned sacrifices to honour them. They gave drink offerings to false gods.’”

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

### Jeremiah and Pashhur

**20** Pashhur son of Immer was a priest and the highest officer in the Temple of the LORD. When he heard Jeremiah say those things in the Temple courtyard, <sup>2</sup>he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten. And he had his hands and feet locked between large blocks of wood. This was at the Upper Gate of Benjamin of the LORD’s Temple. <sup>3</sup>The next day Pashhur released Jeremiah from the blocks. Then Jeremiah said to him, “The LORD’s name for you is not Pashhur. Now his name for you is ‘Terror All Around’.” <sup>4</sup>That is your name because of what the LORD says: ‘I will soon make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. You will watch enemies killing your friends with swords. I will put all the people of Judah under the control of the king of Babylon. He will take some of them away to Babylon, and his army will kill others with their swords. <sup>5</sup>I will give all the wealth of this city to your enemies—everything its people have worked for, everything valuable

<sup>‡‡</sup>**19:13 roofs of their houses** People built their houses with flat roofs that were used as an extra room.

and all the treasure of the kings of Judah. The enemy will raid the city, take everything and carry it to Babylon. <sup>6</sup> And you, Pashhur, and all the people living in your house will be taken away. You will be forced to go and live in the country of Babylon. You will die in Babylon, and you will be buried in that foreign country. You told lies to your friends. You said these things would not happen. But now all your friends will also die and be buried in Babylon.”

### Jeremiah's Fifth Complaint

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Every time I speak, I shout.

I am always shouting about violence and destruction.

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

but they only insult me and make fun of me.

<sup>9</sup> Sometimes I say to myself, “I will forget about him.

I will not speak any more in his name.”

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

It feels like it is burning deep in my bones!

I get tired of trying to hold his message inside,

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

<sup>10</sup> I hear people whispering against me.

Everywhere, I hear things that frighten me.

Even my friends are speaking against me.

People are just waiting for me to make a mistake.

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

Maybe we can trick Jeremiah.

Then we will grab him

and take our revenge on him.”

<sup>11</sup> But the LORD is with me.

He is like a strong soldier.

So those who are chasing me will fall.

They will not defeat me.

They will fail.

They will be disappointed.

They will be ashamed,

and they will never forget that shame.

<sup>12</sup> LORD All-Powerful, you test good people.

You look deeply into a person's mind.

I told you my arguments against these people.

So let me see you give them the punishment they deserve.

<sup>13</sup> Sing to the LORD!

Praise the LORD!

He saves the lives of the poor!

He saves them from the wicked!

### Jeremiah's Sixth Complaint

<sup>14</sup> Curse the day that I was born!

Don't bless the day my mother gave birth to me.

<sup>15</sup> Curse the man who told my father the news that I was born.

“It's a boy!” he said.

“You have a son.”

He made my father very happy

when he told him the news.

<sup>16</sup> Let that man be like the cities the LORD destroyed.<sup>f</sup>

He had no pity on them.

Let him hear shouts of war in the morning;

let him hear battle cries at noontime,

<sup>17</sup> because he did not kill me

while I was in my mother's womb.

If he had killed me then,

<sup>f</sup>20:16 *cities the LORD destroyed* That is, Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen. 19.

my mother would have been my grave,  
and I would not have been born.

<sup>18</sup>Why did I have to come out of her  
body?

All I have seen is trouble and sorrow,  
and my life will end in shame.

### God Rejects King Zedekiah's Request

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

<sup>3</sup>Then Jeremiah answered Pashhur  
and Zephaniah: "Tell King Zedekiah,  
<sup>4</sup>"This is what the LORD, the God of Is-  
rael, says: You have weapons of war in  
your hands that you are using to de-  
fend yourselves from the Babylonians  
and their king. But I will make those  
weapons worthless.

"The army from Babylon is outside  
the wall all around the city. Soon I will  
bring that army into Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>I my-  
self will fight against you people of Ju-  
dah. I will fight against you with all my  
strength and power, with all my vio-  
lent anger and fury! <sup>6</sup>I will kill every-  
thing living in Jerusalem, both people  
and animals. They will die from a terri-  
ble disease that will spread all through  
the city. <sup>7</sup>After that happens, says the  
LORD, I will let King Nebuchadnezzar of  
Babylon capture King Zedekiah of Judah  
and his officials. And I will let him cap-

ture all the people who remain alive in  
Jerusalem—the people who did not die  
from the terrible disease and the people  
who did not die in war or from hunger.  
I will give them all to King Nebuchad-  
nezzar and his army, their enemies who  
want to kill them. And his army will  
kill them without showing any mercy or  
pity.'

<sup>8</sup>"Also tell the people of Jerusalem:  
'This is what the LORD says: Understand  
that I will let you choose to live or die.  
<sup>9</sup>Anyone who stays in Jerusalem will die  
in war or from hunger or from a terri-  
ble disease. But anyone who goes out of  
Jerusalem and surrenders to the Baby-  
lonians attacking the city will live. Only  
those who leave the city will escape with  
their lives! <sup>10</sup>I have decided to make  
trouble for the city of Jerusalem. I will  
not help this city! I will give it to the  
king of Babylon, who will burn it with  
fire.' This message is from the LORD.

<sup>11</sup>"Say this to Judah's royal family:  
'Listen to the message from the LORD.  
<sup>12</sup>Family of David, this is what the LORD  
says:  
"You must judge people fairly every  
day.

Save people from those who rob them.  
If you don't do that, I will be angry.  
My anger will be like a fire that no one  
can put out.

This will happen because you  
have done evil things.

<sup>13</sup>"Jerusalem, I am against you.  
You sit on top of the mountain.  
You sit like a queen over this valley.  
You people of Jerusalem say, "No one  
can attack us.

No one can come into our strong city,"  
says the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>You will get the punishment you  
deserve.

<sup>§§</sup>**21:1 Pashhur** This is not the same Pashhur as the man in Jer. 20:1.

I will start a fire in your forests  
that will completely burn everything  
around you,”  
says the LORD.

### Judgement Against Evil Kings

**22** The LORD said to Jeremiah: “Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and tell him this: <sup>2</sup>‘Listen to this message from the LORD, you king of Judah, you who rule from David’s throne. You, your officials and all your people must listen to this message from the Lord. <sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD says: Do what is right and fair. Protect those who have been robbed from the ones who robbed them. Don’t take advantage of orphans, widows or immigrants living among you. Don’t kill innocent people. <sup>4</sup>If you obey these commands, then those who rule Judah as kings will continue to be from David’s family. They and their officials, together with their people, will come riding through the gates of this palace on horses or in chariots. <sup>5</sup>But I, the LORD, tell you that if you don’t obey these commands, then I promise with an oath in my own name that this king’s palace will be destroyed—it will become a pile of rocks.’”

<sup>6</sup>This is what the LORD says about the palace where the king of Judah lives: “The palace is tall like the forests of Gilead,  
like the mountains of Lebanon.  
But I will make it like a desert,  
as empty as a city where no one lives.  
<sup>7</sup>I will send men to destroy the palace,

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

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

### Judgement Against King Jehoahaz

<sup>10</sup>Don’t cry for the king who has died.\*  
Don’t mourn for him.  
But cry loudly for the king  
who must leave this place.†  
Cry for him because he will never return  
or see his homeland again.

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

### Judgement Against King Jehoiakim

<sup>13</sup>“It will be very bad for King Jehoiakim.  
He is doing wrong so that he can build his palace.  
He is cheating people so that he can build rooms upstairs.  
He is not paying his own people.

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

†**22:10 the king ... place** This means Josiah’s son, Jehoahaz. He became king after Josiah died. He is also called Shallum. King Neco of Egypt defeated Josiah. And Neco took Jehoahaz off the throne of Judah and made him a prisoner in Egypt.

‡**22:11 Jehoahaz** The Hebrew text has “Shallum”, another name for Jehoahaz.

¶**22:12** See 2 Kgs 23:31-34; 2 Chr. 36:2-4.

He is making them work for nothing.

<sup>14</sup>“Jehoiakim says:

‘I will build myself a great palace, with huge rooms upstairs.’

So he built it with large windows.

He used cedar wood for panelling, and he painted it red.

<sup>15</sup>“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, so everything went well for him.

<sup>16</sup> Josiah cared for people who were poor and needed help,

so everything went well for him.

He was an example of what it means to know me,”

says the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>“Jehoiakim, you look only for what benefits you.

You think of ways to get more by cheating others.

You are willing to kill innocent people.

You use force and violence to get more for yourself.”

<sup>18</sup> So this is what the LORD says to King Jehoiakim son of Josiah:

“The people of Judah will not be sorry he died.

They will not say to each other,

‘Brother, I’m so sad to lose him!

Sister, I’m so sorry!’

No one will cry out and say,

‘Poor King Jehoiakim!

My lord, I will miss you!’

<sup>19</sup> The people of Jerusalem will bury Jehoiakim like a donkey.

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

<sup>20</sup>“Judah, go up to the mountains of Lebanon and cry out.

Let your voice be heard in the mountains of Bashan.

Cry out in the mountains of Abarim, because all your lovers will be destroyed.

<sup>21</sup>“Judah, I warned you when you felt safe,

but you refused to listen.

That’s how you have been since you were young.

You have never obeyed me.

<sup>22</sup> Now my punishment will carry away your leaders like a storm.

The nations you trusted to help you will also be taken into captivity.

Then you will be disgraced and ashamed because of all the evil you have done.

<sup>23</sup>“King, you seem so safe in your palace of cedar.

It’s as if you live in Lebanon!<sup>§</sup>

But when your punishment comes, you will groan.

You will be in pain like a woman giving birth!

### Judgement Against King Jehoiachin

<sup>24</sup>“As surely as I live,” says the LORD,

“I will do this to you, Jehoiachin\*\* son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Even if you

were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. <sup>25</sup> Jehoiachin, I

will give you to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the Babylonians. Those are

the people you are afraid of. They want to kill you. <sup>26</sup> I will throw you and your

mother into another country where neither of you was born. Both of you will die

there. <sup>27</sup> Jehoiachin, you will want to return to your land, but you will never be allowed to come back.”

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

\*\*22:24 *Jehoiachin* The Hebrew text has “Coniah”, a short form for “Jeconiah”, another name for King Jehoiachin. Also in verse 28 and 37:1.

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

He is like a pot that no one wants.

Why will Jehoiachin and his children be thrown out

and sent away into a foreign land?

29 Land, land, land of Judah!

Listen to this message from the LORD!

30 This is what the LORD says:

“Write this down about Jehoiachin:

He does not have children any more!

Jehoiachin will not be successful

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

None of his children will rule in Judah.”

**23** “It will be very bad for the leaders of my people. I wanted them to be like shepherds who would take care of my sheep. But they are letting my sheep be destroyed and scattered.” This message is from the LORD.

2 So this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to these leaders who were supposed to take care of his people: “You shepherds have not taken care of my sheep. Instead, you have caused them to be scattered and forced to go away. So now I will punish you for the evil you have done.” This message is from the LORD. 3 “Then I will gather my people who are still alive from all the countries where I scattered them. And I will bring them back home, like sheep to their own pasture. There they will have many children and grow in number. 4 I will place new leaders over my people. They will take care of them like good shepherds. And my people will never again feel afraid. None of my sheep will be lost.” This message is from the LORD.

### The Good “Branch”

5 This message is from the LORD:

“The time is coming, when I will raise up a good ‘branch’ from David’s family.

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

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

6 When he rules, Judah will be safe, and Israel will live in safety.

This will be the king’s name:

The LORD Is Our Victory.<sup>††</sup>

7 “So the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when people will not begin their promises by saying, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, the one who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.’ 8 Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, the one who brought the Israelites out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had sent them.’ At that time the people of Israel will live in their own land.”

### Judgements Against False Prophets

9 A message about the prophets:

I am very sad—my heart is broken.

All my bones are shaking.

Because of the LORD and his holy words, I am like a man who is drunk.

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

They are unfaithful in many ways.

So God cursed the land,

and it became very dry.

The plants are dried up and dying in the pastures.

The fields have become like the desert.

The prophets are evil.

They use their influence and power in the wrong way.

11 This message is from the LORD:

“The prophets and even the priests are evil.

<sup>††</sup>23:6 *The LORD Is Our Victory* This is a wordplay. In Hebrew this is like the name Zedekiah, the king of Judah at the time this prophecy was probably given. But Jeremiah is talking about another king.

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

<sup>12</sup> So I will make their path dark and slippery, and they will fall in the darkness. I will bring disaster on them; I will punish them," says the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> "I saw the prophets of Samaria doing something very wrong. I saw them prophesy in the name of the false god Baal. They led the people of Israel away from me.

<sup>14</sup> I have even seen the prophets of Jerusalem doing sinful things. They are committing adultery and living a life of lies. They support their fellow prophets and never stop doing evil. They have become like Sodom; they are all like Gomorrah."

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

"I will make them suffer. Their food will be bitter, their water like poison.

I will punish these prophets because they are the reason that evil has spread through the whole country."

<sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

"Don't pay attention to what those prophets are saying to you.

They are trying to fool you. They talk about visions, but they did not get their visions from me.

Their visions come from their own minds.

<sup>17</sup> Some of the people hate the real messages from the LORD, so the prophets give them a different message.

They say, 'You will have peace.' Some of the people are very stubborn. They do only what they want to do. So the prophets say, 'Nothing bad will happen to you!'

<sup>18</sup> But none of these prophets has stood in the heavenly council.‡

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

None of them has paid close attention to his message.

<sup>19</sup> Now the punishment from the LORD will come like a storm.

His anger will be like a tornado, crashing down on the heads of all who are wicked.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>22</sup> 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."

<sup>23</sup> This message is from the LORD:

"Am I a God who cannot go beyond this one place?

No, I am everywhere at once!

<sup>24</sup> Can anyone find a place to hide where I cannot see them?

‡**23:18 heavenly council** The people in the Old Testament often talk about God as the leader of a council of heavenly beings (angels). Compare 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Isa. 6:1-8 and Job 1 and 2.

No, because I am everywhere in heaven and earth,” says the LORD.

This message is from the LORD: <sup>25</sup>“There are prophets who tell lies in my name. They say, ‘I have had a dream! I have had a dream!’ I heard them say those things. <sup>26</sup>How long will this continue? They think up lies and then they teach them to the people. <sup>27</sup>They are trying to make the people of Judah forget my name by telling each other these false dreams. They are trying to make my people forget me, just as their ancestors forgot me and worshipped the false god Baal. <sup>28</sup>Straw is not the same as wheat! In the same way, the dreams of those prophets are not messages from me. If people want to tell about their dreams, let them. But those who hear my message must speak it truthfully.” This is what the LORD says. <sup>29</sup>“A true message from me is powerful,” says the LORD. “It is like fire or like a hammer that can break a rock to pieces.”

<sup>30</sup>This message is from the LORD: “So I am against these prophets who take words from each other and say they are from me. <sup>31</sup>I, the LORD, tell you that I am against these false prophets. They use their own words and tell people that they are speaking for the LORD. <sup>32</sup>Yes, I tell you that I am against these prophets who lie about seeing dreams from me. They lead my people into sin with their wild lies. I did not send them or command them to do anything for me. They are not helping my people at all,” says the LORD.

### The Sad Message From the Lord

<sup>33</sup>“The people of Judah, or a prophet or a priest, may ask you, ‘Jeremiah,

what is the LORD’s announcement?’ You will answer them and say, ‘You are his burden,<sup>f</sup> and I will throw this burden down.’” This message is from the LORD.

<sup>34</sup>“A prophet or a priest, or maybe one of the people, might say, ‘This is the LORD’s announcement ....’ Because of that lie, I will punish that person and their whole family. <sup>35</sup>This is what you will say to each other: ‘What was the LORD’s answer?’ or ‘What did the LORD say?’ <sup>36</sup>But you will never again use the expression, ‘The LORD’s announcement.’ That is because his message should not be a burden for anyone. But you changed the words of our God. He is the living God, the LORD All-Powerful!

<sup>37</sup>“If you want to learn about God’s message, ask a prophet, ‘What answer did the LORD give you?’ or ‘What did the LORD say?’ <sup>38</sup>But don’t say, ‘What was the LORD’s announcement?’ If you use those words, the LORD will say this to you: You should not have called my message ‘the LORD’s announcement’. I told you not to use those words. <sup>39</sup>But you called my message a burden, so I will pick you up like a burden 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, <sup>40</sup>and I will make you a disgrace forever. You will never forget your shame.”

### 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 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took Je-

<sup>f</sup>**23:33 You are his burden** This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has “What burden?” This is a wordplay. The Hebrew word translated “burden” here is like the word for “announcement”.

hoiachin<sup>§§</sup> as a prisoner. Jehoiachin, the son of King Jehoiakim and all his important officials were taken away from Jerusalem. They were taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took away all the carpenters and metalworkers of Judah.)<sup>2</sup> One basket had good figs in it, the kind that ripen early in the season. But the other basket had bad figs. They were too rotten to eat.

<sup>3</sup>The LORD said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

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

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

<sup>8</sup>“But the LORD also says: ‘I will treat King Zedekiah of Judah like those figs that are too rotten to eat. Zedekiah, his high officials, all those who are left in Jerusalem and those people of Judah who are living in Egypt will be like those rotten figs. <sup>9</sup>I will punish them. Their punishment will shock all the people on earth. People will make fun of those peo-

ple from Judah. People will tell jokes about them and curse them in all the places where I scatter them. <sup>10</sup>I will bring war, famine and disease against them. I will attack them until they have all been killed. Then they will no longer be on the land that I gave to them and to their ancestors.”

### A Summary of Jeremiah’s Message

**25** This is the message that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah. It came in the fourth year that Jehoiakim\* son of Josiah was king of Judah. This was also the first year that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. <sup>2</sup>This is the message that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and all the people of Jerusalem:

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

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

<sup>7</sup>“But you did not listen to me.” This message is from the LORD. “You wor-

§§24:1 *Jehoiachin* The Hebrew text has “Jeconiah”, another name for King Jehoiachin, who was taken prisoner in the year 597 BC. Also in 27:20; 28:4; 29:2.

\*25:1 *the fourth year ... Jehoiakim* This was about 605 BC.

†25:6 *By doing this you only hurt yourselves* This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has “Then I will not hurt you.”

shipped idols that someone made, and that made me angry. And it only hurt you.”

<sup>8</sup>So this is what the LORD All-Powerful says, “You have not listened to my messages. <sup>9</sup>I will soon send for all the tribes of the north.”<sup>‡</sup> This message is from the LORD. “I will soon send for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He is my servant. I will bring those people against the land of Judah and against the people of Judah. I will bring them against all the nations around you too. I will destroy all those countries. I will leave those lands in ruins forever. People will be shocked to see what happened, but their enemies will also be glad and make fun of them. <sup>10</sup>I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and happiness in those places. There will be no more happy sounds of brides and bridegrooms. I will take away the sound of people grinding meal. I will take away the light of the lamp. <sup>11</sup>That whole area will be an empty desert. All these people will be slaves of the king of Babylon for 70 years.

<sup>12</sup>“But when the 70 years have passed, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins.” This message is from the LORD. “I will make that land a desert forever. <sup>13</sup>I will make sure that all the terrible things I have said about Babylon will happen. Jeremiah has written about those things in this book. And everything he has prophesied about all the nations will happen as he said. <sup>14</sup>Yes, the people of Babylon will have to serve many nations and many great kings. I will give them the punishment they deserve for all the things they have done.”

### Judgement on the Nations of the World

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

<sup>17</sup>So I took the cup of wine from the LORD’s hand. I went to those nations and I made them drink from the cup. <sup>18</sup>I poured this wine for the people of Jerusalem and Judah. I made the kings and leaders of Judah drink from the cup. I did this so that all Judah would be left in ruins—a place destroyed so badly that people would be filled with shock to see it. I wanted their enemies to make fun of their misery. I did this so that people would use Judah’s name as a curse. And that is what has happened.

<sup>19</sup>Then I made all these other people drink from the cup: Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, his officials, his important leaders, all his people <sup>20</sup>and all the foreigners who lived there. I also gave it to the kings of the land of Uz and all the kings of the land of the Philistines. These were the kings of the cities of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and what remains of the city Ashdod.

<sup>21–22</sup>Then I gave the cup to the people of Edom, Moab and Ammon and also to the kings of Tyre and Sidon and the kings of the faraway countries. <sup>23</sup>I gave it to the people of Dedan, Tema and Buz and all those who cut their hair at their temples. <sup>24</sup>I gave it to the kings of Arabia, who live in the desert, <sup>25</sup>and to the kings

<sup>‡</sup>**25:9 north** The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

from Zimri, Elam and Media. <sup>26</sup>I gave it to the kings of the north, those who were far and near. I made them drink one after the other. I made all the kingdoms that are on earth drink from that cup. Finally, after all these other nations, the king of Babylon will drink from it too.

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

<sup>28</sup>“They will refuse to take the cup from your hand. They will refuse to drink it, but you will tell them: ‘This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: You will surely drink from this cup! <sup>29</sup>I am already making these bad things happen to Jerusalem, the city that is called by my name. Maybe you people think that you will not be punished, but you are wrong. You will be punished! I am giving the command for war to come against all the people of the earth.’ This message is from the LORD.

<sup>30</sup>“Jeremiah, give the people this warning from me:

‘The LORD will shout from heaven.  
He will roar like thunder from his holy Temple

to give a loud warning against his people.

He will shout like the workers trampling grapes.

He will shout against everyone on earth.

<sup>31</sup>The sound will echo throughout the earth,

announcing that the LORD is accusing the nations.

He will judge all people on earth, and he will kill the wicked with his sword.”

This message is from the LORD.

<sup>32</sup>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!”

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

<sup>34</sup>Shepherds, you should be leading the sheep.

Start crying, you great leaders!  
Roll around on the ground in pain, you leaders of the sheep.

It is now time for your slaughter. You will be scattered everywhere, like pieces flying from a broken jar.

<sup>35</sup>There will be no place for the shepherds to hide.

They will not escape.

<sup>36</sup>I hear the shepherds shouting. I hear the leaders of the sheep crying, because the LORD is destroying their pastures.

<sup>37</sup>Those peaceful pastures will be ruined because of the LORD’s anger.

<sup>38</sup>Like a lion leaving his cave, he leaves his people behind. So their land will be left in ruins by the attacks of the enemy army and by the LORD’s terrible anger.

### Jeremiah Speaks at the Temple

**26** This message came from the LORD during the first year that Jehoiakim<sup>1</sup> son of Josiah was king of Judah. <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD said: “Jeremiah, stand in the courtyard of the Temple of the LORD. Give this message to all the people of Judah who are coming to worship at the Temple of the

<sup>1</sup>26:1 *the first year ... Jehoiakim* This was 609 BC.

LORD. Tell them everything that I tell you to speak. Don't leave out any part of my message. <sup>3</sup>Maybe they will listen and obey my message. Maybe they will stop living such evil lives. If they change, I will change my mind about my plans to punish them. I am planning this punishment because of the many evil things they have done. <sup>4</sup>You will say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: I gave my teachings to you. You must obey me and follow my teachings. <sup>5</sup>You must listen to what my servants the prophets say to you. I have sent my prophets to you again and again, but you did not listen to them. <sup>6</sup>If you don't obey me, I will make my Temple in Jerusalem just like my Holy Tent at Shiloh.<sup>§</sup> People all over the world will think of Jerusalem when they ask for bad things to happen to other cities.'"

<sup>7</sup>The priests, the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah say these words at the LORD's Temple. <sup>8</sup>Jeremiah finished speaking everything the LORD had commanded him to say to the people. Then the priests, the prophets and all the people grabbed Jeremiah. They said, "You will die for saying such terrible things! <sup>9</sup>How can you say that this Temple will be destroyed like the one at Shiloh? How can you say that Jerusalem will be destroyed so badly that no one can live here? How dare you say such things in the name of the LORD!" All the people gathered around Jeremiah in the Temple of the LORD.

<sup>10</sup>Now the leaders of Judah heard about everything that was happening. So they came out of the king's palace and went up to the LORD's Temple. They took their places at the entrance

of the New Gate, which leads to the LORD's Temple. <sup>11</sup>Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the leaders and all the other people. They said, "Jeremiah should be killed. He said bad things about Jerusalem. You heard him say those things."

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

<sup>16</sup>Then the leaders and all the people spoke. They said to the priests and the prophets, "Jeremiah must not be killed. What he told us comes from the LORD our God."

<sup>17</sup>Then some of the leaders of Judah stood up and spoke to all the people. <sup>18</sup>They said, "Micah the prophet was from the town of Moresheth. He was a prophet during the time that Hezekiah was king of Judah. Micah said this to all the people of Judah: 'This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: 'Zion will be destroyed. It will become a ploughed field. Jerusalem will become a pile of rocks.

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§26:6 *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.

Bushes will cover the hill where the Temple now stands.\*\*

<sup>19</sup>“King Hezekiah of Judah and the people of Judah did not kill Micah. You know that Hezekiah respected the LORD and begged him to be kind to his people. So the LORD changed his mind and did not destroy them as he had said he would. So now, if we hurt Jeremiah, we will bring a terrible disaster on ourselves.”

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

<sup>24</sup>But this did not happen to Jeremiah because an important man named Ahikam son of Shaphan supported him. He kept Jeremiah from being killed by the priests and prophets.

### The Lord Made Nebuchadnezzar Ruler

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

<sup>8</sup>“All your nations or kingdoms must serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. You must put yourselves under his control. I will punish any nation that refuses to do this, says the LORD. I will destroy that nation with war, famine and disease. I will use Nebuchadnezzar to destroy any nation that fights against him. <sup>9</sup>So don’t listen to your prophets or

\*\*26:18 Quote from Mic. 3:12.

††27:1 *the fourth year ... Zedekiah* The traditional Hebrew text has “At the beginning of the kingship of Jehoiakim”. This is probably a scribal error. Verse 3 talks about Zedekiah, and 28:1 says “that same year” was the fourth year of Zedekiah’s reign (594-593 BC). Most Hebrew copies have “Jehoiakim”, but a few Hebrew copies and the ancient Syriac version have “Zedehiah”.

fortune-tellers. Don't listen to those who say they can find out what will happen in the future by interpreting dreams, talking to the dead or practising witchcraft. They will all tell you, "You will not be slaves to the king of Babylon."<sup>10</sup> But they are telling you lies. They will only cause you to be taken far from your homeland. I will force you to leave your homes, and you will die in another land.

<sup>11</sup> "But that will not happen to any nation that is willing to obey and serve the king of Babylon. I will let them stay in their own land to live and work on their own farms," says the LORD.

<sup>12</sup> I gave the same message to King Zedekiah of Judah: "Zedekiah, you must place your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and obey him. If you serve the king of Babylon and his people, you will live. <sup>13</sup> If you don't agree to serve the king of Babylon, you and your people will die from war, hunger and disease. This is what the LORD said would happen. <sup>14</sup> But the false prophets are saying, 'You will never be slaves to the king of Babylon.' Don't listen to those prophets, because they are telling you lies. <sup>15</sup> 'I didn't send them,' says the LORD. 'They are telling lies and saying that the message is from me. So I will send you people of Judah away. You will die, and the prophets who spoke to you will die too.'"

<sup>16</sup> Then I told the priests and all the people that this is what the LORD says: "Those false prophets are saying, 'The Babylonians took many things from the LORD's Temple. These things will be brought back soon.' Don't listen to them because they are telling you lies. <sup>17</sup> Don't listen to those prophets. Serve the king

of Babylon. Accept your punishment, and you will live. There is no reason for you to cause this city of Jerusalem to be destroyed. <sup>18</sup> If they are prophets and their message is from the LORD, let them pray. Let them pray to the LORD about the things that are still in the LORD's Temple, in the king's palace and in Jerusalem. Let them pray that all those things will not be taken away to Babylon.

<sup>19</sup> "This is what the LORD All-Powerful says about the things that are still left in Jerusalem. In the Temple, there are the pillars, the bronze sea, the moveable stands and other valuable things.<sup>‡‡</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon left those things in Jerusalem. <sup>20</sup> He didn't take them away when he took Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah away as a prisoner. Nebuchadnezzar also took other important people away from Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>21</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says about the things still left in the LORD's Temple and in the king's palace and in Jerusalem: <sup>22</sup> 'All those things will be taken to Babylon too. They will be brought to Babylon until the day comes when I go to get them,' says the LORD. 'Then I will bring those things back. I will put them back in this place.'"

### The False Prophet Hananiah

**28** That same year, in the fifth month of the fourth year that Zedekiah<sup>¶¶</sup> was king of Judah, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur spoke to me. Hananiah was from the town of Gibeon. He was in the LORD's Temple

<sup>‡‡</sup>27:19 *pillars ... other valuable things* For a description of these things, see 1 Kgs 7:23-37.

<sup>¶¶</sup>28:1 *the fourth year ... Zedekiah* This was about 594-593 BC.

when he spoke to me. The priests and all the people were there also. This is what Hananiah said: <sup>2</sup>“The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘I will break the yoke that the king of Babylon has put on the people of Judah. <sup>3</sup>Before two years are over, I will bring back all the things that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took from the LORD’s Temple. Nebuchadnezzar has carried those things to Babylon. But I will bring them back here to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>I will also bring the king of Judah, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, back to this place. And I will bring back all the people of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar forced to leave their homes and go to Babylon,’ says the LORD. ‘So I will break the yoke that the king of Babylon put on the people of Judah.’”

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

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

<sup>10</sup>Jeremiah was wearing a yoke around his neck. The prophet Hananiah

took the yoke from Jeremiah’s neck and broke it. <sup>11</sup>Then Hananiah spoke loudly so that all the people could hear him. He said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘In the same way, I will break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He put that yoke on all the nations of the world, but I will break it before two years are over.’” After Hananiah said that, Jeremiah left the Temple.

<sup>12</sup>After Hananiah had taken the yoke off Jeremiah’s neck and had broken it, this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>13</sup>The LORD said to Jeremiah, “Go and tell Hananiah that this is what the LORD says: ‘You have broken a wooden yoke, but I will make a yoke of iron in the place of the wooden yoke. <sup>14</sup>The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, is the one saying this. I will put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these nations. I will do that to make them serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and they will be slaves to him. I will even give Nebuchadnezzar control over the wild animals.’”

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

<sup>17</sup>Hananiah died in the seventh month of that same year.

### A Letter to the Captives in Babylon

**29** Jeremiah sent a letter to the captives in Babylon. He sent it to the leaders, the priests, the prophets and all the other people who Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>2</sup>(This letter was sent after

King Jehoiachin and the queen mother<sup>§§</sup> and the officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem and the carpenters and metalworkers had been taken from Jerusalem.)<sup>3</sup> King Zedekiah of Judah sent Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah to King Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah gave them the letter to take to Babylon. This is what the letter said:

<sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says to all the people he sent into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon:

<sup>5</sup>“Build houses and live in them. Settle in the land. Plant gardens and eat the food you grow. <sup>6</sup>Get married and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons, and let your daughters be married. Do this so that they also may have sons and daughters. Have many children and grow in number in Babylon. Don’t become fewer in number. <sup>7</sup>Also, do good things for the city where I sent you. Pray to the LORD for the city you are living in, because if there is peace in that city, you will have peace also.” <sup>8</sup>The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says this: “Don’t let your prophets and those who practise magic fool you. Don’t listen to the dreams they have. <sup>9</sup>They are telling lies, and they are saying that their message is from me. But I didn’t send it.” This message is from the LORD.

<sup>10</sup>This is what the LORD says: “Babylon will be powerful for 70 years. After that time, I will come to you people who are living in Babylon. I will keep my good promise to bring you back to Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup>I say this because I know the plans that I

have for you.” This message is from the LORD. “I have good plans for you. I don’t plan to hurt you. I plan to give you a future you can look forward to. <sup>12</sup>Then you will call my name. You will come to me and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>You will search for me with all your heart, you will find me. <sup>14</sup>I will let you find me.” This message is from the LORD. “And I will bring you back from your captivity. I forced you to leave this place. But I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have sent you,” says the LORD, “and I will bring you back to this place.”

<sup>15</sup>You people may say, “The LORD has given us prophets here in Babylon.” <sup>16</sup>But this is what the LORD says about your relatives who were not carried away to Babylon. I am talking about the king who is sitting on David’s throne now and all the other people who are still in the city of Jerusalem. <sup>17</sup>The LORD All-Powerful says this: “I will soon bring war, famine and disease against those who are still in Jerusalem. And I will make them the same as bad figs that are too rotten to eat. <sup>18</sup>I will attack those who are still in Jerusalem with war, famine and disease. I will cause such pain that all the kingdoms of the earth will be frightened at what has happened to those people. They will be destroyed. People will be amazed when they hear what has happened. And people will use them as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to other people. People will insult them wherever I force

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<sup>§§</sup>29:2 *queen mother* The mother of the king.

them to go. <sup>19</sup> I will make all these things happen because the people of Jerusalem have not listened to my message. This message is from the LORD. I sent my message to them again and again. I used my servants the prophets to give my messages to them, but they didn't listen." This message is from the LORD. <sup>20</sup> "You people are captives. I forced you to leave Jerusalem and go to Babylon." So listen to the message from the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah: "These two men have been telling you lies. They have said that their message is from me. I will hand them over to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. And he will kill them as the rest of you watch. <sup>22</sup> They will be an example of a terrible way to die. Yes, in the future, when the Jewish captives want something bad to happen to someone, they will say this curse: 'May the LORD punish you like Zedekiah and Ahab, those men the king of Babylon burned in the fire!' <sup>23</sup> They did terrible things among the people of Israel. They committed adultery with their neighbours' wives. They also spoke lies and said those lies were a message from me. I did not tell them to do that. I know what they have done. I am a witness." This message is from the LORD.

### God's Message to Shemaiah

<sup>24</sup> Also give a message to Shemaiah from the Nehelam family. <sup>25</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: "Shemaiah, you sent letters to all the people in Jerusalem and to the

priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah. You also sent letters to all the priests. You sent those letters in your own name, not by my authority. Your letter to Zephaniah said: <sup>26</sup> "The LORD has made you priest in place of Jehoiada. You are to be in charge of the LORD's Temple. You know you should arrest any madman who pretends to be a prophet. Anyone like that should have chains put around his feet and neck. <sup>27</sup> You have Jeremiah from Anathoth there, who is pretending to be a prophet. So why have you not stopped him? <sup>28</sup> He 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 the food you grow."

<sup>29</sup> Zephaniah the priest read the letter to Jeremiah the prophet. <sup>30</sup> Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>31</sup> "Jeremiah, send this message to all the captives in Babylon: 'This is what the LORD says about Shemaiah, the man from the Nehelam family: Shemaiah has spoken to you, but I didn't send him. He has made you believe a lie. <sup>32</sup> Because Shemaiah has done that, says the LORD, 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."

### Promises of Hope

**30** This is the message that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> The LORD, the God of the people of Israel, said: "Jeremiah, write down in a book the words I have spoken to you. <sup>3</sup> Do this because the days will come, says the LORD, when I will bring my people, Israel and Judah, back to the good life

they had before. I will put the people back in the land that I gave to their ancestors. Then my people will own that land again.”

<sup>4</sup>The LORD spoke to me about the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD said:

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

<sup>6</sup>“Ask this question and consider it: Can a man have a baby? Of course not! Then why do I see these men holding their stomachs

like a woman having labour pains? Why have their faces turned so pale?

<sup>7</sup>“It is a terrible time of trouble—the worst ever!

And my people Israel will suffer greatly, but they will be saved in the end.

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

<sup>10</sup>“So, descendants of Jacob, my servants,

don’t be afraid,” says the LORD.

“People of Israel, don’t be afraid.

I will save you from that faraway place, and I will save your children from the land where they are captives.

Your people will return to a life of peace. There will be no enemy to frighten them.

<sup>11</sup>I am with you and will save you,” says the LORD.

“I will completely destroy those nations where I scattered you.

But I will not destroy you.

Certainly, you must be punished for your sin.

But I will punish you fairly.”

<sup>12</sup>This is what the LORD says to his people:

“You have been badly wounded, and no one can heal your injuries.

<sup>13</sup>There is no one to help you.

There is no medicine to ease your pain or heal your wounds.

<sup>14</sup>Those nations you wanted as friends have forgotten you.

They don’t care about you any more.

So I wounded you like an enemy.

I punished you severely.

I did this because of your great guilt.

I did this because of your many sins.

<sup>15</sup>Why are you crying about your wounds?

There is no cure for them.

I did this to you because of your great guilt.

I did this because of your many sins.

<sup>16</sup>But now, all who try to destroy you will be destroyed.

All your enemies will become captives.

All who steal from you will have their things stolen.

All who attack you will be attacked.

<sup>17</sup>And I will bring back your health and heal your wounds,” says the LORD, “because those other people rejected you.

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

<sup>18</sup>This is what the LORD says:

“I will return Jacob’s descendants to a better life,

and I will have pity on their ruined houses.

The city<sup>†</sup> will be rebuilt on its hill of ruins.

\***30:9 David their king** This means another king of Israel who will be great like King David.

<sup>†</sup>**30:18 city** This probably refers to Jerusalem. But it might also mean all the cities of Israel and Judah.

And the king's palace will stand where it was before.

<sup>19</sup> People in those places will sing songs of praise, and there will be the sound of laughter. I will give them many children, so Israel and Judah will not be small. I will bring honour to them. No one will look down on them.

<sup>20</sup> Their descendants will be blessed as my people were long ago. They will again worship me all together, and I will punish anyone who tries to harm them."

<sup>21</sup> The LORD says: "One of their own people will lead them. That ruler will come from among them. I will invite him to approach me, and he will come near. That's the only way anyone would have the courage to come near me.

<sup>22</sup> You will be my people, and I will be your God."

<sup>23</sup> The LORD was very angry! He punished the people. The punishment came like a storm. It came like a tornado against those wicked people.

<sup>24</sup> The LORD will be angry until he finishes punishing them. 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** This is what the LORD said: "At that time I will be the God of all the tribes of Israel. And they will be my people."

<sup>2</sup> When Israel escaped the enemy's sword,

they found favour in the desert. The LORD came to give them rest.

<sup>3</sup> Long ago he appeared to them and said, "I have loved you with a love that continues forever.

That is why I have continued showing you kindness.

<sup>4</sup> Israel, my bride, I will rebuild you. You will be a country again.

You will pick up your tambourines again.

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

<sup>5</sup> You farmers of Israel will plant vineyards again.

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

The farmers will enjoy the fruit from the vineyards.

<sup>6</sup> There will be a time when watchmen<sup>‡</sup> shout this message:

'Come, let's go up to Zion to worship the LORD our God!'

Even the watchmen in the hill country of Ephraim<sup>¶</sup> will shout that message."

<sup>7</sup> This is what the LORD says:

"Be happy and sing for Jacob!

Shout for Israel, the greatest of the nations!

Sing your praises and shout:

'LORD, save your people!'<sup>§</sup>

Save those of Israel who are still living.'

<sup>8</sup> 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 lame.

<sup>‡</sup>**31:6 watchmen** Here, this means the prophets, who were like guards on the city walls. They watched for danger and called out instructions to the people.

<sup>¶</sup>**31:6 hill country of Ephraim** This was the central part of the land that had been the northern kingdom of Israel.

<sup>§</sup>**31:7 LORD, save your people** Or "The LORD has saved his people!" This is often a shout of victory.

Some of the women will be pregnant and ready to give birth,

but many people will come back.

<sup>9</sup>They will come back crying, but I will lead them and comfort them.

I will lead them by streams of water.

I will lead them on an easy road, where they will not stumble.

I will lead them in that way because I am Israel's father,

and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

<sup>10</sup>"Nations, listen to this message from the LORD!

Tell this message in the faraway lands by the sea:

'God scattered the people of Israel, but he will bring them back together, and he will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'

<sup>11</sup>The LORD will bring Jacob back.

He will save his people from those who are stronger.

<sup>12</sup>The people of Israel will come to the top of Zion,

and they will shout with joy.

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

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

They will be like a garden

that has plenty of water.

And the people of Israel will not be troubled any more.

<sup>13</sup>Then the young women of Israel will be happy and dance.

And the men, young and old,

will join in the dancing.

I will change their sadness into happiness.

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

<sup>14</sup>I will give the priests plenty of food,

and my people will be filled and satisfied with the good things I give them,"

says the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>This is what the LORD says:

"A sound is heard in Ramah—bitter crying and great sadness. Rachel\*\* cries for her children, and she refuses to be comforted, because her children are gone."

<sup>16</sup>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 return from their enemy's land.

<sup>17</sup>Israel, there is hope for you," says the LORD.

"Your children will come back to their own land.

<sup>18</sup>I have heard Ephraim crying:

'Lord, you punished me, and I have learned my lesson.

I was like a calf that was never trained.

Please stop punishing me,

and I will come back to you.

You really are the LORD my God.

<sup>19</sup>I wandered away from you,

but I finally realized how wrong I was.

So I changed my heart and life.

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

<sup>20</sup>The LORD says:

"You know that Ephraim is my dear son.

I love that child.

Yes, I often criticize him,

but I still love him.

He is very dear to me,

and I really do want to comfort him.

<sup>21</sup>"People of Israel, repair the road signs.

Put up markers that show the way home.

Look carefully at the road you are on.

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

Remember the way you went.

Israel, my bride, come home.

Come back to your towns.

<sup>22</sup>You have been an unfaithful woman.

How long before you find your way back?

But I, the LORD, will cause something new and different:

the woman will start courting the man."<sup>††</sup>

<sup>23</sup>This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: "I will again let the people of Judah enjoy great success. I will bring back those who were taken away as captives. 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!'"<sup>‡‡</sup>

<sup>24</sup>"People in all the towns of Judah will live together in peace. Farmers and those who move around with their flocks will live peacefully together in Judah.

<sup>25</sup>I will give rest and strength to those who are weak and tired."

<sup>26</sup>After hearing that, I, Jeremiah, woke up and looked around. My sleep had been very pleasant.

<sup>27</sup>"The days are coming," says the LORD, "when I will help the people of Israel and Judah to grow like a healthy plant. I will fill their land with children and animals. <sup>28</sup>In 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.

<sup>29</sup>"People will not use this saying any more:

'The parents ate the sour grapes, but the children got the sour taste.'<sup>¶¶</sup>

<sup>30</sup>No, people will die for their own sins. Those who eat sour grapes will get the sour taste."

### The New Agreement

<sup>31</sup>This is what the LORD said: "The time is coming when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the agreement I made with their ancestors. I made that agreement when I took them by the hand and brought them out of Egypt. I was their master, but they broke that agreement," says the LORD.

<sup>33</sup>"In the future I will make this agreement with the people of Israel," says 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. <sup>34</sup>People will not have to teach their neighbours and relatives to know the LORD, because all people, from the least important to the most important, will know me," says the LORD. "I will forgive them for the evil things they did. I will not remember their sins."

### The Lord Will Never Leave Israel

<sup>35</sup>He makes the sun shine in the day, and he makes the moon and the stars shine at night.

He stirs up the sea so that its waves crash on the shore.

The LORD All-Powerful is his name.

This is what the LORD says:

<sup>††</sup>31:22 *the woman ... man* One possible meaning of the Hebrew phrase is that Israel will change and seek to be near the LORD instead of rejecting his love for them.

<sup>‡‡</sup>31:23 *good home and holy mountain* This was a blessing for the Temple and for Mount Zion, the mountain the Temple was built on.

<sup>¶¶</sup>31:29 *The parents ... sour taste* This means the children were suffering for things their parents did.

<sup>36</sup> “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.”

<sup>37</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“I will never reject the descendants of Israel.

That would happen only if people could measure the sky above and learn all the secrets of the earth below.

Only then would I reject them for the bad things they have done,” says the LORD.

### The New Jerusalem

<sup>38</sup> This message is from the LORD: “The days are coming when the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt for the LORD. The whole city will be rebuilt—from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

<sup>39</sup> The border will go from the Corner Gate straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to the place named Goah.

<sup>40</sup> The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown and all the terraces down to the bottom of Kidron Valley all the way to the corner of Horse Gate will be holy to the LORD. The city of Jerusalem will never again be torn down or destroyed.”

### 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.<sup>§§</sup> The tenth year of Zedekiah was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>2</sup> At that time the army of the king of Babylon was surrounding the city of Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was under arrest in the courtyard of the guardhouse. This courtyard was at

the palace of the king of Judah. <sup>3</sup> King Zedekiah of Judah had put Jeremiah in prison in that place. Zedekiah didn’t like the things Jeremiah prophesied. Jeremiah had said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘I will soon give the city of Jerusalem to the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar will capture this city. <sup>4</sup> King Zedekiah of Judah will not escape from the army of the Babylonians. But he will surely be given to the king of Babylon. And Zedekiah will speak to the king of Babylon face to face. He will see him with his own eyes. <sup>5</sup> The king of Babylon will take Zedekiah to Babylon. Zedekiah will stay there until I have punished him. (This message is from the LORD.) If you fight against the army of the Babylonians, you will not succeed.’”

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

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

So I knew that this was a message from the LORD. <sup>9</sup> I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel. I weighed out 17 pieces of silver for him. <sup>10</sup> I signed the deed and had a copy of

§§ **32:1 the tenth year ... Judah** This was 588-587 BC. This was the year Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

the deed sealed up.\* I got some men to witness what I had done, and I weighed out the silver on the scales.<sup>11</sup> Then I took the sealed copy of the deed, which contained the demands and limits of my purchase, and the copy that was not sealed.<sup>12</sup> I gave the deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah. I did this while my cousin Hanamel and the other witnesses were there. They also had signed the deed. And many other people of Judah saw this as they were sitting there in the courtyard of the guardhouse.

<sup>13</sup> With all the people watching, I said to Baruch,<sup>14</sup> “This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘Take both copies of the deed—the sealed copy and the copy that was not sealed—and put them in a clay jar so that they will not be lost or destroyed.’<sup>15</sup> The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says, ‘In the future my people will once again buy houses, fields and vineyards in the land of Israel.’”

<sup>16</sup> After I gave the deed to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD:

<sup>17</sup> “Lord GOD, with your great power you made the earth and the sky. There is nothing too hard for you to do.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> You plan and do great things. You see everything that people do. You reward those who do good, and you punish those who do evil—you give them what they deserve.<sup>20</sup> You did powerful miracles in the land of Egypt—amazing things that people still remember. In this way you have made yourself fa-

mous in Israel and in the rest of the world.<sup>21</sup> With your mighty power you used miraculous signs and wonders to terrify the enemy and bring your people Israel out of Egypt.

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

<sup>24</sup> “And now the enemy has surrounded the city. They have built ramps up against the walls to attack it. Because of war, famine and disease, the city of Jerusalem will fall to the Babylonian army. The Babylonians are attacking the city now. You said this would happen, and now you can see it is happening.

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

<sup>26</sup> Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah:<sup>27</sup> “I am the LORD. I am the God of every person on the earth. You know that nothing is impossible for me.”<sup>28</sup> The LORD also said, “I will soon give the city of Jerusalem to the Babylonian army and to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The army will capture the city.<sup>29</sup> The Babylonian army is already attacking the city of

\***32:10 sealed up** Important documents were rolled up and tied with a string. Then a piece of clay or wax was put on the string. Then a person’s mark was put in that clay or wax. This way, people could prove nothing in the document had been changed.

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

<sup>33</sup>“They should have come to me for help, but they turned their backs on me. I tried to teach them again and again, but they would not listen to me. I tried to correct them, but they would not listen. <sup>34</sup>They have put their disgusting idols in the Temple that was built to honour me and have polluted it.

<sup>35</sup>“In the Valley of Ben Hinnom,<sup>†</sup> they built places of worship to the false god Baal. They built those worship places so that they could burn their sons and daughters as sacrifices. I never commanded them to do such a terrible thing. I never thought the people of Judah would do such a disgusting thing.

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

<sup>40</sup>“I will make an agreement with the people of Israel and Judah that will last forever. In this agreement I will never turn away from them. I will always be good to them. I will make them want to respect me. Then they will never turn away from me. <sup>41</sup>They will make me happy. I will enjoy doing good to them. And I will surely plant them in this land and make them grow. I will devote myself to making this happen.”

<sup>42</sup>This is what the LORD says: “I have brought this great disaster to the people of Israel and Judah. In the same way, I will bring good things to them. I promise to do good things for them. <sup>43</sup>You people are saying, ‘This land is an empty desert. There are no people or animals here. The Babylonian army defeated this country.’ But in the future people will once again buy fields in this land. <sup>44</sup>They will use their money and buy fields. They will sign and seal their agreements. They will witness the people signing their deeds. They will again

<sup>†</sup>**32:35 Valley of Ben Hinnom** This valley is also called “Gehenna”. This name comes from the Hebrew name “Ge Hinnom—Hinnom’s Valley”. This place became an example of how God punishes wicked people.

buy fields in the land where the tribe of Benjamin lives, in the area around Jerusalem, in the towns of the land of Judah, in the hill country, in the western foothills and in the area of the southern desert. I will again let my people enjoy great success,” says the LORD.

### The Promise of God

**33** While Jeremiah was still locked up in the courtyard of the guardhouse, a message from the LORD came to him again: <sup>2</sup>“I am the LORD, the one who made the earth. I, the LORD, formed it and put it in place. My name is the LORD, and this is what I say: <sup>3</sup>‘Judah, pray to me, and I will answer you. I will tell you amazing secrets that you have never heard before. <sup>4</sup>I, the LORD, the God of Israel, have something to say about the houses of this city and the palaces of the kings of Judah. You tore them down for the wood and stone to make your walls stronger against the attacks of the enemy army. <sup>5</sup>The places where those houses stood will be filled with the dead bodies of the people I will kill in their fight against the Babylonians. I will do this because of my great anger. I have turned away from the people of Jerusalem because of the evil things they have done.

<sup>6</sup>“But then I will heal the people in this city. I will let them enjoy peace and safety. <sup>7</sup>I will make good things happen to Judah and Israel again, and I will make them strong as in the past. <sup>8</sup>They sinned against me, but I will wash away that sin. They fought against me, but I will forgive them. <sup>9</sup>Then this city will bring me fame and make me happy. People from all nations on earth will praise and honour me when they hear about the good things happening there. They will be happy and excited about

the peace and success I am giving to Jerusalem.’

<sup>10</sup>“This is what the LORD says: ‘You people say that your country is an empty desert, with no people or animals living there.’ Yes, the streets of Jerusalem and the towns of Judah are empty. Nothing lives there now, people or animals. But someday the sounds of life will return— <sup>11</sup>sounds of joy and happiness. There will be the happy sounds of brides and bridegrooms. There will be the sounds of people bringing their offerings of thanksgiving to the LORD’s Temple. They will say, ‘Praise the LORD All-Powerful! The LORD is good! His faithful love will continue forever!’ They will say this because I will again do good things to Judah. It will be as it was in the beginning,” says the LORD.

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

### The Good Branch

<sup>14</sup>This message is from the LORD: “I made a special promise to the people of Israel and Judah. The time is coming when I will do what I promised. <sup>15</sup>At that time I will make a good ‘branch’ grow from David’s family. That branch will do what is good and right for the country. <sup>16</sup>During the time that he rules, the people of Judah will be safe. The people in Jerusalem will live in safety.

And the city will be called, ‘The LORD Is Our Victory’.”

<sup>17</sup> This is what the LORD says: “Someone from David’s family will always rule Israel as king. <sup>18</sup> And there will always be priests from the tribe of Levi to stand before me. They will always be there to offer burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices to me.”

<sup>19</sup> This message from the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>20</sup> “This is what the LORD says: I have an agreement with day and night that they will always come at the right time. You cannot change that agreement. <sup>21</sup> In the same way, you cannot change my agreement with David and Levi. So it will always be true that a descendant of David will rule as king and that priests from the tribe of Levi will serve in my presence. <sup>22</sup> I will give many descendants to my servant David and to the tribe of Levi. They will be as many as the stars in the sky—no one can count all the stars. And they will be as many as the grains of sand on the seashore—no one can count the grains of sand.”

<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah received this message from the LORD: <sup>24</sup> “Jeremiah, have you heard what some people are saying? They are saying, ‘The LORD turned away from the two families of Israel and Judah that he chose.’ So it is clear that they look down on my people and do not accept them as a nation.”

<sup>25</sup> But this is what the LORD says: “It is certain that my agreement with day and night and the laws that control the earth and the sky will never change. <sup>26</sup> So it is just as certain that I will never turn away from Jacob’s descendants or my servant David. I will always choose one of David’s descendants to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will show kindness to my people and let them enjoy great success again.”

### A Warning to Zedekiah

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

<sup>2</sup> This is what the LORD, the God of the people of Israel, said: “Jeremiah, go to King Zedekiah of Judah and give him this message: ‘Zedekiah, this is what the LORD says: I will give the city of Jerusalem to the king of Babylon very soon, and he will burn it down. <sup>3</sup> 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. Then you will go to Babylon. <sup>4</sup> But listen to the promise of the LORD, King Zedekiah of Judah. This is what the LORD says about you: You will not be killed with a sword. <sup>5</sup> You will die in a peaceful way. People made funeral fires to honour your ancestors, the kings who ruled before you. In the same way, they will make a funeral fire to honour you. They will cry for you and sadly say, ‘Oh, my master!’” I myself make this promise to you,” says the LORD.

<sup>6</sup> So Jeremiah told all this message to Zedekiah in Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup> This was while the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem. The army of Babylon was also fighting against the cities of Judah that had not been captured. These cities were Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities left in the land of Judah.

### The People Break an Agreement

<sup>8</sup> King Zedekiah had made an agreement with all the people in Jerusalem to

give freedom to all the Hebrew slaves. A message from the LORD came to Jeremiah after Zedekiah had made that agreement. <sup>9</sup>Everyone was supposed to free their male and female Hebrew slaves. No one was supposed to keep another person from the tribe of Judah in slavery. <sup>10</sup>So all the leaders of Judah and all the people accepted this agreement. They agreed to free their male and female slaves so that they would no longer serve them. Everyone agreed, so all the slaves were set free. <sup>11</sup>But after that,<sup>‡</sup> the people who had slaves changed their minds. So they took back the people they had set free and made them slaves again.

<sup>12</sup>Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>13</sup>“This is what the LORD, the God of the people of Israel, says: I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, where they were slaves. When I did that, I made an agreement with them. <sup>14</sup>I said to your ancestors, ‘At the end of every seven years, everyone must set their Hebrew slaves free. If you have fellow Hebrews who have sold themselves to you, you must let them go free after they have served you for six years.’ But your ancestors did not listen to me or pay attention to me. <sup>15</sup>A short time ago you changed your hearts to do what is right. Everyone set free their fellow Hebrews who were slaves. And you even made an agreement before me in the Temple that is called by

my name. <sup>16</sup>But now you have changed your minds. You have shown that you do not honour my name, because each of you has taken back the male and female slaves that you had set free. You have forced them to become slaves again.

<sup>17</sup>“So this is what the LORD says: You people have not obeyed me. You have not given freedom to your fellow Hebrews. So, because you have not given them freedom, I will give you a special kind of freedom—freedom to die in war or by disease or by hunger! This message is from the LORD. When the other nations see what I have done to you, they will all be shocked. <sup>18</sup>I will hand over those who broke my agreement and have not kept the promises they made before me. They cut a calf in half before me and made a vow by walking between the two pieces.<sup>¶</sup> <sup>19</sup>These are the people who made that agreement before me by walking between the pieces of the calf: the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the important officials of the court, the priests and the people of the land. <sup>20</sup>So I will give them to their enemies who want to kill them. Their bodies will become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth. <sup>21</sup>I will give King Zedekiah of Judah and his leaders to those who want to kill them. I will give Zedekiah and his people to the army of the king of Babylon, even though that

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<sup>‡</sup>**34:11 after that** In the summer of 588 BC, the Egyptian army came to help the people of Jerusalem. So the Babylonian army had to leave Jerusalem for a short time to fight the Egyptians. The people of Jerusalem thought God had helped them, and things were back to normal, so they didn't keep their promise. They took the slaves they had set free back into slavery.

<sup>¶</sup>**34:18 They ... two pieces** This is part of a ceremony people used to show that they were sincere in making an agreement. An animal was cut in half. Those who were making the agreement would walk between the two parts. Then they would make a vow, saying something like, “May this same thing happen to me if I don't keep the agreement.” See Gen. 15:8-10.

army has left Jerusalem.<sup>§ 22</sup> But I will give the order, says the LORD, to bring the Babylonian army back to Jerusalem. That army will fight against Jerusalem, capture it, set it on fire and burn it down. And I will destroy the towns in the land of Judah. They will become empty deserts. No one will live there.”

### The Recabite Family’s Good Example

**35** During the time when Jehoiakim son of King Josiah was king of Judah, the LORD spoke this message to Jeremiah: <sup>2</sup>“Go to the Recabite family<sup>\*\*</sup> and invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the LORD’s Temple. Offer them wine to drink.”

<sup>3</sup>So I went to get Jaazaniah<sup>††</sup> son of Jeremiah,<sup>‡‡</sup> who was the son of Habazziniah. And I got all of Jaazaniah’s brothers and sons and the whole family of the Recabites together. <sup>4</sup>Then I brought them into the Temple of the LORD. We went into the room that was for the followers of Hanan, the man of God, who was the son of Igdaliah. This was next to the room where the Temple officials stay. It was over the room of Maaseiah son of Shallum. Maaseiah was the doorkeeper in the Temple. <sup>5</sup>Then I put some bowls full of wine and some cups in front of the Recabite family. And I said to them, “Drink some wine.”

<sup>6</sup>But the Recabite family answered, “We never drink wine. We never drink it because our ancestor Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: ‘You

and your descendants must never drink wine. <sup>7</sup>Also you must never build houses, plant seeds or plant vineyards. You must never do any of those things. You must live only in tents so that you can move from one place to another. If you do that, you will be able to live a long time in the land.’ <sup>8</sup>So we have obeyed everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. None of us ever drinks wine, and neither do our wives, sons or daughters. <sup>9</sup>We never build houses to live in or own vineyards or fields or plant crops. <sup>10</sup>We have lived in tents and have obeyed everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. <sup>11</sup>But when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked the country of Judah, we did go into Jerusalem. We said to each other, ‘Come, we must enter the city of Jerusalem so that we can escape the Babylonian army and the Aramean army.’ So we have stayed in Jerusalem.”

<sup>12</sup>Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>13</sup>“The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says to go to the people of Judah and Jerusalem and tell them this: ‘Why is obeying me such a difficult lesson for you to learn? (This message is from the LORD.) <sup>14</sup>Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine, and they have obeyed that command. To this day the descendants of Jonadab have obeyed their ancestor’s command. They do not drink wine. But I have given commands to you people of Judah again and again, and you have not

<sup>§34:21</sup> *left Jerusalem* In the summer of 588 BC, the Egyptian army came to help the people of Jerusalem. So the Babylonian army had to leave Jerusalem for a short time to fight the Egyptians. See Jer. 37:5.

<sup>\*\*35:2</sup> *Recabite family* A group of people descended from Jonadab son of Recab. The family was very loyal to the Lord. See 2 Kgs 10:15-28 for the story about Jonadab. Also in verses 6,18.

<sup>††35:3</sup> *Jaazaniah* He was the head of the Recabite family at that time.

<sup>‡‡35:3</sup> *Jeremiah* This is not the prophet Jeremiah but a different man with the same name.

obeyed me. <sup>15</sup> Time after time I have sent my servants the prophets to you. They said, “You must each stop doing evil things and do what is right. Don’t follow other gods. Don’t worship or serve them. If you obey me, you will live in the land I have given to you and your ancestors.” But you have not paid attention to my message. <sup>16</sup> The descendants of Jonadab obeyed the commands that their ancestor gave them, but the people of Judah have not obeyed me.’

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

<sup>18</sup> Then Jeremiah said to the Recabite family, “This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘You have obeyed the commands of your ancestor Jonadab. You have followed all his teachings. You have done everything he commanded.’ <sup>19</sup> So 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 LORD spoke his message to Jeremiah during the fourth year that Jehoiakim<sup>f</sup> son of Josiah was king of Judah. This was the message from the Lord: <sup>2</sup> “Jeremiah, get a scroll and write down all the messages I have spoken to you. I have spoken to you about the nations of Israel and Judah and all the other nations. Write down all the words that I have spoken to you from the time that Josiah was king, until now. <sup>3</sup> Maybe

the people of Judah will hear what I am planning to do to them and will stop doing bad things. If they will do that, I will forgive their sins. I will forgive all the evil things they have done.”

<sup>4</sup> So Jeremiah called a man named Baruch son of Neriah. Jeremiah spoke the messages the LORD had given him. While he spoke, Baruch wrote the messages on the scroll. <sup>5</sup> Then Jeremiah said to Baruch, “I cannot go to the LORD’s Temple. I am not allowed to go there. <sup>6</sup> So I want you to go to the Temple of the LORD on a day of fasting. Read to the people the messages from the LORD that you wrote on the scroll as I spoke them to you. Read them to all the people of Judah who come into Jerusalem from the towns where they live. <sup>7</sup> Perhaps they will ask the LORD to help them. Perhaps each person will stop doing bad things. The LORD has announced that he is very angry with them.” <sup>8</sup> So Baruch son of Neriah did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him to do. Baruch read aloud from the scroll that had the LORD’s messages written on it. He read it in the LORD’s Temple.

<sup>9</sup> In the ninth month of the fifth year that Jehoiakim was king, a time of fasting was announced. All those who lived in the city of Jerusalem and everyone who had come into Jerusalem from the towns of Judah were supposed to go without eating as they prayed to the LORD. <sup>10</sup> At that time Baruch read the scroll that contained Jeremiah’s words. He read the scroll in the Temple of the LORD to all the people who were there. Baruch was in the room of Gemariah in the upper courtyard when he read from the scroll. That room was located at the entrance of the New Gate of the Tem-

<sup>f</sup>36:1 *the fourth year ... Jehoiakim* This was about 605 BC.

ple. Gemariah was the son of Shaphan the secretary.

<sup>11</sup> A man named Micaiah heard all the messages from the LORD that Baruch read from the scroll. Micaiah was the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan. <sup>12</sup> When Micaiah heard the messages from the scroll, he went down to the secretary's room in the king's palace. All the officials were sitting there in the king's palace. These are the names of the officials: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Acbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah; all the other officials were there too. <sup>13</sup> Micaiah told them everything he had heard Baruch read from the scroll.

<sup>14</sup> Then all the officials sent a man named Jehudi to Baruch. (Jehudi was the son of Nethaniah, son of Shelemiah. Shelemiah was the son of 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.

<sup>15</sup> Then the officials said to Baruch, "Sit down and read the scroll to us."

So Baruch read the scroll to them.

<sup>16</sup> When the officials heard all the messages from the scroll, they were afraid and looked at each other. They said to Baruch, "We must tell King Jehoiakim about these messages on the scroll." <sup>17</sup> Then the officials asked Baruch, "Tell us, Baruch, where did you get these messages that you wrote on the scroll? Did you write down what Jeremiah said to you?"

<sup>18</sup> "Yes," Baruch answered. "Jeremiah spoke, and I wrote down all the messages with ink on this scroll."

<sup>19</sup> Then the officials said to Baruch, "You and Jeremiah must go and hide. Don't tell anyone where you are hiding."

<sup>20</sup> Then the officials put the scroll in the room of Elishama the secretary. They went to King Jehoiakim and told him all about the scroll.

<sup>21</sup> So King Jehoiakim sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought the scroll from Elishama's room and read it to the king and all the servants who stood around the king. <sup>22</sup> This was in the ninth month,<sup>§§</sup> so King Jehoiakim was sitting in the part of the palace used for winter. There was a fire burning in a small fireplace in front of the king. <sup>23</sup> Jehudi began to read from the scroll. But each time he read two or three sections, King Jehoiakim grabbed the scroll and used a small knife to cut off that part of the scroll and throw it into the fire. Finally, the whole scroll was burned up. <sup>24</sup> King Jehoiakim and his servants heard the message from the scroll, but it did not make them afraid. They did not tear their clothes or show any other sign of sorrow.

<sup>25</sup> Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah had asked the king not to burn the scroll, but he did not listen to them. <sup>26</sup> Instead, he ordered his son Jerahmeel, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest the prophet Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch. But they could not find Baruch and Jeremiah because the LORD had hidden them.

<sup>27</sup> King Jehoiakim burned the scroll on which Baruch had written all the words that Jeremiah had spoken to him. Then this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah:

<sup>28</sup> "Get another scroll. Write all the messages on it that were on the first scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah

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§§36:22 *ninth month* That is, November–December.

burned. <sup>29</sup> Also tell King Jehoiakim of Judah that this is what the LORD says: ‘Jehoiakim, you burned that scroll. You said, “Why did Jeremiah write that the king of Babylon will surely come and destroy this land and kill all the people and animals in it?”’ <sup>30</sup> So this is what the LORD says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: Jehoiakim’s descendants will not sit on David’s throne. When Jehoiakim dies, he will not get a king’s funeral, but his body will be thrown out on the ground. His body will be left out in the heat of the day and the cold frost of the night. <sup>31</sup> I will punish Jehoiakim and his children, and I will punish his officials. I will do this because they are wicked. I will bring terrible disasters on them and on all those who live in Jerusalem and on the people from Judah. I will bring all these bad things on them, just as I warned them, because they have not listened to me.”

<sup>32</sup> Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to his secretary Baruch son of Neriah. 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. He appointed Zedekiah son of Josiah to be the king of Judah in the place of Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim. <sup>2</sup> But Zedekiah, his servants and the people of Judah did not pay attention to the messages the LORD had given to Jeremiah the prophet.

<sup>3</sup> King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah son

of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with a message. This was the message they brought to Jeremiah: “Jeremiah, pray to the LORD our God for us.”

<sup>4</sup> At that time Jeremiah had not yet been put into prison, so he was free to go anywhere he wanted. <sup>5</sup> Also at that time Pharaoh’s army had marched from Egypt towards 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 towards them. So they left Jerusalem to fight with the army from Egypt.

<sup>6</sup> This message from the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet: <sup>7</sup> “This is what the LORD, the God of the people of Israel, says: Jehucal and Zephaniah, I know that King Zedekiah of Judah sent you to me to ask questions. Tell King Zedekiah this: ‘Pharaoh’s army marched out of Egypt to come here to help you against the army of Babylon. But Pharaoh’s army will go back to Egypt.’ <sup>8</sup> After that, the army from Babylon will come back here and attack Jerusalem. Then they will capture and burn it.’ <sup>9</sup> This is what the LORD says: People of Jerusalem, don’t fool yourselves. Don’t say to yourselves, ‘The army of Babylon will surely leave us alone.’ They will not. <sup>10</sup> People of Jerusalem, even if you could defeat all the Babylonian army that is attacking you, there would still be a few wounded men left in their tents. Even those few wounded men would come out of their tents and burn Jerusalem down.”

<sup>11</sup> When the Babylonian army left Jerusalem because the Egyptian army was coming, <sup>12</sup> Jeremiah wanted to travel from Jerusalem to the land of Benjamin.\* He wanted to get his share of some property that belonged to his fam-

\***37:12 the land of Benjamin** Jeremiah was going to his home town, Anathoth, which was in the land of Benjamin.

ily. <sup>13</sup>But when Jeremiah approached the Benjamin Gate of Jerusalem,<sup>†</sup> the captain in charge of the guards arrested him. He said, “Jeremiah, you are leaving us to join the Babylonian side.” The captain was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah and grandson of Hananiah.

<sup>14</sup>Jeremiah said to Irijah, “That is not true! I am not leaving to join the Babylonians.” But Irijah refused to listen to Jeremiah and took him to the king’s officials. <sup>15</sup>They were very angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten. Then they locked him up in the house of Jonathan the secretary. His house had been made into a prison. <sup>16</sup>They put Jeremiah in a cell in the basement of the house. He was kept there a long time.

<sup>17</sup>Then King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and had him brought to the palace. Zedekiah talked to Jeremiah in private. He asked Jeremiah, “Is there any message from the LORD?”

Jeremiah answered, “Yes, he said that you will be given to the king of Babylon.” <sup>18</sup>Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What have I done wrong? What crime have I committed against you or your officials or the people of Jerusalem? Why have you thrown me into prison? <sup>19</sup>King Zedekiah, where are your prophets now? They told you a false message. They said, ‘The king of Babylon will not attack you or this land of Judah.’ <sup>20</sup>But now, my lord, king of Judah, please listen to me. I make this one request: Don’t send me back to Jonathan’s house. If you send me back, I will die there.”

<sup>21</sup>So King Zedekiah gave orders for Jeremiah to be kept in the courtyard of the guardhouse. And he ordered that Jeremiah should be given bread from the

street bakers. He was given bread until there was no more bread in the city. So Jeremiah stayed under guard in the courtyard.

### Jeremiah Is Thrown Into a Well

**38** Some of the officials had heard what Jeremiah was saying to the people. They were Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah and Pashhur son of Malkijah. He said, <sup>2</sup>“This is what the LORD says: ‘Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, hunger or disease. But everyone who surrenders to the army of Babylon will live and escape with their lives.’ <sup>3</sup>And this is what the LORD says: ‘This city of Jerusalem will surely be given to the army of the king of Babylon. He will capture this city.’”

<sup>4</sup>When those officials heard Jeremiah say these things, they went to King Zedekiah. They said to him, “Jeremiah should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are still in the city and everyone else by what he is saying. He is not looking for peace; he is just trying to cause trouble.”

<sup>5</sup>So King Zedekiah said to the officials, “Jeremiah is in your control. I cannot do anything to stop you.”

<sup>6</sup>So they took Jeremiah and put him in an open well that belonged to the king’s son Malkijah. This well was in the courtyard of the guardhouse. The officials used ropes to lower Jeremiah down into the well. There was no water in it, only mud. And Jeremiah sank down into the mud.

<sup>7</sup>But a man named Ebed Melech heard that the officials had put Jeremiah into the well. Ebed Melech was from Ethiopia, and he was a eunuch in the

<sup>†</sup>37:13 *Benjamin Gate of Jerusalem* This gate led out of Jerusalem to the road, which went north to the land of Benjamin.

king's palace. King Zedekiah was sitting at the Benjamin Gate, <sup>8</sup>so Ebed Melech left the palace and went to talk to the king at the gate. <sup>9</sup>Ebed Melech said, "My lord and king, these officials have done evil. They have treated Jeremiah the prophet badly. They have thrown him into a well and left him there. He will starve to death when there is no more food left in the city."

<sup>10</sup>Then King Zedekiah gave a command to Ebed Melech, the Ethiopian: "Ebed Melech, take three<sup>‡</sup> men from the palace with you, and go and get Jeremiah out of the well before he dies."

<sup>11</sup>So Ebed Melech took the men with him. But first he went to a room under the storeroom in the king's palace. He took some old rags and worn-out clothes from that room. Then he let the rags down with some ropes to Jeremiah in the well. <sup>12</sup>Ebed Melech, the Ethiopian, said to Jeremiah, "Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms. When we pull you out, these rags will pad your underarms, and the ropes will not hurt you." So Jeremiah did as Ebed Melech said. <sup>13</sup>The men pulled Jeremiah up with the ropes and lifted him out of the well. And Jeremiah was kept there in the courtyard of the guardhouse.

### **Zedekiah Asks Jeremiah Some Questions**

<sup>14</sup>Then King Zedekiah sent someone to get Jeremiah the prophet. He had Jeremiah brought to the third entrance to the Temple of the LORD. Then the king said, "Jeremiah, I am going to ask you something. Don't hide anything from me, but tell me everything honestly."

<sup>15</sup>Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I give you an answer, you will probably kill me. And even if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."

<sup>16</sup>But King Zedekiah secretly swore an oath to Jeremiah. Zedekiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, the one who gives us breath and life, I will not kill you, Jeremiah. And I promise not to give you to the officials who want to kill you."

<sup>17</sup>Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, "This is what the LORD God All-Powerful, the God of Israel, 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. <sup>18</sup>But if you refuse to surrender, Jerusalem will be given to the Babylonian army. They will burn Jerusalem down, and you will not escape from them.'"

<sup>19</sup>But King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "But I am afraid of the men of Judah who have already gone over to the side of the Babylonian army. I am afraid that the soldiers will give me to those men, and they will treat me badly."

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

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<sup>‡</sup>**38:10 three** This is found in one ancient Hebrew copy. Most Hebrew copies have "30".

‘Your friends were stronger than you, and they led you the wrong way. You trusted them, but now your feet are stuck in the mud, and your friends have left you.’

<sup>23</sup>“All your wives and children will be brought out and 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.”

<sup>24</sup>Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Don’t tell anyone that I have been talking to you. If you do, you might die.

<sup>25</sup>If the officials find out that I talked to you, they will come to you and say, ‘Jeremiah, tell us what you said to King Zedekiah and what he said to you. Be honest with us, and tell us everything, or we will kill you.’ <sup>26</sup>If they say this to you, tell them, ‘I was begging the king not to send me back to Jonathan’s house to die.’”

<sup>27</sup>It happened that the king’s officials did come to Jeremiah to question him. So Jeremiah told them everything the king had ordered him to say. Then they left Jeremiah alone. No one had heard what he and the king had talked about.

<sup>28</sup>So Jeremiah was kept there in the courtyard of the guardhouse 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, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He surrounded the city to defeat it. <sup>2</sup>And on the ninth day of the fourth month in Zedekiah’s eleventh year, the wall of Jerusalem was broken through. <sup>3</sup>Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came into the city of Jerusalem. They came in and sat down

at the Middle Gate. These are the names of the officials: Nergal-Sharezer, the governor of the district of Samgar, a very high official; Nebo Sarsekim, another very high official; and various other important officials were there also.

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

<sup>8</sup>The Babylonian army set fire to the king’s palace and the houses of the people of Jerusalem. And they broke down the walls of Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup>Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king of Babylon’s special guards. He took all the people who had surrendered to him and all the people still in Jerusalem and made them captives. He carried them away to Babylon. <sup>10</sup>But the commander Nebuzaradan left behind some of the poor people of Judah who owned nothing. Nebuzaradan gave them vineyards and farmland in Judah.

<sup>11</sup>Nebuchadnezzar also gave an order about Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan: <sup>12</sup>“Find Jeremiah and take care of him.

Don't hurt him. Give him whatever he asks for."

<sup>13</sup> So Nebuzaradan, commander of the king's special guards, Nebushazban, a chief officer in the army of Babylon, Nergal-Sharezzer, a high official and all the other officers of the army of Babylon sent for Jeremiah. <sup>14</sup> They had him brought from the courtyard of the guardhouse and turned him over to Gedaliah<sup>¶</sup> son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. Gedaliah did as he was told and took Jeremiah back home. So Jeremiah was able to stay in Judah among his own people.

### The Lord's Message to Ebed Melech

<sup>15</sup> Earlier, when Jeremiah was still being held in the courtyard of the guardhouse, he received this message from the LORD: <sup>16</sup> "Jeremiah, go and tell Ebed Melech<sup>§</sup> the Ethiopian that this is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: 'Very soon I will make everything I said about this city of Jerusalem come true. My words will come true through disaster, not through something good. You will see everything happen with your own eyes. <sup>17</sup> But I will save you on that day, Ebed Melech,' says the LORD. 'You will not be given to those you fear. <sup>18</sup> I will save you, Ebed Melech. You will not die from a sword, but you will escape and live. That will happen because you have trusted in me,'" says the LORD.

### Jeremiah Is Set Free

**40** The LORD spoke his message to Jeremiah after he was set free at the city of Ramah. Nebuzaradan, the

commander of the king of Babylon's special guards, found Jeremiah in Ramah. Jeremiah was bound with chains. He was with all the captives from Jerusalem and Judah. They were being taken away in captivity to Babylon. <sup>2</sup> When the commander Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah, he said to him: "Jeremiah, the LORD your God warned that this disaster would come to this land. <sup>3</sup> And now the LORD has done everything just as he said he would do. This disaster happened because you people of Judah sinned against the LORD. You did not obey him. <sup>4</sup> But now, Jeremiah, I will set you free. I am taking the chains off your wrists. If you want to, come with me to Babylon, and I will take good care of you. But if you do not want to come with me, then don't come. Look, the whole country is open to you. Go anywhere you want. <sup>5</sup> Or go back to Gedaliah,<sup>\*\*</sup> the son of Ahikam and grandson 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. <sup>6</sup> So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. He stayed with Gedaliah among those who were left behind in the land of Judah.

### The Short Rule of Gedaliah

<sup>7</sup> There were some of the officers from the army of Judah and their men still out in the open country when Jerusalem was destroyed. They heard that the king of Babylon had put Gedaliah son of Ahikam in charge of those who were left in the

<sup>¶</sup>39:14 *Gedaliah* Gedaliah was the man who Nebuchadnezzar appointed as his governor for the land of Judah.

<sup>§</sup>39:16 *Ebed Melech* See Jer. 38:7-13.

<sup>\*\*</sup>40:5 *Or ... Gedaliah* Or "Before Gedaliah goes back, return to him ...".

land. Those who were left were men, women and children who were very poor. They were not carried off to Babylon as captives.<sup>8</sup> So these officers and their men came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. They were Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and his brother Jonathan, sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai from Netophah, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and the men who were with them.

<sup>9</sup> Gedaliah, son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan, made an oath to make the soldiers and their men feel more secure. This is what he said: “You soldiers, don’t be afraid to serve the Babylonians. Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon. If you do this, things will go well for you.<sup>10</sup> I myself will live in Mizpah. I will speak for you before the Babylonians who come here. You 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 control.”

<sup>11</sup> The people of Judah who were in Moab, Ammon, Edom and other countries heard that the king of Babylon had let some people stay in Judah. And they heard that the king had chosen Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan, to be governor over them. When they heard this,<sup>12</sup> they came back to the land of Judah from all the places where they had been scattered. They met with Gedaliah at Mizpah. Then they joined in gathering a large harvest of wine and summer fruit.

<sup>13</sup> Johanan son of Kareah and all the officers of the army of Judah who were still in the open country came to Gedaliah. Gedaliah was at the town of Mizpah.<sup>14</sup> Johanan and the officers with

him said to Gedaliah, “Do you know that Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, wants to kill you? He has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to kill you.” But Gedaliah son of Ahikam didn’t believe them.

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

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

**41** 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 to the town of Mizpah. Ishmael was a member of the king’s family, and he had been one of the officers of the king of Judah. Ishmael and his men ate a meal with Gedaliah.<sup>2</sup> While they were eating together, Ishmael and his ten men got up and killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam with a sword. Gedaliah was the man the king of Babylon had chosen to be governor of Judah.<sup>3</sup> Ishmael also killed all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at the town of Mizpah. He also killed the Babylonian soldiers who were there.

<sup>4-5</sup> The day after Gedaliah was murdered, 80 men came to Mizpah. They were bringing grain offerings and incense to the LORD’s Temple. They had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes and cut themselves.<sup>††</sup> They came

<sup>††</sup>41:4-5 *shaved ... cut themselves* The men did this to show that they were sad about the destruction of the Lord’s Temple in Jerusalem.

from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria. None of these men knew that Gedaliah had been murdered. <sup>6</sup> Ishmael left Mizpah and went to meet the 80 men. He cried<sup>‡</sup> while he walked out to meet them. Ishmael met them and said, “Come with me to meet with Gedaliah son of Ahikam.” <sup>7-8</sup> As soon as they were in the city, Ishmael and the men with him began to kill the 80 men and throw them into a deep well! But ten of the men said to Ishmael, “Don’t kill us! We can give you wheat, barley, olive oil and honey. We can show you the field where we hid it.” So Ishmael did not kill them with the others. <sup>9</sup> Ishmael and his men filled the well with the bodies of the men they had killed. The well was a large one that King Asa had dug long ago. Asa expected a long attack against his city from King Baasha of Israel. So he dug this well to store the water they would need during the attack.

<sup>10</sup> Ishmael captured all the other people in the town of Mizpah and started to cross over to the country of the Ammonites. They included the king’s daughters, and all those who were left there. Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king of Babylon’s special guards, had chosen Gedaliah to watch over those people.

<sup>11</sup> Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers who were with him heard about all the evil things Ishmael had done. <sup>12</sup> So they 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. <sup>13</sup> When the captives who were with Ishmael saw Johanan and the army officers, they were very happy. <sup>14</sup> Then all the captives Ishmael had taken from the town

of Mizpah ran to Johanan son of Kareah. <sup>15</sup> But Ishmael and eight of his men escaped from Johanan and ran away to the Ammonites.

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

### The Escape to Egypt

<sup>17-18</sup> Johanan and the other army officers were afraid of the Babylonians. The king of Babylon had chosen Gedaliah to be governor of Judah, but Ishmael had murdered Gedaliah. Johanan was afraid that the Babylonians would be angry. So they decided to run away to Egypt. On the way to Egypt, they stayed at Geruth Kimham, near the town of Bethlehem.

**42** While they were at Geruth Kimham, Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiah went to Jeremiah the prophet. All the army officers went with Johanan and Jezaniah. All the people, from the least important to the most important, went to Jeremiah. <sup>2</sup> They said to him, “Jeremiah, please listen to what we ask. Pray to the LORD your God for those of us who have survived. Once we were many, but you can see that only a few of us are left. <sup>3</sup> Jeremiah, pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do.”

<sup>4</sup> Then Jeremiah the prophet answered, “I understand what you want me to do. I will pray to the LORD your God, as you have asked. I will tell you every-

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<sup>‡</sup>41:6 *He cried* Ishmael was acting as though he was sad about the destruction of the Temple.

thing the LORD says. I will not hide anything from you.”

<sup>5</sup>Then the people said to Jeremiah, “If we don’t do everything the LORD your God tells us, then we hope the LORD will be a true and faithful witness against us. We know he will send you to tell us what to do. <sup>6</sup>It doesn’t matter whether we like the message or not. 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.”

<sup>7</sup>At the end of ten days, the message from the LORD came to Jeremiah. <sup>8</sup>Then Jeremiah called together Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers who were with him. He also called all the other people together, from the least important to the most important. <sup>9</sup>Then Jeremiah said to them, “You sent me to the LORD, the God of Israel, and I asked him what you wanted me to ask. This is what he says: <sup>10</sup>‘If you will stay in Judah, I will make you strong—I will not destroy you. I will plant you, and I will not pull you up. I will do this because I am sad about the terrible things that I made happen to you. <sup>11</sup>Now you are afraid of the king of Babylon. But don’t be afraid of him. Don’t be afraid of the king of Babylon,’ says the LORD, ‘because I am with you. I will save you. I will rescue you. He will not get his hands on you. <sup>12</sup>I will be kind to you, and the king of Babylon will also treat you with mercy. He will bring you back to your land.’ <sup>13</sup>But you might say, ‘We will not stay in Judah.’ If you say that, you will disobey the LORD your God. <sup>14</sup>And you might say, ‘No, we will go and live in Egypt. We will not be bothered with war there. We will not hear the trumpets of war, and in Egypt we will not be hungry.’ <sup>15</sup>If you say that, listen to this

message from the LORD, you survivors from Judah. This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you decide to go and live in Egypt, this will happen: <sup>16</sup>You are afraid of the sword of war, but it will defeat you there. And you are worried about famine, but you will be hungry in Egypt. You will die there. <sup>17</sup>Everyone who decides to go and live in Egypt will die by war, hunger or disease. Not one person who goes to Egypt will survive. Not one of them will escape the terrible things that I will bring to them.’

<sup>18</sup>“This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: ‘I showed my anger against Jerusalem. I punished the people who lived there. In the same way, I will show my anger against everyone who goes to Egypt. People will use you as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to other people. You will become like a curse word. People will be ashamed of you, and they will insult you. And you will never see Judah again.’

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

**43** So Jeremiah finished telling the people the message from the LORD their God. He told them every-

thing that the LORD their God had sent him to tell them.

<sup>2</sup>Azariah son of Hoshaiiah, Johanan son of Kareah and some other men were proud and stubborn. They became angry with Jeremiah. They said to him, “Jeremiah, you are lying! The LORD our God didn’t send you to say to us, ‘You must not go to Egypt to live there.’”<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah, we think that Baruch son of Neriah is encouraging you to be against us. He wants you to give us to the Babylonians. He wants you to do this so that they can kill us. Or he wants you to do this so that they can make us captives and take us to Babylon.”

<sup>4</sup>So Johanan, the army officers and all the people disobeyed the LORD’s command. The Lord had commanded them to stay in Judah. <sup>5</sup>But Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers took the survivors from Judah to Egypt. In the past the enemy had taken the survivors to other countries, but they had come back to Judah. <sup>6</sup>They took 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. <sup>7</sup>These people didn’t listen to the LORD. So they all went to Egypt to the town of Tahpanhes.<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>8</sup>In the town of Tahpanhes, Jeremiah received this message from the LORD: <sup>9</sup>“Jeremiah, get some large stones. Take them and bury them in the clay and brick pavement in front of Pharaoh’s official building in Tahpanhes. Do this while the people of Judah are watching

you.”<sup>10</sup> Then say to those who are watching you: “This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: I will send for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to come here. He is my servant, and I will set his throne over these stones I have buried here. He will set up his royal tent over these stones.”<sup>11</sup> He will come here and attack Egypt. He will bring death to those who must die. He will make prisoners of those who must be prisoners. And he will bring war to those who must be killed with a sword. <sup>12</sup>Nebuchadnezzar will start a fire in the temples of the false gods of Egypt. He will burn the temples, and he will take the idols away. Shepherds pick the bugs and thorns off their clothes to make them clean. In the same way, Nebuchadnezzar will pick Egypt clean. Then he will safely leave Egypt. <sup>13</sup>He will destroy the sacred stones that are in the temple of the sun god<sup>§§</sup> in Egypt, and he will burn down the temples of the false gods of Egypt.”

### The Lord Warns the People of Judah

**44** Jeremiah received a message from the Lord for all the people of Judah living in the Egyptian towns of Migdol, Tahpanhes and Memphis, and in southern Egypt. This was the message: <sup>2</sup>“This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: You people saw the disasters that I brought on the city of Jerusalem and on all the towns of Judah. The towns are empty piles of stones today. <sup>3</sup>They were destroyed because the people living in them did evil. They gave sacrifices to other gods, and that made me angry! Your people and your ancestors did not worship those gods in the past. <sup>4</sup>I sent my servants the prophets to those people again and

<sup>¶</sup>43:7 *Tahpanhes* A town in north-eastern Egypt.

<sup>§§</sup>43:13 *sun god* This was the most important god in Egypt.

again. They spoke my message and said to the people, ‘Don’t do this disgusting thing I hate.’<sup>5</sup> But they didn’t listen to the prophets or pay attention to them. They didn’t stop doing wicked things. They didn’t stop making sacrifices to other gods.<sup>6</sup> So I showed my anger against them. I punished the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. My anger made Jerusalem and the towns of Judah the empty piles of stone they are today.

<sup>7</sup>“So this is what the LORD God All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: Why are you hurting yourselves by continuing to worship idols? You are separating the men and women, the children and babies from the people of Judah. And so you will leave yourselves without anyone left from Judah.<sup>8</sup> Why do you people want to make me angry by making idols? Now you are living in Egypt, and you are making me angry by offering sacrifices to the false gods of Egypt. You will destroy yourselves, and it will be your own fault. The people of all the other nations on the earth will say bad things about you and make fun of you.<sup>9</sup> Have you forgotten about the wicked things your ancestors did? And have you forgotten about the wicked things the kings and queens of Judah did? Have you forgotten about the wicked things you and your wives did in Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?<sup>10</sup> Even to this day the people of Judah have not made themselves humble. They have not shown any respect for me, and they have not followed my teachings. They have not obeyed the laws I gave you and your ancestors.

<sup>11</sup>“So this is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: I have decided to make terrible things happen to you. I will destroy all the people of Judah.<sup>12</sup> There were a few survivors from

Judah who came here to Egypt. But I will destroy them. They will be killed with swords or starve to death. The people of other nations will point at them and wish evil for them. People will be shocked and frightened by what has happened to them. The name Judah will become a curse word and an insult.<sup>13</sup> I will punish those who have gone to live in Egypt. I will use war, famine and disease to punish them. I will punish them just as I punished the city of Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> Not one of the few survivors of Judah who have gone to live in Egypt will escape my punishment. None of them will survive to return to Judah. They want to go back to Judah and live there. But not one of them will return to Judah, except a few people who escape.”

<sup>15</sup>There were many people from Judah living in southern Egypt. Many of the women from Judah were meeting together in a large group and making sacrifices to other gods, and their husbands knew what they were doing. Those men said to Jeremiah,<sup>16</sup> “We will not listen to the message from the LORD that you spoke to us.<sup>17</sup> We promised to make sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven, and we will do everything we promised. We will offer sacrifices and pour out drink offerings in worship to her. We did that in the past. Our ancestors, our kings and our officials did that in the past. All of us did those things in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. When we worshipped the Queen of Heaven, we had plenty of food. We were successful and nothing bad happened to us.<sup>18</sup> But then we stopped making sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven, and we stopped pouring out drink offerings to her. And we have had problems ever since we stopped worshipping her. Our people have been killed by war and hunger.”

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

<sup>20</sup>Then Jeremiah spoke to all the men and women who told him these things: <sup>21</sup>“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. He remembered what you had done, and he thought about it. <sup>22</sup>The LORD hated the disgusting things you did, and he could not be patient with you any longer. So he made your country an empty desert. No one lives there now. Other people say bad things about that country. <sup>23</sup>The reason all those bad things happened to you is that you made sacrifices to other gods. You sinned against the LORD. You didn’t obey him or follow his teachings or the laws he gave you. You didn’t keep your part of the agreement.†”

<sup>24</sup>Then Jeremiah spoke to all the men and women: “All you people of Judah who are now in Egypt, listen to this message from the LORD. <sup>25</sup>This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says: You women did what you said you would do. You said, ‘We will keep the promises we made. We promised to make sacrifices and pour out drink offerings to the Queen of Heaven.’ So go ahead. Do what you promised you would do. Keep your promises. <sup>26</sup>But listen to this message from the LORD, all you peo-

ple of Judah who are living in Egypt: ‘I, the LORD, use my own great name to make this promise: none of the people of Judah who are now living in Egypt will ever again use my name to make promises. They will never again say, “As surely as the Lord GOD lives.”’ <sup>27</sup>I am watching over the people of Judah, but I am not watching over them to take care of them. I am watching over them to bring them harm. The people of Judah who live in Egypt will starve to death or be killed in war until they are completely destroyed. <sup>28</sup>Only a few people of Judah will escape being killed by the sword and will return to Judah from Egypt. Then the survivors of Judah who came to live in Egypt will know whose word proves to be true. They will know whether my word or their word came true. <sup>29</sup>I will give you proof,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will punish you here in Egypt. Then you will know for sure that my promises to harm you will really happen. <sup>30</sup>This will be your proof that I will do what I say.’ This is what the LORD says: ‘Pharaoh Hophra is the king of Egypt. His enemies want to kill him, and I will give Pharaoh Hophra to them. Just as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah to his enemy Nebuchadnezzar, in the same way I will give Pharaoh Hophra to his enemies.’”

#### A Message to Baruch

**45** In the fourth year that Jehoiakim‡ son of Josiah was king of Judah, Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch son of Neriah. Baruch wrote down on a scroll everything Jeremiah said: <sup>2</sup>“Baruch, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you: <sup>3</sup>You have

\* **44:19** *Then the women spoke up* This is from some ancient versions—the Syriac and some copies of the Greek.

† **44:23** *agreement* This probably means the Law of Moses, the commands and agreement God made with the Israelites.

‡ **45:1** *the fourth year ... Jehoiakim* This was about 605 BC.

been complaining about how bad things are for you. You say that I, the LORD, have given you pain and sorrow. You say you are worn out from your suffering and can't get any rest."

<sup>4</sup>Baruch, this is what the LORD told me to say to you: "Everywhere in Judah I will tear down everything I have built, and I will pull up all that I have planted. <sup>5</sup>I will cause everyone to suffer terrible things. So if you are making any great plans for yourself, Baruch, forget about them. You will be running for your life. But I promise that wherever you go, I will protect you from death," says the LORD.

### The Lord's Messages About the Nations

**46** Jeremiah received the following messages from the LORD about many different nations.

#### A Message About Egypt

<sup>2</sup>This message is about the nation of Egypt when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the Egyptian army of Pharaoh Neco. This happened at Carchemish, a city by the Euphrates River, in the fourth year that Jehoiakim<sup>n</sup> son of Josiah was king of Judah.

<sup>3</sup>"Get your large and small shields ready.

March out for battle.

<sup>4</sup>Get the horses ready.

Soldiers, get on your horses.

Go to your places for battle.

Put your helmets on.

Sharpen your spears.

Put your armour on."

<sup>5</sup>The LORD says, "What do I see?

The soldiers are terrified.

They are running away.

Their warriors are defeated.

They are filled with fear.

They are running as fast as they can without looking back.

<sup>6</sup>But even the fastest cannot get away.

Even the strongest cannot escape.

There, in the north by the Euphrates River,

they stumble and fall.

<sup>7</sup>"Who is this that rises like the Nile River,

like that river that overflows its banks?

<sup>8</sup>It is Egypt that comes like the Nile, with its raging waters rising high.

It is Egypt that comes

roaring its warning:

'I will rise and cover the earth.

I will destroy its cities and the people in them.'

<sup>9</sup>Horsemen, 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.

<sup>10</sup>"But the victory this day belongs to the Lord GOD All-Powerful!

He will give his enemies the punishment they deserve.

His sword will kill until it is finished,

until it has satisfied its thirst for blood.

Yes, the Lord GOD All-Powerful will kill them as a sacrifice

in the land of the north by the Euphrates River.

<sup>11</sup>"You poor, helpless people of Egypt, maybe you should go to Gilead for some of their famous medicines!

But no matter how many medicines you take,

nothing will heal you.

<sup>12</sup>The nations will hear you crying.

Your cries will be heard all over the earth.

<sup>n</sup>46:2 the fourth year ... Jehoiakim This was about 605 BC.

One brave soldier will run into another  
brave soldier;  
both of them will fall down together.”

<sup>13</sup> This is the message the LORD spoke  
to Jeremiah the prophet about Neb-  
uchadnezzar coming to attack Egypt.

<sup>14</sup> “Announce this message in Egypt.

Tell it in the city of Migdol.

Tell it in Memphis and Tahpanhes.

‘Get ready for war,  
because people all around you are being  
killed with swords.’

<sup>15</sup> Egypt, your strong soldiers will be  
killed.

They will not be able to stand  
because the LORD will push them down.

<sup>16</sup> They will stumble again and again.

They will fall over each other.

They will say, ‘Get up; let’s go back to  
our own people.

Let us go back to our homeland.

Our enemy is defeating us.

We must get away.’

<sup>17</sup> In their homelands, those soldiers will  
say,

‘Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is only a lot  
of noise.

His time of glory is over.’”

<sup>18</sup> This message is from the King,

whose name is the LORD All-Powerful:

“As surely as I live, a powerful leader  
will come.

He will be like Mount Tabor among  
smaller mountains,

like Mount Carmel standing high above  
the sea.

<sup>19</sup> People of Egypt, pack your things.

Get ready for captivity,

because Memphis will be a ruined,  
empty land.

Those cities will be destroyed,  
and no one will live there.

<sup>20</sup> “Egypt is like a beautiful cow,  
but a stinging fly is coming from the  
north<sup>§</sup> to attack her.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> As the enemy’s army marches closer,  
Egypt’s army will hiss like a snake and  
try to slip away.

But the enemy will attack with axes,  
like men cutting down trees.”

<sup>23</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“They will chop down Egypt’s forest.

There are many trees in that forest,  
but they will all be cut down.

There are more enemy soldiers than  
locusts.

There are so many soldiers that no one  
can count them.

<sup>24</sup> Egypt will be ashamed.

The enemy from the north will defeat  
her.”

<sup>25</sup> The 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 who depend  
on Pharaoh. <sup>26</sup> I will let all of them be  
defeated by their enemies—those who  
want to kill them. I will give the people

<sup>§</sup>46:20 *north* The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel. Also in 47:2.

\*\* 46:25 *Amon* For many centuries Amon was the most important god of Egypt. At the time of this prophecy, he was not worshipped 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.

to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his servants.

“Long ago, Egypt lived in peace. And after all these times of trouble, Egypt will live in peace again,” says the LORD.

### A Message for Northern Israel

<sup>27</sup> “You descendants of Jacob, my servants, do not be afraid.

Do not be frightened, people of Israel. I will save you from those faraway places.

I will save your children from the countries where they are captives.

Your people will return to a life of peace. There will be no enemy to frighten them.

<sup>28</sup> Descendants of Jacob, my servants, do not be afraid,

because I am with you,” says the LORD. “I will completely destroy those nations where I scattered you.

But I will not destroy you. Certainly, you must be punished for your sin.

But I will punish you fairly.”

### A Message About the Philistines

**47** This is the message from the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet about the Philistines. This message came before Pharaoh attacked the city of Gaza. <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD says:

“Look, the enemy is gathering in the north<sup>††</sup> like rising water.

They will come like a river spilling over its banks.

They will cover the whole country like a flood.

They will cover the towns and the people living in them.

Everyone in the country will cry for help; everyone will cry out in pain.

<sup>3</sup> They will hear the sound of running horses,

the noisy chariots, the rumbling wheels. Fathers will not be able to protect their children.

They will be too weak to help,

<sup>4</sup> because the time has come to destroy all the Philistines.

The time has come to destroy all who help Tyre and Sidon.

The LORD will destroy the Philistines, those who came from the island of Crete.

<sup>5</sup> 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?<sup>‡‡</sup>

<sup>6</sup> “Sword of the LORD, you have not stopped.

How long will you keep fighting?

Go back into your sheath!<sup>¶¶</sup>

Stop! Be still!

<sup>7</sup> But how can the sword of the Lord rest?

The LORD gave it a command.

He commanded it to attack the city of Ashkelon and the seacoast.”

### A Message About Moab

**48** This message is about the country of Moab. This is what the LORD

All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says:<sup>§§</sup>

“It will be bad for Mount Nebo.\*

Mount Nebo will be ruined.

The town of Kiriathaim will be humbled.

<sup>††</sup>47:2 *north* The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

<sup>‡‡</sup>47:5 *sad ... cut yourselves* The people did these things to show their sorrow.

<sup>¶¶</sup>47:6 *sheath* A holder for a sword.

<sup>§§</sup>48:1 *This message ... says* See Isa. 15 for a similar message.

\*48:1 *Mount Nebo* A mountain in Moab, a country east of Israel.

It will be captured.  
 The fortress there will be torn down.  
 It will be shattered.  
<sup>2</sup>No one will ever honour Moab again.  
 The enemy will capture the town of Hes-  
 hbon and plan Moab's defeat,  
 saying, 'Come, let us put an end to that  
 nation!'

Town of Madmen, you will also be  
 destroyed.

The enemy is coming to attack you.

<sup>3</sup>Listen to the cries from Horonaim.

They are cries of great confusion and  
 destruction.

<sup>4</sup>Moab will be destroyed.

Her little children will cry for help.

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>Run away! Run for your lives!

Run away like a weed<sup>†</sup> blowing through  
 the desert.

<sup>7</sup>"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.

<sup>8</sup>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.

<sup>9</sup>Spread salt over the fields in Moab.

The country will be an empty desert.<sup>‡</sup>

Moab's towns will become empty.

No one will live in them.

<sup>10</sup>May the LORD put a curse on those  
 who refuse to do his work.

May the LORD put a curse on those who  
 will not kill his enemies.

<sup>11</sup>"Moab has never known trouble.

It has never been taken captive.

Its people are like wine left to settle  
 undisturbed,

never poured from one jar to another.

So they are the same as they have always  
 been,

like wine whose taste and smell has not  
 changed."

<sup>12</sup>This is what the LORD says:

"But I will soon send men  
 to pour you out from your jars.<sup>¶</sup>

Then they will empty the jars  
 and smash them to pieces.

<sup>13</sup>"Then the people of Moab will be  
 ashamed of their false god, Chemosh.  
 They will be like the people of Israel  
 who trusted that god in Bethel but were  
 ashamed when he did not help them.

<sup>14</sup>"You cannot say, 'We are good  
 soldiers.

We are brave men in battle.'

<sup>15</sup>The enemy will attack Moab.

The enemy will enter its towns and de-  
 stroy them.

Its best young men will be killed in the  
 slaughter."

This message is from the King.

The King's name is the LORD All-  
 Powerful.

<sup>16</sup>"The end of Moab is near.

Moab will soon be destroyed.

<sup>17</sup>All you who live around Moab

should cry for that country.

You know how famous Moab is.

So cry for it.

Say, 'The ruler's power is broken.

Moab's power and glory are gone.'

<sup>†</sup>48:6 *weed* In Hebrew this word is like the name "Aroer", an important city in Moab.

<sup>‡</sup>48:9 The Hebrew text is not clear.

<sup>¶</sup>48:12 *jars* This probably means the cities in Moab.

18 “You people living in Dibon,<sup>§</sup>  
 come down from your place of honour.  
 Sit on the ground in the dust,  
 because the destroyer of Moab is  
 coming.

And he will destroy your strong cities.

19 “You people living in Aroer,  
 stand next to the road and watch.  
 When you see a man or a woman run-  
 ning away from Moab,  
 ask them what has happened.

20 “Moab will be ruined and filled with  
 shame.

Moab will cry and cry.

Tell everyone along the Arnon River\*\*  
 that Moab is destroyed.

21 People on the high plain have been  
 punished.

Judgement has come to the towns of  
 Holon, Jahzah and Mephaath.

22 Judgement has come to the towns  
 of Dibon, Nebo and Beth Diblathaim.

23 Judgement has come to the towns  
 of Kiriathaim, Beth Gamul and Beth  
 Meon.

24 Judgement has come to the towns  
 of Kerioth and Bozrah.

Judgement has come to all the towns  
 of Moab, far and near.

25 Moab’s strength has been cut off.  
 Its arm has been broken.”

This is what the LORD says.

26 “The people of Moab thought they  
 were greater than the LORD.  
 So punish them until they walk like a  
 drunk.

Make them fall down and roll around in  
 their own vomit.

Then people will make fun of them.

27 “People of Moab, you made fun of my  
 people.

You thought they were no better than  
 someone caught stealing.

You could not talk about them  
 without shaking your head in pity.

28 People of Moab, leave your towns.

Go and live among the rocks;  
 be like a dove that makes its nest  
 at the opening of a cave.

29 “We have all heard how proud Moab’s  
 people are.

They think they are better than anyone  
 else.

They think they are so great.

They boast and brag and show no respect  
 to others.”

30 The LORD says:

“I know how proud and rude they are.

But their boasts mean nothing.

They cannot do what they say.

31 So I cry for Moab.

I cry for everyone in Moab.

I cry for the men from Kir Hareseth.

32 People of Sibmah, I cry for you  
 more than I did for the people of Jazer.

Your vines once spread all the way to the  
 sea

and as far as Jazer.

But the destroyer has stripped your  
 vines.

He has harvested all your summer 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 Hesh-  
 bon 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

<sup>§</sup>48:18 *Dibon* A city in the country of Moab.

\*\*48:20 *Arnon River* An important river in Moab.

the waters of Nimrim are dried up. <sup>35</sup> I will stop Moab from making burnt offerings at their places of worship. I will stop them from offering sacrifices to their gods,” says the LORD.

<sup>36</sup> “I am very sad for Moab. My heart cries like the sad sound of a flute playing a funeral song. I am sad for the people from Kir Hareseth. Their money and riches have all been taken away. <sup>37</sup> Everyone has a shaved head. Everyone’s beard is cut off. Everyone’s hands are cut and bleeding.<sup>††</sup> Everyone is wearing rags around their waists. <sup>38</sup> People are crying for the dead everywhere in Moab—on every housetop and in every public square. There is sadness because I have broken Moab like an empty jar,” says the LORD.

<sup>39</sup> “Moab is shattered. The people are crying. Moab has surrendered. Now Moab is ashamed. People make fun of Moab, but what happened fills them with fear.”

<sup>40</sup> This is what the LORD says: “Look! An eagle is diving down from the sky.

It is spreading its wings over Moab.

<sup>41</sup> The towns of Moab will be captured. The strong hiding places will be defeated.

At that time Moab’s soldiers will be filled with fear, like a woman giving birth.

<sup>42</sup> The nation of Moab will be destroyed, because they thought that they were more important than the LORD.”

<sup>43</sup> This is what the LORD says: “Moab, this is what is ahead for you—

fear, pits and traps.<sup>‡‡</sup>

<sup>44</sup> People will be afraid and run away, and they will fall into the pits. Anyone who climbs out of the pits will be caught in the traps.

I will bring the year of punishment to Moab,” says the LORD.

<sup>45</sup> “People have run from the powerful enemy.

They ran to safety in the town of Heshbon.

But a fire started in Heshbon.

That fire started in Sihon’s town,<sup>¶¶</sup> and it is destroying the leaders of Moab. It is destroying those proud people.

<sup>46</sup> It will be bad for you, Moab!

You people who worshipped Chemosh will be destroyed.

Your sons and your daughters will be taken away as captives.

<sup>47</sup> But in days to come, I will return the people of Moab to the good life they once had,” says the LORD.

This ends the judgement on Moab.

### A Message About Ammon

**49** This message is about the Ammonites. This is what the LORD says:

“Ammonites, do you think that the people of Israel don’t have children? Do you think there are no children to take the land when the parents die? Maybe that is why Milcom took Gad’s<sup>§§</sup> land?”

<sup>2</sup> The LORD says:

<sup>††</sup>48:37 *Everyone ... cut and bleeding* The people did these things to show their sorrow for people who had died.

<sup>‡‡</sup>48:43 *fear, pits and traps* This is a wordplay in Hebrew. The Hebrew words are “Pahad, Pahat and Pah”.

<sup>¶¶</sup>48:45 *Sihon’s town* This was Heshbon. See Num. 21:25-30.

<sup>§§</sup>49:1 *Gad’s* One of the tribes of Israel. Their land was on the east side of the Jordan River, near the country of Ammon.

“The time will come in Rabbah of Ammon\*  
when people hear the sounds of battle.  
Rabbah of Ammon will be destroyed.  
It will be an empty hill covered with ruined buildings,  
and the towns around it will be burned.  
Those people forced the people of Israel to leave their own land.  
But later, Israel will force them to leave,” says the LORD.

<sup>3</sup>“People in Heshbon, cry because the town of Ai is destroyed!  
Women in Rabbah of Ammon, cry!  
Put on rags and cry.  
Run to the city for safety,  
because the enemy will take away the god Milcom,  
with his priests and officials.

<sup>4</sup>You boast about your strength,  
but you are losing your strength.  
You trust in your wealth to save you.  
You think no one would even think of attacking you.”

<sup>5</sup>But this is what the Lord GOD All-Powerful says:  
“I will bring troubles to you from every side.  
You will all run away,  
and no one will be able to bring you together again.

<sup>6</sup>“The Ammonites will be taken away as captives. But the time will come when I will bring the Ammonites back,” says the LORD.

### A Message About Edom

<sup>7</sup>This message is about Edom. This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:  
“Is there no more wisdom in Teman?  
Are the wise men of Edom not able to give good advice?

Have they lost their wisdom?  
<sup>8</sup>You people living in Dedan, run away and hide,  
because I will punish Esau for the bad things he did.

<sup>9</sup>“Workers pick grapes from grapevines, but they leave a few grapes on the plants. If thieves come at night, they don’t take everything.

<sup>10</sup>But I will take everything from Esau. I will find all his hiding places.  
He will not be able to hide from me.  
His children, relatives and neighbours will all die.

<sup>11</sup>No one will be left to care for his children.  
His wives will have no one to depend on.”

<sup>12</sup>This is what the LORD says: “Some nations that don’t deserve to be punished† will have to suffer punishment. But you, Edom, deserve to be punished. So do you think you will escape punishment? No, you will not escape. You will certainly be punished.” <sup>13</sup>The LORD says: “By my own power, I make this promise: I promise that Bozrah will be destroyed. It will become a ruined pile of rocks. People will use it as an example when they ask for bad things to happen to other cities. People will insult that city, and all the towns around Bozrah will become ruins forever.”

<sup>14</sup>I heard a message from the LORD:  
He sent this messenger to the nations.  
This is the message:  
“Gather your armies!  
Get ready for battle!  
March against the nation of Edom!”  
<sup>15</sup>“Edom, I will make you become unimportant.  
Everyone will hate you.

\*49:2 *Rabbah of Ammon* The capital city of the Ammonites.

†49:12 *to be punished* Literally, “to drink the cup”. In this verse, the idea of being punished is pictured as drinking from a cup.

<sup>16</sup> Edom, you made other nations afraid,  
so you thought you were important.  
But your pride has fooled you.  
You live in caves, high on the cliff.  
Your home is high in the hills.  
But even if you build your home as high  
as an eagle's nest,  
I will bring you down from there,"  
says the LORD.

<sup>17</sup> "Edom will be a horrible sight.  
All who pass by there will be shocked by  
what has happened.  
They will be alarmed to see the  
destruction.

<sup>18</sup> It will be like the destruction of Sodom  
and Gomorrah and the nearby  
towns.  
No one will ever live there after that,"  
says the LORD.

<sup>19</sup> "I will attack like a lion coming out  
from the thick bushes near the Jordan  
River to attack the sheep in the green  
pasture nearby. I will chase Edom away  
from its land and kill their leaders. No  
one is like me. No one can challenge  
me. None of their leaders will stand up  
against me."

<sup>20</sup> So listen to what the LORD has  
planned  
to do to the people of Edom.  
Listen to what he has decided  
to do to the people in Teman.  
The enemy will drag away the young of  
Edom's flock.

Edom's pastures will be empty  
because of what they did.

<sup>21</sup> At the sound of Edom's fall,  
the earth will shake.

Their cry will be heard  
all the way to the Red Sea.

<sup>22</sup> Just as an eagle flies high to see the  
animal it will attack,  
so the Lord will spread his wings over  
Bozrah.

And Edom's soldiers will be filled with  
fear  
like a woman giving birth.

### A Message About Damascus

<sup>23</sup> This message is about the city of  
Damascus:

"The towns of Hamath and Arpad are  
afraid.

They are afraid because they heard the  
bad news.

They are discouraged.

They are worried and afraid.

<sup>24</sup> The city of Damascus has become  
weak.

The people want to run away.

They are ready to panic.

They are overcome with fear and pain,  
like a woman giving birth.

<sup>25</sup> "Damascus is a happy city.

The people have not left that fun city yet.

<sup>26</sup> So the young men will die in the pub-  
lic squares of that city,  
and all her soldiers will be killed at that  
time."

This is what the LORD All-Powerful says.

<sup>27</sup> "I will set the walls of Damascus on  
fire.

The fire will completely burn up the  
strong fortresses of Ben-Hadad."<sup>‡</sup>

### A Message About Kedar and Hazor

<sup>28</sup> This message is about the tribe of  
Kedar and the rulers of Hazor. King Neb-  
uchadnezzar of Babylon defeated them.

This is what the LORD says:

"Go and attack the tribe of Kedar.

Destroy those who live in the eastern  
desert.

<sup>29</sup> Their tents and flocks will be taken  
away.

Their tents and all their riches will be  
carried off.

Their enemy will take away the camels.

<sup>‡</sup>49:27 *Ben-Hadad* This was the name of several of the kings of Aram-Damascus.

Men will shout this to them:

‘There is terror all around us!’

<sup>30</sup> Run away quickly!

People in Hazor, find a good place to hide,”

says the LORD.

“Nebuchadnezzar has made plans against you.

He has thought of a way to defeat you.

<sup>31</sup> “There is a nation that feels so safe and secure

that it does not have gates or fences to protect it.

And no one lives near enough to help them.

So attack that nation!” says the LORD.

<sup>32</sup> “Their camels are there to be taken in battle.

Their large herds of cattle will be yours.

I will scatter to every place on the earth those who cut their hair short.<sup>†</sup>

I will bring disaster on them from every direction,”

says the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> “Hazor will become a home for wild dogs,

an empty desert forever.

No one will live there;

no one will stay in that place.”

### A Message About Elam

<sup>34</sup> Early in the time when Zedekiah was king of Judah, Jeremiah the prophet received a message from the LORD about the nation of Elam.<sup>§</sup> <sup>35</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“I will destroy the archers who have made Elam’s army so powerful.

<sup>36</sup> I will bring the four winds against Elam.

I will bring them from the four corners of the skies.

I will scatter the people of Elam to every place on the earth.

Elam’s captives will be carried away to every nation.

<sup>37</sup> I will break Elam to pieces before their enemies,

before those who want to kill them.

I will bring terrible troubles to them.

I will show them how angry I am,”

says the LORD.

“I will send a sword to chase Elam.

The sword will chase them

until I have killed them all.

<sup>38</sup> I will show Elam that I am in control, and I will destroy its king and his officials,”

says the LORD.

<sup>39</sup> “But in the future I will make good things happen to Elam,”

says the LORD.

### A Message About Babylon

**50** This is the message the LORD spoke through the prophet Jeremiah about Babylon and its people:

<sup>2</sup> “Tell this to all nations!

Lift up a flag and announce the message!

Speak the whole message and say,

‘The city of Babylon will be captured.

The god Bel will be put to shame.

The god Marduk will be very afraid.

Babylon’s idols will be put to shame.

Her gods will be filled with terror.’

<sup>3</sup> A nation from the north will attack Babylon.

That nation will make Babylon like an empty desert.

No one will live there.

All the people and animals will run away.”

<sup>†</sup>49:32 *cut their hair short* Literally, “cut on the side of their heads”, a custom different from that of Israelite men.

<sup>§</sup>49:34 *Elam* A nation east of Babylon.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD says: “At that time the people of Israel and Judah will come together.

Together they will cry, and they will look for the LORD their God.

<sup>5</sup>They will ask how to go to Jerusalem, and they will start in that direction. And they will say, ‘Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD.

Let’s make an agreement that will last forever, an agreement that we will never forget.’

<sup>6</sup>“My people have been like lost sheep. Their shepherds led them the wrong way and caused them to wander into the mountains and hills.

They forgot where their resting place was.

<sup>7</sup>They were attacked by all who saw them,

and their attackers said, ‘We were not wrong to attack them because they sinned against the LORD. They should have stayed close to him, their true resting place.

The LORD is the one their fathers trusted in.’

<sup>8</sup>“Run away from Babylon. Leave the land of the Babylonians. Be like the goats that lead the flock.

<sup>9</sup>I am preparing an army of many nations from the north, who will come together to attack Babylon.

This army from the north will march against Babylon, and they will capture it.

Their arrows will be like skilled warriors who never lose a battle.

<sup>10</sup>The enemy will take all the wealth from the Babylonians.

The soldiers will take all they want,” says the LORD.

<sup>11</sup>“People of Babylonia, you took my land,

and so you are excited and happy.

You dance like a young cow in a green pasture.

Your laughter is like the happy sounds that horses make.

<sup>12</sup>But now the city you loved like a mother will be shamed.

The land of your birth will suffer disgrace.

Babylonia will be the least important of all the nations.

It will be an empty, dry desert.

<sup>13</sup>The LORD will show his anger against Babylon,

and everyone will leave.

It will be nothing but ruins.

Everyone who passes by Babylon will be shocked.

They will shake their heads when they see all the destruction.

<sup>14</sup>“Prepare for an attack against Babylon,

all you warriors armed with bows.

Shoot every arrow you have at her!

Babylon has sinned against the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>Enemies of Babylon, attack!

Now you can see her surrender!

Her walls and towers have fallen!

The LORD is punishing her for what she has done.

So give Babylon the punishment she deserves.

Do to her what she did to other nations.

<sup>16</sup>Don’t let the people from Babylon plant their crops.

Don’t let them gather the harvest.

Let the captives inside the city return to their own people.

Let them escape the sword of the attacking army

and run back to their own land.

<sup>17</sup>“The people of Israel are like sheep that have been scattered,

chased away by lions.

The first lion to attack them was the king of Assyria.

Now King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon  
has crushed their bones.”

<sup>18</sup> So this is what the LORD All-Powerful,  
the God of Israel, says:

“I will soon punish the king of Babylon  
and his country

as I punished the king of Assyria.

<sup>19</sup> I will bring the people of Israel back  
to their own fields,

where they will have all they want.

They will be like sheep grazing on Mount  
Carmel and in Bashan,  
and on the hills in the lands of Ephraim  
and Gilead.”

<sup>20</sup> The LORD says:

“If anyone looks for guilt in Israel,  
there will be no guilt there.

If anyone looks for sin in Judah,  
there will be no sin there.

That’s because the only people left alive  
will be the few I save,

and their sins will be forgiven.”

<sup>21</sup> The LORD says:

“Attack the country of Merathaim!

Attack the people living in Pekod!

Attack them!

Kill them and destroy them completely!

Do everything I commanded you!

<sup>22</sup> “The noise of battle can be heard all  
over the country.

It is the noise of much destruction.

<sup>23</sup> Babylon was the hammer of the whole  
earth,

but now the hammer is shattered.

The nations are shocked to see Babylon  
in ruins.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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 Babylonians.

<sup>26</sup> “Come against Babylon from far away.  
Break open the storehouses where she  
keeps her grain.

Destroy Babylon completely.

Don’t leave anyone alive.

Pile up her dead bodies like big piles of  
grain.

<sup>27</sup> Kill all the young men in Babylon;

let them be slaughtered like bulls.

How terrible for them that their day of  
defeat has come!

It is time for them to be punished.

<sup>28</sup> People are escaping from Babylon  
and coming to Zion.

They are telling everyone the good news  
about what the Lord is doing.

The LORD our God is taking revenge  
against those who destroyed his Temple!

<sup>29</sup> “Call for the archers.

Tell them to attack Babylon.

Tell them to surround the city.

Don’t let anyone escape.

Pay her back for the bad things she has  
done.

Do to her what she has done to other  
nations.

Babylon did not respect the LORD.

Babylon was very rude to the Holy One  
of Israel.

So punish Babylon.

<sup>30</sup> Babylon’s young men will be killed in  
the streets.

All her soldiers will die on that day,”  
says the LORD.

<sup>31</sup> “Babylon, you are too proud,  
and I am against you,”

says the Lord GOD All-Powerful.

“I am against you,

and the time has come for you to be  
punished.

<sup>32</sup> Proud Babylon will stumble and fall,  
and no one will help her get up.

I will start a fire in her towns.

That fire will completely burn up everyone around her.”

<sup>33</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

“The people of Israel and Judah are slaves.

The enemy took them,  
and the enemy will not let Israel go.

<sup>34</sup> But God will get them back.

His name is the LORD All-Powerful.  
He will defend them strongly.

He will argue their case so that he can let their land rest.

But there will be no rest for those living in Babylon.”

<sup>35</sup> The LORD says:

“Strike\*\* the Babylonians with my sword!

Kill the people living in Babylon.  
Kill the king’s officials and advisers.

<sup>36</sup> Strike their lying prophets!

Let the people see that they are fools.

Strike the soldiers of Babylon!

They will be filled with fear.

<sup>37</sup> Strike their horses and chariots!

Strike the foreign troops they have hired!

They will become as weak as women.

Strike the treasures of Babylon!

They will be taken away by the enemy.

<sup>38</sup> Strike the waters of Babylon!

Let the rivers and pools dry up.

All this will happen because Babylon is full of idols

that frighten the people

and make them do crazy things.

<sup>39</sup> Babylon will never again be filled with people.

Wild dogs, ostriches and other desert animals will live there,

but no one will live there ever again.

<sup>40</sup> God completely destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah

and the towns around them.

In the same way, no one will live in Babylon,

and no one will ever go to live there.

This is what the LORD says.

<sup>41</sup> “Look! There are people coming from the north.

They come from a powerful nation.

Many kings are coming together from all around the world.

<sup>42</sup> Their armies have bows and spears.

The soldiers are cruel and have no mercy.

The soldiers come riding on their horses;  
the sound is as loud as the roaring sea.

They stand in their places, ready for battle.

They are ready to attack you, city of Babylon.

<sup>43</sup> The king of Babylon heard about those armies,

and he is paralysed with fear.

He is overcome with fear and pain,  
like a woman giving birth.

<sup>44</sup> “Sometimes a lion will come from the thick bushes near the Jordan River.

It will walk into the fields

where people have their animals.

I will be like that lion;

I will chase the Babylonians from their land.

Who should I choose to do this?

There is no one like me.

There is no one who can challenge me.

No shepherd will come to chase me away.

I will chase away the Babylonians.”

<sup>45</sup> Listen to what the LORD has planned to do to Babylon.

Listen to what he has decided to do to the Babylonians.

“I promise that an enemy will drag away the young of Babylon’s flock,

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\*\*50:35 *Strike* Literally, “A sword against”. Also in verses 36-38.

and Babylon will become an empty pasture.

<sup>46</sup> Babylon will fall, and that fall will shake the earth.

People in all nations will hear about the destruction of Babylon.”

**51** This is what the LORD says:  
 “I will cause a powerful, destructive wind to blow against Babylon and the Babylonians.††

<sup>2</sup> I will send foreigners to destroy Babylon like a wind that blows away chaff.

They will strip everything from the land. Armies will surround the city, and there will be terrible destruction.

<sup>3</sup> The Babylonian soldiers will not get to use their bows and arrows.

They will not even put on their armour. Don’t feel sorry for the soldiers of Babylon.

Destroy her army completely!

<sup>4</sup> They will be killed in the land of the Babylonians.

They will be badly wounded in the streets of their cities.”

<sup>5</sup> The LORD All-Powerful did not leave Israel and Judah alone, like a widow.

No, they are guilty of leaving the Holy One of Israel.

Their God did not leave them.

They left him!

<sup>6</sup> Run away from Babylon.

Run to save your lives!

Don’t stay and be killed because of Babylon’s sins!

It is time for the LORD to punish the Babylonians for the bad things they have done.

Babylon will get the punishment that she deserves.

<sup>7</sup> Babylon was like a golden cup in the LORD’s hand.

She made the whole world drunk. The nations drank Babylon’s wine, so they went crazy.

<sup>8</sup> But Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken.

Cry for her!

Get medicine for her pain, and maybe she can be healed.

<sup>9</sup> Foreigners living in Babylon say, “We tried to heal Babylon, but she cannot be healed.

So let us leave her, and let each of us go to our own country. God in heaven will decide Babylon’s punishment.

He will decide what will happen to her.”

<sup>10</sup> The people of Israel and Judah say, “The LORD has shown that he is on our side.

Come, let’s tell about that in Zion.

Let’s tell what the LORD our God has done.”

<sup>11</sup> Sharpen the arrows!

Get your shields!

The LORD has stirred up the kings of the Medes

because he wants to destroy Babylon.

The army from Babylon destroyed his Temple in Jerusalem,

so he will give them the punishment they deserve.

<sup>12</sup> Lift up the battle 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.

<sup>13</sup> Babylon, you live near much water.

†† **51:1 Babylonians** Literally, “Leb Kamai”. In Hebrew this was a secret way of writing “Chaldeans”.

You are rich with treasures, but your end  
as a nation has come.

It is time for you to be destroyed.

<sup>14</sup>The LORD All-Powerful used his name  
to make this promise:

“Babylon, I will fill you with enemy  
soldiers.

They will cover you like a swarm of  
locusts.

They will celebrate their victory over  
you.”

<sup>15</sup>God used his power to make the earth.  
He used his wisdom to create the world.  
With his understanding  
he stretched the sky over the earth.

<sup>16</sup>When he speaks, it sounds like  
thunder.

The waters in the sky roar.

He makes clouds appear from far away.

He sends lightning with the rain.

He brings out the wind from his  
storehouses.

<sup>17</sup>But people are too stupid

to understand God’s power.

Goldsmiths make idols that bring them  
shame,

because the idols they make are false  
gods.

They have no life in them.

<sup>18</sup>These worthless idols are nothing but  
a joke.

When it is time for judgement, they will  
be destroyed.

<sup>19</sup>But Jacob’s God<sup>‡‡</sup> is not like those  
idols.

He is the one who created everything.

And Israel is the family that he chose to  
be his own people.

His name is the LORD All-Powerful.

### The Lord Speaks to Babylon

<sup>20</sup>“Babylon, you are my club.

I used you to smash nations.

I used you to destroy kingdoms.

<sup>21</sup>I used you to smash horse and rider.

I used you to smash chariot and driver.

<sup>22</sup>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.

<sup>23</sup>I used you to smash shepherds and  
flocks.

I used you to smash farmers and oxen.

I used you to smash governors and im-  
portant officials.

<sup>24</sup>But I will repay Babylon and all the  
Babylonians

for all the evil things they did to Zion.

I will pay them back so that you can see  
it, Judah.”

This is what the LORD says.

<sup>25</sup>“Babylon, I am against you.

You have been as strong as a mountain,  
destroying nations everywhere.

But I will reach out and punish you.

I will throw you over the cliffs

and turn you into a mountain of ashes.

<sup>26</sup>Your stones will be broken to pieces.

None will be big enough to use as a cor-  
nerstone or in a foundation.

Your city will be a pile of ruins forever.”

This is what the LORD says.

<sup>27</sup>“Lift up the battle flag in the land!

Blow the trumpet to call the nations!

Prepare the nations for war against  
Babylon.

Call these kingdoms to come and fight  
against Babylon:

Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz.

Choose a commander to lead the army  
against her.

Gather horses to attack like a swarm of  
locusts.

<sup>28</sup>Get the nations ready for battle  
against her.

Get the kings of the Medes ready.

<sup>‡‡</sup>51:19 *Jacob’s God* Literally, “Jacob’s share”. This means that God and Jacob (the people of Israel) had a special relationship—God belonged to Israel, and Israel belonged to God.

Get their governors and all their important officials ready.

Get all the countries they rule ready for battle against Babylon.

<sup>29</sup>The land shakes and moves as if it is in pain.

It will shake when the LORD does to Babylon what he plans—

to make the land of Babylon an empty desert,

a place where no one will live.

<sup>30</sup>Babylon's soldiers have stopped fighting.

They stay in their fortresses.

Their strength is gone.

They have become like frightened women.

Babylon's houses are burning.

The bars of her gates are broken.

<sup>31</sup>One messenger follows another.

Messenger follows messenger.

They announce to the king of Babylon that his whole city has been captured.

<sup>32</sup>The places where people cross the rivers have been captured.

The swamplands are burning.

All of Babylon's soldiers are afraid.”

<sup>33</sup>This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says:

“Babylon is like a threshing floor, where people beat the grain at harvest time.

And the time to defeat Babylon is coming soon.”

<sup>34-35</sup>This is what the city of Jerusalem says:

“King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is like a giant monster

that attacked our people

and caused us to panic.

He swallowed us all

and left the city like an empty jar.

He filled his belly with our riches and then spit everything out.”

The people living in Zion say, “Make Babylon suffer as we have.

Punish the Babylonians for killing our people.”

<sup>36</sup>So this is what the LORD says:

“I will defend you, Judah.

I will make sure that Babylon is punished.

I will dry up Babylon's sea,

and I will make her springs become dry.

<sup>37</sup>Babylon will become a pile of ruined buildings,

a place fit only for wild dogs.

People will be shocked and shake their heads at what is left there.

It will be a place where no one lives.

<sup>38</sup>“The people of Babylon are like roaring young lions.

They growl like hungry lion cubs.

<sup>39</sup>When they are hungry enough to eat anything,

I will prepare a feast for them.

I will make them drink until they pass out.”<sup>f</sup>

They will fall asleep and never wake up.”

This is what the LORD says:

<sup>40</sup>“Babylon will be like sheep, rams and goats waiting to be killed.

I will lead them to the slaughter.

<sup>41</sup>“Sheshach<sup>§§</sup> will be defeated.

The country that the whole earth praised will be captured.

The other nations will look at Babylon, and what they see will shock them.

<sup>42</sup>The sea will rise over Babylon.

Its roaring waves will cover her.

<sup>43</sup>Babylon will be like a dry, desert land.

Its cities will be empty ruins.

No one will live in those cities.

No one will even travel through them.

<sup>f</sup>**51:39 pass out** This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has “make merry”.

<sup>§§</sup>**51:41 Sheshach** Jeremiah used a special code to create this secret name for Babylon.

<sup>44</sup>I will punish the false god Bel in Babylon.

I will make him vomit out the people he swallowed.

The wall around Babylon will fall, and other nations will stop coming there.

<sup>45</sup> Come out of the city of Babylon, my people.

Run to save your lives.

Run from the LORD's great anger.

<sup>46</sup> "Don't be sad, my people.

Rumours will spread, but don't be afraid.

One rumour comes this year.

Another rumour will come next year.

There will be rumours about terrible fighting in the country.

There will be rumours about rulers fighting against other rulers.

<sup>47</sup> The time will surely come when I will punish the false gods of Babylon, and the whole land of Babylon will be put to shame.

There will be many dead people lying in the streets of that city.

<sup>48</sup> 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,"

says the LORD.

<sup>49</sup> "Babylon killed people from Israel.

Babylon killed people from everywhere on earth.

So Babylon must fall!

<sup>50</sup> You who have escaped the swords,

hurry and leave Babylon.

Don't wait!

You are in a faraway land,

but remember the LORD where you are and remember Jerusalem."

<sup>51</sup> "We people of Judah are ashamed.

We have been insulted,

because unfit foreigners have gone into the holy places of the LORD's Temple."

<sup>52</sup> So 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.

<sup>53</sup> Babylon might grow until she touches the sky.

Babylon might make her fortresses strong,

but I will send people to fight against that city.

And they will destroy her,"

says the LORD.

<sup>54</sup> "We can hear people crying in Babylon.

We hear the sound of people destroying things in the land of the Babylonians.

<sup>55</sup> 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.

<sup>56</sup> The army will come and destroy Babylon.

Its soldiers will be captured, and their bows will be broken.

This will happen because the LORD punishes people for the bad things they do.

He gives them the full punishment they deserve.

<sup>57</sup> 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,"

says the King.

His name is the LORD All-Powerful.

<sup>58</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:

"Babylon's thick, strong wall will be pulled down.

Her high gates will be burned.

The people of Babylon will work hard, but it will not help. They will get very tired trying to save the city, but they will only be fuel for the flames.”

### Jeremiah Sends a Message to Babylon

<sup>59</sup>In the fourth year that Zedekiah\* was king of Judah, he went to Babylon. Seraiah,<sup>†</sup> the son of Neriah and grandson of Mahseiah, travelled with the king because he was the king’s assistant. Jeremiah gave a message to Seraiah to take with him to Babylon. <sup>60</sup>Jeremiah had written on a scroll all the terrible things that would happen to Babylon.

<sup>61</sup>Jeremiah said to Seraiah: “Go to Babylon. Be sure to read this message so that all the people can hear you. <sup>62</sup>Then say, ‘LORD, you have said that you will destroy this place, Babylon. You will destroy it so that no people or animals will live in it. This place will be an empty ruin forever.’ <sup>63</sup>After you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates River. <sup>64</sup>Then say, ‘In the same way, Babylon will sink. Babylon will rise no more. It will sink because of the terrible things that I will make happen here.’”

The words of Jeremiah end here.

### The Fall of Jerusalem

**52** Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah.<sup>‡</sup> Hamutal’s family was from the town of Libnah. <sup>2</sup>Zedekiah did what

the LORD says is evil, just as King Jehoiakim had done. The LORD did not like Zedekiah doing those evil things. <sup>3</sup>Terrible things happened to the people of Jerusalem and Judah because the LORD was angry with them. Finally, he completely rejected them and sent them away.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. <sup>4</sup>So in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s rule, on the tenth day of the tenth month,<sup>¶</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. The army of Babylon set up their camp outside Jerusalem. Then they built ramps up against the city walls for an attack. <sup>5</sup>The city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the army of Babylon until the eleventh year that Zedekiah<sup>§</sup> was king. <sup>6</sup>By the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, the famine in the city was very bad. There was no food left for the people in the city to eat. <sup>7</sup>On that day the army of Babylon broke into Jerusalem. The soldiers of Jerusalem ran away. They left the city at night and 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 towards the desert.

<sup>8</sup>But the Babylonian army chased King Zedekiah and caught him on the plains of Jericho. All of Zedekiah’s soldiers ran away. <sup>9</sup>The Babylonian army captured Zedekiah and took him to the king of Babylon who was at the city of Riblah in the land of Hamath. There the king

\*51:59 *the fourth year ... Zedekiah* That is, 594-593 BC.

†51:59 *Seraiah* Seraiah was a brother of Baruch, Jeremiah’s secretary.

‡52:1 *Jeremiah* This is not the prophet Jeremiah, but a different man with the same name.

¶52:4 *ninth year ... tenth month* That is, January of 588 BC.

§52:5 *the eleventh year ... Zedekiah* That is, 587 BC.

decided what to do with Zedekiah.<sup>10</sup> At that same place, the king of Babylon killed Zedekiah's sons and all the officials of Judah while Zedekiah watched.<sup>11</sup> Then the king of Babylon poked out Zedekiah's eyes. He put bronze chains on him and took him to Babylon. In Babylon he put Zedekiah in prison, where he stayed until the day he died.

<sup>12</sup>Nebuzaradan was the commander of the king of Babylon's special guard. He was one of the king's most important officials while at Jerusalem. He came to Jerusalem on the tenth day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year that Nebuchadnezzar<sup>\*\*</sup> was king.<sup>13</sup> Nebuzaradan burned the LORD's Temple, the king's palace and every important building in Jerusalem, and all the houses.<sup>14</sup> All the Babylonian soldiers that were with the commander broke down the walls around Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> The commander Nebuzaradan took the people who were still in Jerusalem<sup>††</sup> and those who had surrendered earlier and made them captives. He took them and the skilled craftsmen who were left in Jerusalem as captives to Babylon.<sup>16</sup> But Nebuzaradan left some of the poorest people behind in the land. He left them to work in the vineyards and the fields.

<sup>17</sup>The Babylonian army broke up the bronze pillars of the LORD's Temple. They also broke up the stands and the bronze basin that were in the LORD's Temple. They carried all that bronze to Babylon.<sup>18</sup> The army of Babylon also took these things from the Tem-

ple: pots, shovels, the tools for trimming the lamps, bowls, pans and all the bronze utensils that were used in the Temple service.<sup>19</sup> The commander of the king's special guards took these things away: basins, firepans, bowls, pots, lampstands, pans and bowls used for drink offerings. He took everything that was made of gold or silver.<sup>20</sup> The two pillars, the large bronze basin called "the sea" with 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.

<sup>21</sup>Each of the bronze pillars was 8 metres<sup>‡‡</sup> tall. Each pillar was over 5 metres<sup>¶¶</sup> around. Each pillar was hollow. The wall of each pillar was 75 millimetres<sup>§§</sup> thick.<sup>22</sup> The bronze capital on top of the first pillar was over 2 metres<sup>\*</sup> tall. It was decorated with a net design and bronze pomegranates all around it. The other pillar had pomegranates too. It was like the first pillar.<sup>23</sup> There were 96 pomegranates on the sides of the pillars. All together, there were 100 pomegranates above the net design that went around the pillars.

<sup>24</sup>The commander of the king's special guards took Seraiah the high priest and Zephaniah the next highest priest as prisoners. The three doorkeepers were also taken as prisoners.<sup>25</sup> He also took from the city the officer in charge of the soldiers, seven of the king's advisers, the secretary who was in charge of selecting

**\*\*52:12 the nineteenth year ... Nebuchadnezzar** That is, 587 BC.

**††52:15 the people ... Jerusalem** This is from the ancient Greek version. The phrase, "some of the poorest people", which appears in the traditional Hebrew text, seems to have been accidentally copied from the next verse.

**‡‡52:21 8 metres** Literally, "18 cubits".

**¶¶52:21 5 metres** Literally, "12 cubits".

**§§52:21 75 millimetres** Literally, "4 fingers".

**\*52:22 2 metres** Literally, "5 cubits".

men for the army, and 60 other men who were still there in the city. <sup>26-27</sup> Nebuzaradan, the commander, took all these officials and brought them to the king of Babylon. The king was at the city of Riblah in the country of Hamath. There at Riblah the king ordered all of them to be killed.

So the people of Judah were taken from their country. <sup>28</sup> This is how many people Nebuchadnezzar carried into captivity:

In Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year<sup>†</sup> as king of Babylon, 3023 people were taken from Judah.

<sup>29</sup> In Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year<sup>‡</sup> as king of Babylon, 832 people were taken from Jerusalem.

<sup>30</sup> In Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year<sup>¶</sup> as king, Nebuzaradan, the commander of the king's special guards, took 745 people of Judah into captivity.

In all, 4600 people were taken captive.

### Jehoiachin Is Set Free

<sup>31</sup> King Jehoiachin of Judah was in prison in Babylon for thirty-seven years. In the thirty-seventh year of his time in prison,<sup>§</sup> Evil Merodach became king of Babylon. Before the year ended, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, the king was very kind to Jehoiachin and let him out of prison. <sup>32</sup> Evil Merodach was friendly to Jehoiachin. He gave Jehoiachin a place of honour higher than the other kings who had also been taken as captives to Babylon. <sup>33</sup> So Jehoiachin was allowed to stop wearing prison clothes. And for the rest of his life, he ate regularly at the king's table. <sup>34</sup> The king gave Jehoiachin enough to take care of his needs every day until the end of his life.

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<sup>†</sup>52:28 *Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year* That is, from the middle of 598 BC to the middle of 597 BC.

<sup>‡</sup>52:29 *Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year* That is, from the middle of 588 BC to the middle of 587 BC.

<sup>¶</sup>52:30 *Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year* That is, from the middle of 582 BC to the middle of 581 BC.

<sup>§</sup>52:31 *thirty-seventh year of his time in prison* That is, 561 BC.